

## A solution for great peace in agape of Luke's gospel

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### Abstract

Agape is the core emphasis in Jesus' teaching in New Testament. Jesus usually taught his disciples, Jews, and others agape. The important teaching of agape is to love and forgive neighbors who were Jews, Christians, Romans, and even disciples each other. However, Luke different from Matthew, Mark and John used agape in his unique reason. Luke made his writings from sources different from other gospels. What was different from other gospels? Why did Luke use them in different context? First of all, important words were taken in Luke's gospel. It informs the reason why agape was different in Luke's gospel through researching. In doing so, it shows intention of Luke which is educational meaning of agape for solving conflicts with peace in Jesus' days.

**Keywords:** agape, teaching, neighbors, forgiveness, peace.

### Introduction

With development of high technology in contemporary society, it looks like living in more convenience and comfort than old ages. However, it is easy to access to look at wars, disagreements, and conflicts in mass media such as T.V., radio, newspaper, internet, and etc. In some cases, it is hardly to solve the problems. Likewise, it was some disagreement and conflict in Jesus days. They were kinds of religious, racial, and sex conflicts. The paper introduced that agape of Jesus could be one of great solutions especially in Luke's gospel.

There are 122 agapes in New Testament. Among these, 66 agapes are in four gospels. There are 9 in Matthew, 5 in Mark, 13 in Luke, and 39 in John (Morrison, 1979). It shows that the use of agape is more than half in four gospels. Even though John used the word agape much more than in Luke's gospel, it is a little different from John's gospel. Luke different from other gospels was interested in society. Luke concerned especially the weak of his community more than John's gospel. The paper studies Luke's social interesting with agape. It also researches how different agape was in Luke from Matthew and Mark. It focuses on the author's interesting of Luke's gospel and why Luke used agape in educational situation as well. In fact agape which Jesus emphasized to his disciples and people was the best lesson in Jesus teachings. Jesus did not teach agape to his disciples simply, but purposed it as an intended word for solving social problems in Luke's gospel. It shows that the lesson which Jesus taught for agape is the meaning of education for his disciples and those who followed Jesus at that time for peace between them, and it would

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even give some valuable teaching to us for great peace in nations and others nowadays.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the current research was to investigate why Luke used agape in different story and circumstance from other gospels. The intention of using agapes was analyzed in the current research.

### **Methodology**

It researches as following to be clear for the purpose of the paper. First of all, it studies an analytic concordance in New Testament. It also researches theological context in four gospels about Jesus days.

It explores paragraphs used by agapes in Luke's gospel. It will show what different they are from other gospels - Matthew and Mark - such as time, place, and the purpose which each author intended.

### **Analysis**

Three paragraphs which include words such as agape, enemy, neighbor, and forgive were selected. Then, they are categorized into different points from other gospels based on history, culture, and custom between Roman Empire and Israelites.

It researches how purpose Luke used agape. It needs to study history, culture, and custom between the Roman Empire and Israelites. It informs the reason why Jesus intended to teach agape to his disciples and those who followed him. We also analyzed how many times Jesus intended to teach agapes and why. It studies three important paragraphs used by agape in Luke's gospel.

### **Discussion and result**

It states that agape which was used in Luke's gospel was intended by educational meaning over one of great lessens for solving conflicts in Jesus' days. It informs why Jesus needed educational teaching to his disciples and people who followed him. In doing so, it shows that agape which Jesus used to teach had the intended educational meaning especially in Luke's gospel.

### **First paragraph**

This paragraph is considered as the lesson of plain because the place is on the plain. However, Matthew used the similar paragraph on the mount. Luke different from Matthew had different focus. Luke was interested in the word "enemies."

"But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will

be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish.”<sup>2</sup>

The parallel of this paragraph is Matthew 5:47-48. It is very famous for the Sermon on the Mount to those who have read New Testament. Matthew chapter 5 begins with preaching of the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:47-48 placed in it. The contents of the Sermon on the Mount were Jesus’ useful teaching about the law, anger, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and even love for enemies. According to Matthew chapter 5 especially Matthew 5:47-48, Jesus’ sermon looked so typical such as other teachings. However, as for love for enemies in Luke, it looks that Luke purposed something special for educating his disciples. Luke chapter 6 starts that disciples ate ears on Sabbath. And then Jesus taught and worked on Sabbath, and Jesus selected 12 disciples, and then Jesus preached sermons called “plain lesson” with the golden rule. Among sermons, Luke used the lesson of agape. As for the place of agapes, it looked that Luke had some intention for using agape in this place. In this reason, according to Luke chapter 6, the plain lessons of “love for enemies” could be some special purpose different from Matthew definitely.

In Luke 6, a Greek word “exhlous” means “enemies” as plural, “eulogetei” as “bless” and “ploseukesthe” as “pray” much more emphasize “love” as agape. Then, who were enemies? According to plural, they could be a group or an organization other than ordinary persons (Plummer, 1977). The expression of “enemies” could mean the group who persecuted Israelites because of religious conflict between Roman Empire and them in those days. Therefore Theissen (2000) stated that “enemies” could be Roman Empire or Roman soldiers. Steven M. Bryan (2002) mentioned that Israelites was ruled by Romans after they had power of attacking Macedonia. Roman Empire served many gods and wanted Jews to take the emperor like their God. However, Jews did not like to do that. Although Romans did not totally interfere with religious practices, sometimes they did, and then Jews would rebel against it (Justo, 1984). Jews had always hoped to recover their political power with their religion in Israel. It was firmly rooted on the words of Bible. They had waited their religious leader eagerly who will recover Israel (Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1). So Jews were very anxious to restore their politic authority including religious power. Although zealots insisted violence to resist it, Jesus taught them nonviolence especially to his disciples (Cassidy, 1978). As a matter of fact his disciples very wanted that Jesus would recover Israel politically and religiously from Roman Empire. However, Jesus came out the nonviolent person to Roman Empire or others. In fact nonviolence is against violence and would expect the change of action in the other parts for nonviolence.

In Luke 6:12-19, Jesus took Simon named Peter who was one of zealots. After selecting his disciples, he taught nonviolence lessons to them. Why did Jesus teach it to them? Actually nonviolence makes people avoid violent action. In addition, nonviolence attitude to Roman Empire was one of good ways for coexistence between Christians and Romans (Rowe, 2005). In doing so, Christians could stay peace with Romans. This makes naturally Romans contact the gospels of Bible as well. Therefore agape which Jesus taught to his disciples is not simply the lesson for loving people but intended one for peace with Romans and Christian mission. Accordingly agape could include educational meaning for peace with Romans in Luke’s gospel. If Christians would not stay peace with Romans, Roman Empire would attack or persecute Jews definitely and they would not have attention of the gospel which Christians introduce them as well. Therefore, Jesus selected his disciples including Peter as a zealot. Then Jesus purposed to show his purposed teaching as loving enemies in Luke’s gospel. It is much more than simple lessons. It is religious and educational teaching for his disciples very clearly for survival.

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<sup>2</sup> Luke 6:27-31.

Especially Jesus used golden rule which was usually used in bad relation with business and friends in those days with agape (Kirk, 2003). Jesus must have wanted that Christianity was not against Roman Empire and to stay peace with them. Wink (1970) mentioned that the nonviolent teaching of Jesus to his disciples makes Romans themselves know that the persecution to Israelite was not proper and they have open mind to Christians and even Jews.

Agape of Jesus is one of religious and ordinary lessons in Christians and even not involved people of Christianity. Matthew, Mark, and John used agape in meaning of loving neighbors on usual teaching of Jesus. However, Luke used the usual agape lesson as special educational purpose for peace and mission with Romans. It is not only religious goal but also survival.

### **Second paragraph**

Luke different from other gospels had different thought of neighbor. In this paragraph, Jesus informed the meaning of neighbor as the story of Good Samaritan.

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read?” And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have answered right; do this, and you will live.” But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”<sup>3</sup>

This paragraph was traditionally famous for the great commandment by Jesus. The parallels of these are Matthew 22:34-40 and Mark 12:28-31. The contents of Matthew and Mark were very similar. It is that Sadducees came to Jesus and discussed about resurrection. It was followed by the great commandment. A lawyer asked Jesus “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” and then Jesus answered “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” However, unlike Matthew and Mark, there was no discussion of resurrection in Luke. A lawyer asked to Jesus “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” and then Jesus said to him, “What is written in the law? How do you read? And he answered, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” In Luke the lawyer asked how to inherit eternal life, and then Jesus answered the great commandment. It was very different from Matthew and Mark. In addition, the lawyer asked “who is my neighbor”, and then

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<sup>3</sup> Luke 10:25-37.

Jesus mentioned the story of Good Samaritan as the example of agape. Actually this story appeared only in Luke. Therefore it was generally accepted as the special source of Luke. Even though it shows what is living with agape, the story has over meaning for loving neighbor. Definitely, it is the lesson for loving neighbor by Jesus (Sprinkle, 2007). However, it is not easy to understand that the story looks a simple lesson for loving neighbor because it is very difficult to accept the story normally. A man faced with difficulty due to robbers, but both a priest and a Levite were going down that road. In those days, they were high class persons in Jewish religion. In addition it is guessed that they were respected by people. However, they just passed by the person who had difficulty. Unlike them, a Samaritan helped him. This story is strange very much. If the person who helped him was the priest or the Levite, it would be so natural. As we know, those who have lots of wealth and things could help those who need help. It is very curious why did Luke show the story different from Matthew and Mark? Reinstorf (2002) stated that Luke would expect that the story of Good Samaritan would give the lesson for practicing agape with Jews as loving neighbor. However, Luke had another purpose for the story. In Bible the relationship between Jews and Samaritans came from Old Testament. After the death of the king Solomon, Israelite was separated as north and south in 8 B.C. Then Assyrian Empire attacked the north and ruled it, and then there were international marriages between them. This marriage started to make a kind of tension between south and north. According to Bible, Jews were prohibited that they have other religions in the law. In addition some people in north had different God in Assyrian Empire other than God in Bible. It resulted in conflict between north and south because north did not keep the first commandment in Law (Esler, 2000). Besides, Samaritan worshiped for Zeus Xenios as Greek god in welcoming ceremony in Gerizim temple. It made that the relation between them was getting worse (Thornton, 1996). For example Matthew10:5-6 “These twelve Jesus sent out, charging them, go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” When Jesus sent his disciples for mission, he said “don’t go to town of the Samaritans.” It shows that there was still some conflict between them in those days. If the Good Samaritan story was intended just as loving neighbor, the priest or the Levite would help him who needed help. However Luke used the Good Samaritan story to explain “who is neighbor?” with agape of loving neighbor. Here, it shows that Luke had another purpose with the Good Samaritan story. Stein (1981) introduced two kinds of Good Samaritan stories adapted from original one. It is a brief summary. First, he informed the Cotton Patch Version of Luke and Acts of Clarence Jordan. It is Good Samaritan story adapted from the Bible to help Black-American to easily read. When a man was going from Atlanta to Albany, a few robbers blocked and hit him. A white preacher passed by on the other side. And then, a white leader of church choir passed by on the other side as well. This story shows to replace the priest and the Levite into the white preacher and the white leader of church choir. Therefore, it is not that Luke informed simple agape as loving neighbor but that Luke intended a solution in tension and conflict between Jews and Samaritan. In the Good Samaritan story Jesus taught a lawyer what is true neighbor? And what is agape? Luke purposed to teach true meaning of neighbor and agape as loving neighbor. True neighbor is not simply thinking what is a law? but keeping and practicing the law (Sprinkle, 2007). As a matter of fact Samaritan was always hurt by Jews. It is natural that Samaritans have to receive care and love by others. However, it is the Samaritan who helped him. Therefore, it shows that true agape is to first open others. In the same manner, the conflict between White and Black people in America was very severe. Black people were always hurt, hit, and persecuted by White people. However a Black one helped the person who really needed help.

In addition, Stein introduced another Good Samaritan story. When a man was going to attend politic meeting for Hitler from Berlin to Frankfurt, he was attacked by robber. And then, a high executive of Nazi passed by on the other side. A pastor of Lutheran Church also passed by on the other side. However, a Jew found and helped him. It means that Good Samaritan story

is not simple lesson for loving neighbor. The story shows the lesson of solution in strong conflict between Nazi and Jews. As we know Jews was severely persecuted by Nazi at that time. However a Jew opened his mind to apology, and helped others as agape. Therefore the clauses of Luke were not simple lesson but good teaching of true agape. Furthermore it means that Luke wanted agape with educational meaning over loving neighbor through Jesus (Longenecker, 2009).

The three gospels Matthew, Mark, and John except Luke used agape in ordinary meaning of loving neighbors on usual teaching of Jesus. However, Luke used agape lesson into more specialized educational purpose for peace between Jews and Samaritans. It shows not only peace between Black and White people but also true forgiveness to assailants who are never forgiven.

### **Third paragraph**

In this paragraph, Luke is interested in forgiveness to a woman specially. Furthermore, the intention of Luke was focused on sex discrimination in Jesus days.

“One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house, and took his place at table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man was a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner.” And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “What is it, Teacher?” “A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he forgave them both. Now which of them will love him more?” Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, to whom he forgave more.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.” Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house, you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little. And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”<sup>4</sup>

The paragraph appears in Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9. It placed in similar sequence. The chief priests and the elders of people discussed about arresting Jesus. When a woman poured an alabaster cruse of ointment, disciples discussed regarding acting Jesus. Then Judas Iscariot who was one of 12 disciples delivered Jesus to the chief priests. However, Luke placed this in chapter 7 which is in plain lesson. The similar story of Matthew and Mark is in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper. In case of Luke, this is in one of Pharisees. Therefore it means that Luke used this in different situation from Matthew and Mark. As for contents, there were some different parts. In case of Matthew and Mark, when a woman poured, disciples said that this

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 7:36-50.

ointment might have been sold and given to the poor. But Luke did not use the expression. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus said that wherever this gospel shall be preached, the woman shall be spoken for memorial of her. On the other hand, there is no word like this in Luke. According to these facts, Matthew and Mark, they focused on pouring ointment, but Luke was interested in forgiveness of her with agape.

A woman who was a sinner wanted to pour the ointment to Jesus. As a matter of fact there was a law - if you contact with a sinner even chatting with him, you would be a sinner. A Pharisee was simply looking at how Jesus would do with the woman. However, Jesus knew what he thought through seeing him and showed him agape which is in forgiveness for great harmony. Jesus did not discuss about what is right or not about laws. Rather Jesus taught audiences to forgive her as agape. Furthermore Jesus even loved her truly as agape (Crabbe, 2011). Fitzmyer (1981) mentioned that Luke added 7:44-47 and purposed to emphasize the act of forgiving the sinner. Therefore it is clear that Luke intended that Jesus taught agape for great harmony to his disciples and others as an educational meaning which you have to love and forgive others.

It is very obvious that Luke showed this story with another purpose. In those days, females did not receive right equally in the society of Jews and the early part of Christianity. In Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or his maidservant, or his ox, or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor's." In this clause, female was thought by one of things as property. Jeremias (1969) mentioned that females could not attend official meetings. When a female went also out, she must take a veil. The status of female was much less than male in those days very clearly. Therefore the different purpose of Luke was going to give the solution regarding discrimination between male and female to audiences in Jesus's days.

In addition, Cosgrove (2005) stated that the woman was not a usual sinner in Luke. He insisted that she had long hair. It would symbolize the meaning of sexual intercourse. So he guessed that the sin of the woman would be adultery. As a matter of fact Jesus was born in authenticity of Jews and respected by people in those days. When he was invited by a Pharisee, he contacted with the woman who was the sinner. Simon saw it and wanted to point out her fault. However, Jesus knew his thought and taught the true meaning of agape to him. It showed that the law of love and forgiveness is greater than Jew's law. Flender (1967) mentioned that this story is teaching for disciples to respect the repressed woman at that time. Unlike Matthew and Mark, Luke showed that agape was over simply forgiving sinners and had the great power for harmony. Luke purposed to show the power of agape and to overcome discrimination between female and male in Jesus' days as well. Luke was interested in the weak in Jesus' days very much. He saw the story in another angle and informed the solution of social problems in those days. It was educational meaning for Jesus' disciples and people.

Although three gospels Matthew, Mark, and John also introduced the woman, they did not emphasize her as the sinner. However, Luke used agape lesson not only in ordinary meaning of loving neighbors but also in educational teaching for great harmony intended by Luke. It is very obvious intention in educational teaching.

## Conclusion

Agape is the best teaching of Jesus such as loving neighbors and forgiving enemies in New Testament. However, Luke used agape in different story and circumstances as Jesus' teaching. Luke made his writings from other sources and intended agape with his special purpose. It showed how the author of Luke used agape different from others for peace. The reason is that agape would be the good way of teaching and learning for solving strong disagreements with

peace. Therefore agape in Luke was not a simple lesson but the word with educational meaning for great peace and harmony even in contemporary society with social problems between black and white, male and female, and etc.

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