Chapter V

Leitmotifs: Structural Devices

... a repeated leitmotif should prompt the listener to think of the thing or person it belongs to.

(Lorenzo par. 3)

The Matrix Narrative and the Hyponarrative have been studied in the previous chapters for the primary and the secondary story-lines developed by the narrative act in Luke's Gospel. The narrative goal of the Matrix Narrative was identified as Jesus’ establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth, the establishment of the Kingdom in the hearts of the elect being the ultimate fulfilment of the Hyponarrative. However, the essence of the Kingdom is brought about through the leitmotifs in Luke’s Gospel narrative.

According to C.Hugh Holman, leitmotif in literature is “[. . .] an intentional and recurrent repetition of a word, phrase, a situation or an idea,
[which] tends to unify a work” (par. 19). The term was coined by F.W. Jahns in 1871 to refer to a closely defined theme or musical idea, representing or symbolizing a person, object, or idea which returns in its original or an altered form at appropriate points in a work. (The Grove Concise Dictionary of Music par. 12). Richard Wagner, the German opera composer, developed a series of leitmotifs in the form of leading melodies which are designed to represent characters, objects, emotions or thoughts. Through various repetitions, alterations and transformations of these leitmotifs, the listener adopts a musical perspective to follow the events, characters, and emotions of the musical story (Hollander par. 1). Similarly, leitmotifs in literature act as directional signals to the implied reader in making sense of the narrative content, consistent with the point of view of the implied author. The result is that leitmotifs serve the purpose of unifying the subject matter in a work of literature. A motif is defined as “a recurrent, often well-known, feature or idea occurring across a work or a number of literary works, for example the symbolic representation of life as a journey” (Bloomsbury Dictionary of English Literature par. 13). On the other hand, the phenomenon of leitmotif is meaningful “only in the structure of the individual work” (Weisstein 148).

Among the leitmotifs that can be traced in Luke's Gospel, those of reversal, division and prioritizing recur as dominant leitmotifs, that an
examination of these recurrent leitmotifs provides an encapsulated description of the Kingdom of God established by Jesus in the world. As “a structural device” as Weisstein (129) describes the leitmotif, each of these leitmotifs of reversal, division and prioritizing serves to organize different ideas or elements of the Kingdom of God. The structure of a story is said to involve more than the story. Grimes Scott defines the structure of a story as referring to “its organization and planning, the way in which its component parts fit together to produce a totality, a satisfactory whole, or of course, the way in which it does not”. (Par.2). That is to say, while the narrative act of Luke's Gospel is responsible for the story-lines in it, leitmotifs as structural devices go on to take a much more far reaching step, to unify and concretize the subject matter of the Gospel narrative, the Kingdom of God. This means that what the implied author wishes to say about the Kingdom may be discerned by closely following the leitmotifs.

The leitmotif of reversal occurs throughout the Gospel narrative of Luke. Mary celebrates the reversal of fortune that takes place in the Kingdom of God in a song thus:

He [God] has shewed strength with his arm;
he hath scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
and exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away. (1:51-53)

These lines speak of the reversals that happen in the Kingdom of God in three aspects. Verse 51 describes the Kingdom as the death of pride. When a man sets his life beside that of God, it tears the last vestiges of pride away from him. God’s power in the Kingdom enables one to see himself as he is. This is an instance of moral reversal in the Kingdom. Verse 52 is about the social reversal that invalidates worldly notions of status and prestige. Verse 53 talks about the economic reversal that an elect experiences in the Kingdom, for in it no man dares to have too much while others have too little. In the Kingdom, every man is obliged to share what he receives. Thus there is a total reversal of the world order: the powerful are overthrown; the weak are raised up; the first is made last and the last is made first. Society and societal order, as the world has known them, are turned upside down in the Kingdom. The rich and complacent are rejected while the poor and repentant are accepted. It is the spiritual reversal that takes place in the Kingdom which is manifested in the moral, social and economic aspects of the elect’s life. It can be noticed that this spiritual reversal is a pervasive leitmotif in Luke’s Gospel.
The leitmotif of spiritual reversal recurs as a reinforcing factor in John’s mission. His words reflecting the song of Mary, obviously, is a figurative description of the Kingdom of God. He announces: “Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain, and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; [. . .]” (3:5, 6). Presumably, the kind of reversal that John calls for is the repentance of the elect leading to a reversal of their spiritual values. This leitmotif of spiritual reversal becomes more direct in Jesus’ commission to the elect: “[. . .] he [God] has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, [. . .]” (4:18).

The leitmotif of reversal is a recurring phenomenon in all the aspects of an elect’s life in the Kingdom. One such aspect pertains to one’s orientation. When Joseph and Mary find the twelve year old Jesus missing on their return journey from Jerusalem, they go back to Jerusalem in search of him, and find him in the temple talking to the priests. It is narrated:

And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto
them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business? (2:48, 49)

What is observed here is the symbolic leitmotif of reversal in Jesus’ life from his earthly business of pleasing his earthly parents, to the business of setting out to establish God’s Kingdom and please his heavenly Father.

The leitmotif of reversal in orientation is a ubiquitous motif in the Gospel narrative. The reversal of orientation takes place in the elect as they enter the Kingdom. Their purpose is oriented towards the interests of the Kingdom. Discipleship involves the fundamental commitment of self-denial. Therefore discipleship requires a basic shift of orientation, as the elect align themselves with God’s will, through a humble renunciation of their own agenda. The cross-bearing image in 9:23 becomes a leitmotif of reversal of orientation. One who voluntarily bears the cross, deliberately renouncing the world, is the ultimate gainer in the Kingdom of God, as the reward for such an orientation towards denial of the self is the blessing in disguise which the elect enjoy. Verse 9.24 summarizes the point nicely, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose life for my [Jesus’] sake, the same shall save it”.

Significantly, in the verses that highlight the mission of Jesus, the narrator combines word and event. The spiritual reversal that the elect experience is symbolically represented as the reversal of power in their
life. Jesus’ message of reversal in Chapter 4 is supported by three instances of reversal of power. A demon possessed boy (4:35), a sick woman (4:39) and people with diverse diseases (4:40) made powerless by Satan, experience reversal of power and are restored to normal life. All the people who come to Jesus with all kinds of maladies experience reversal of power. In 5:13 a leper is cleansed, in 5:25 a paralysed man is restored to health, and this reversal of power recurs as a key leitmotif throughout the Gospel narrative. It can be seen that those troubled by evil spirits are cured (6:19); an army officer’s servant is healed (7:10); a widow’s dead son is raised to life (7:15); many are cured of their infirmities (7:21); a lame man walks and lepers are cleansed (7:22); a demon-possessed man is exorcised (8:35); a sick woman comes to normal health (8:48); Jairus’s dead daughter comes alive (8:55); people are healed (9:11); an unclean spirit leaves a man (9:42); a dumb speaks (11:4); a crippled woman is loosed from infirmity (13:12); a man with dropsy is healed (14:4); again lepers are cleansed (17:14); Lazarus is raised from the dead (18:33); a blind man receives his sight (18:42); and a severed ear of the servant of the High Priest is back in its place (22:55). All these are instances of the reversal of power experienced by the Kingdom entrants. Clearly, the leitmotif of reversal of power emerges from every instance describing the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of reversals.
Another reversal element that runs as a constant leitmotif is that of religious values. The Kingdom of God being a spiritual Kingdom, the old rites and rigid religious practices, give place to spiritual observances of piety. Some of John's disciples want to know why Jesus' disciples do not fast. Jesus eliminates fasting from the Kingdom by asking them “[...] Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?” (5:34). Jesus wonders why his disciples need to fast to get God’s favour, while he, his son, is with them. For his disciples, Jesus’ presence, his forgiveness, their release from spiritual bondage and the new vistas he has opened up before them, make their joy like that of a wedding banquet. To impose fasting on them at that stage in their spiritual experience is highly incongruous and artificial. Naturally, there is no point in fasting, when it is not related to the spiritual realities. The Kingdom of God is described as a new era in which one experiences a reversal of old religious practices, which do not conform to the spirituality of the Kingdom.

An insistent leitmotif of the elect’s reversal of approach to sabbath observance is also permeating Luke’s Gospel narrative. In one instance, the disciples pluck corn and eat on a sabbath. The Pharisees view this as an unlawful behaviour. Jesus defends the action of his colleagues with a challenging question:
Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; How he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the shew-bread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone? (6:3, 4)

Jesus explicitly notes that what his disciples have done is wrong according to the old religious law. Strangely enough, what Jesus suggests is a reversal of the Pharisees’ approach to the law. Jesus holds that if David, though not a spiritual king, could reverse the law concerning the religious observance, himself being the spiritual King has every right to do so. His remark indicates the reversal of approach which the dwellers in his Kingdom are to adopt.

When Jesus heals a woman who has suffered for eighteen years under the spell of a spirit that caused her to be weak and bent over, the synagogue leader argues that Jesus has violated the law which forbids work on the sabbath. Jesus responds sternly, addressing those who argue in support of the synagogue leader as “hypocrites”. He cites an example of their own practice of leading their donkey or ox to water on the sabbath. Jesus then asks “[...] ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond
on the sabbath day?” (13:16). To Jesus, the most appropriate day for the release of the woman, an elect, being the daughter of Abraham, is the sabbath day. Jesus’ approach to the issue is the exact reversal of the then priestly leadership’s view.

The discourse in chapter 6 is the key text of inexhaustible import declaring the reversal of the condition of the elect in the world to come. “Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, [. . .] for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: [. . .]” (6: 21-23). The elect, owing to their suffering on earth, experience a positive reversal in heaven. The reversal of the condition of the elect in heaven, provides a leitmotif connecting the Kingdom of God with the world to come. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus centres round the reversal of roles. Initially it contrasts the condition of the rich man with that of Lazarus. The rich man’s way of life has been sumptuous. For Lazarus it has been just the opposite. But death is the great reverser, since after death the one thing that counts is the human heart. Possessions are left behind. The rich man and Lazarus exchange lifestyles. Their roles are reversed. Lazarus is happy in heaven while the rich man suffers in torment. With a rather deliberate bluntness, the parable of the rich man concretely mirrors the divine reversal
leitmotif of the verse "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (6:20).

This reversal of roles occurs as a reinforcing leitmotif in Jesus’ reply to Peter’s exclamation “Lo, we have left all, and followed thee,” (18:28). Jesus pacifies him:

[... ] There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting. (18:29, 30).

What the implied author means here is that the elect who sacrifice the world for the sake of the Kingdom will not be left to suffer without recompense in the Kingdom itself. They will be receiving “manifold” spiritual blessings in the Kingdom, though they may be hidden to the world’s eye.

Jesus’ exhortation for a reversal of world standards follows next, in which the leitmotif of reversal in motivation is discernible.

But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that
smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloak forbid not to take thy coat also [. . .] and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. (6:27-30)

Running through these exhortations are the basic principles of reversal of motivation, for the evolution of behaviour pertaining to the Kingdom, a significant leitmotif that recurs constantly.

In Jesus' reinforcement of the call in verses 14:12-14, the narrator introduces a leitmotif of reversal of values in the Kingdom of God. The elect in the kingdom are called to serve those who cannot repay their kindness. Therefore they should invite "the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind" to their feasts. This is illustrative of the Kingdom bringing about a total reversal of earthly notions concerning propriety and rectitude. The law of the Kingdom is that if a man gives to gain reward, he will receive no reward; but if a man gives with no thought of reward, his reward is certain. Thus basic to this reversal behaviour is the reversal of motivation which in turn reverses their values.

The leitmotif of reversal of rank in the Kingdom of God is recognizable in Jesus' exhortation to enter the Kingdom through the
narrow path. The broad, spacious highway which most men take, throws up several opportunities of earthly gratification. The straight and narrow path, that leads to spiritual happiness, obliges the traveller to forego the illegitimate indulgences of the broad highway. The elect have to be humble, gracious, gentle, courteous, forgiving, and loyal to the tenets of the Kingdom, thus revealing a total reversal of their former preferences and attitudes. Those who do not find the way easily, struggle hard to find it and enter earlier than those who find the way easily but are slow in entering it. The verse runs, "And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last" (13:30).

Through a homely illustration in 14:7-11, a leitmotif of reversal of position, the elect are taught the virtue of humility in the Kingdom of God. If an undistinguished guest arrives early at a feast and occupies the highest, and a more distinguished person then arrives, the former will be told to step down, and an embarrassing reversal of position will arise. If, on the other hand, the man deliberately prefers the lowest place, and is then asked to occupy a more distinguished place, his humility gains him the honour he deserves. The proverbial description of reversal runs as follows: "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (14:11). The reversal of position becomes the appropriate
leitmotif here, indicating humility as the inherent pre-requisite of the elect in the Kingdom of God. The leitmotif of reversal of position recurs in the same vein in the parable of the two prayers in 18:9-14. The Pharisee gives himself a testimonial before God. He prays “thus with himself” (18:11). In contrast, the tax-collector’s prayer is different. “God be merciful to me a sinner” (18:13). The tax-collector comes to God with a desire to improve his relationship to God. He “goes home “justified” (18:14), his approach to God and his attitude in prayer thoroughly vindicated. But the Pharisee who exalts himself does not receive any blessing.

The parable of the lost son is a great story of reversal. It provides the familiar leitmotif of reversal to reality. The younger son squanders his fortune in a distant land. With no one to help him, his life becomes a self-inflicted tragedy. Then, when he comes to himself, experiencing a reversal to reality, he decides to return to his father. This is the transformation one undergoes as one enters the Kingdom. When the elect come to reality, the great reversal takes place in their lives.

In the Zac-chaeus episode (19:1-10) one can observe the leitmotif of reversal of orientation recurring. By visiting Zac-chaeus, widely regarded as the accumulator of corrupt wealth, Jesus initiates the process of orientation. For his part, Zac-chaeus enthused by Jesus’ acceptance, and guided by a
nascent motivation, declares that he will turn a new leaf and be a different person altogether from then on. He says that half of his possessions will go to the poor, and those he has wronged will receive restitution at four times the amount taken. He is aware of his sin, and declares that he will right the wrongs he has done. The leitmotif of reversal of orientation is juxtaposed with that of motivation.

The key principle of the community of the Kingdom of God is observed when Jesus exhorts his people to exhibit a reversal of approach in the way they perform their roles in the world. The kings of the world wield power and “exercise lordship over” (22:25) their people. This is not the type of leadership that Jesus calls for. The disciple-leader is to function like one who serves: “For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth”(22:27). This significant leitmotif of reversal of approach is also discernible in Peter’s attitude towards following Jesus. Peter promises Jesus, “Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death” (22:33), but subsequently denies his knowledge of Jesus (22:57), thus displaying a negative reversal of approach in his attitude. A further reversal takes place in Peter after Jesus’ resurrection. Thus the reversal of approach, characteristic of the Kingdom of God, evolves into a nexus of leitmotifs.
Another instance of a reversal leitmotif of approach is the one which emerges from the comments of the disappointed disciples of Jesus as they walk to Em-ma-us: “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done” (24:21). And within a few hours a great reversal of approach takes place in their life as the narrator reports, “And their eyes are opened, and they knew him” (24:31). This leitmotif of reversal of approach mirrors the reversal of power experienced by the powerless in Jesus’ mission.

And finally, the greatest reversal leitmotif in Luke’s Gospel is the story of the resurrection of Jesus. The women who go to the tomb of Jesus do not find his body and the angels ask the “perplexed” women “why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, he is risen [...] (24:6, 7). The resurrection of Jesus endorses the words of the angel to Mary “of his [Jesus’] Kingdom there shall be no end” (1:33). To the elect who recognize the Kingdom of God, Jesus is not merely a hero of the past but a living reality of the present.

In keeping with the narrative intention of the implied author, the leitmotif of reversal serves to enlighten the mind of the implied reader, regarding the character of the Kingdom of God. The implied reader gains a
comprehensive view of the newly established spiritual Kingdom, through the series of leitmotifs which recur indicating the reversal that takes place in the different spheres in the life of the elect. Through these leitmotifs of reversal, the implied author isolates the elect community from the rest of humanity. The implied reader views the elect as those for whom the Kingdom alone is a reality, and the world order and the standards the world goes by count the least. Thus it can be seen that the leitmotif of reversal occasions the division between the Kingdom of God and the other world/religious organizations, and facilitates the identification of the division leitmotif closely related to it.

The leitmotif of division between the elect and the others clearly evolves from the narrative intent of the Gospel. It directly aligns with the point of view of the implied author which is to enlighten the elect as to the mystery of the Kingdom of God. This leitmotif of division, dividing the elect and the others, is a pervasive one in the Gospel narrative. Jesus’ words, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (5:32) indicates the presence of the division element as existing even before the beginning of his mission. This mission of Jesus evolves into a leitmotif of division between the elect, the people who realize their need for entry into the Kingdom, and the others, who are not inclined to do so.
The double analogy between the new garment and the old garment, and the new wine and the old bottles convincingly presents the leitmotif of division between the old religious practices and the new spiritual life. The verses are:

No one putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are perserved. (5:36-38)

The polarities of the new garment/wine versus the old garment/wine, stress the marked division between the old religious practices like fasting and strict sabbath observance and the new spiritual relationship with Jesus in the Kingdom. In the Kingdom of God the lives of the elect are ordered not so much by rules and regulations, as by the practical realities of a living relationship with Jesus. The rituals and the disciplines are the worn-out garment. It is impossible to maintain the usefulness of the worn-out garment by attempting to patch it up with the new garment of the Gospel. The implied author's contention is that the spiritual relationship
with Jesus (new wine) and the old religious practices (old bottles) can not coexist. The old bottles of religiosity and the new wine of spirituality are to be kept apart, and unless a clean break — a division — is made between the two, the sanctity of the spiritual Kingdom can not be maintained.

The parable (6:48–49) of those who build houses on rock, and those who build them on sand provides the familiar leitmotif of division between those in the Kingdom, who hear God's words and obey, and those who stop with hearing. The latter do not experience growth as the former, who depend on him, and stand firm in the face of life's calamities.

The narrator's analogy between the children of the market place and the people who are out of the Kingdom, and between the children of wisdom and the people of the Kingdom is a leitmotif of division (7:31–35). The worldly people, who are out of the Kingdom, regard John, who leads a life of austerity like a hermit, as a mad eccentric, and Jesus who shares social life with men entering into all their activities, as one who loves earth's pleasures. Admittedly, such worldly people are like those children who in their childish wilfulness and discontent find fault with their playmates as the verses indicate: "They are like unto children sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not
wept” (7:32). On the other hand, the children of wisdom, the elect of God, understand the Gospel truth as conveyed by the epigrammatic verse: “But wisdom is justified of all her children” (7:35). This leitmotif of division that evolves from the concept of election recurs in the following words of Jesus to his disciples. “[...] Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand (8:10).

This division leitmotif in the same vein is observed in chapter 10 where Jesus calls those who have become eligible to be partners in the Kingdom of God – babes, and the others – the wise and the prudent of the world. The simple minds of the elect receive the Gospel truth that the wise minds of the world do not (10:21-22). This division leitmotif occurs again when Jesus draws a line of division between the elect who seek the treasures of heaven, and the others who seek the treasures of earth (12:21, 33).

The following verses testify to the role of Jesus as the great divider:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against
three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother, the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (12:51-53)

The far reaching changes that come about in the lives of the elect, as they experience conscious discernment, growing faith, and a deep relationship with God divide them from the world. Personal spiritual awakening comes with the metaphysical understanding of the Kingdom of God, and the practical application of it in their lives. This spiritual realization of the Kingdom of God is contrary to the popular views of the world, and the fact that it is realized only by a few often results in serious conflicts and division arising in families, among friends, and in the work place. Their lives are put under the strictest scrutiny in a search for faults. The division grows rather than disappears as those who have realized the truth stick on to their stand and welcome division. The leitmotif of division accounts for the reasons for the prevalence of different attitudes, approaches and sets of values and priorities among members of the same family.

The leitmotif of division is recognizable in Jesus’ words when he declares, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the
Kingdom of God is preached, and everyman presseth into it” (16:16). The Kingdom era presumably begins with Jesus’ establishment of the Kingdom, and the period of the law and the prophets comes to an end with John’s mission. The significance of the beginning of the new era as the Kingdom age is explicitly stated here by Jesus himself who is its founder.

The leitmotif of division that emerges from Jesus’ words to the Scribes and the Pharisees who come to trip up him on political grounds serves to highlight the responsibilities of the citizens of the Kingdom of God. These people are looking for anything Jesus might say to allow them to hand him over to the governor on a political charge. They ask Jesus, “Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?” (20:22). Jesus calls for a coin and asks, “Whose image and superscription hath it?” (20:24). Their answer is “Caesar’s”. And Jesus says to them, “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s” (20:25). Jesus’ paradoxical reply is that both the Kingdom of God and the political government have the right to exist and function independently; the presence of the one does not destroy one’s allegiance to the other. However, the division lies in the nature of the elect’s duties, his spiritual duties in the Kingdom and his civic duties to the political government.
Thus it is seen that the leitmotif of division serves to describe the elect of the Kingdom of God, by dividing the spiritual from the religious, the obedient from the disobedient, the simple from the prudent and the people of the Kingdom from the people of the world.

Apart from the leitmotifs of reversal and division, the idea of prioritizing one thing over another also permeates the Gospel of Luke as a leitmotif. According priority to Jesus over everything else is a pervasive leitmotif in the Gospel. The essence of the Kingdom life is that in order to make the most of everything Jesus has given, his people in the Kingdom need to accord him top priority in their lives. The elect are enabled to discover where Jesus fits in their lives in relation to every thing else. When they put him first and follow his lead, everything else falls in its proper place.

Jesus' words "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (9:23), exhort his disciples to deny the self, though by so doing, they may have to suffer; denying the self involves walking outside the path of the world. They should be ready to suffer for according priority to Jesus over the self; Jesus' way is not the way of the world.
In the story of Martha and Mary (10:38-42), Mary gives priority to sitting at Jesus’ feet and learning from him, over helping Martha in preparing food for him. Tension mounts up as seen in Martha’s complaint to Jesus, “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me” (10:40). She expects Jesus to come to her aid. But Jesus answers “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (10:41, 42). The leitmotif of prioritizing, giving priority to learn from Jesus over other things, emerges from this story. Further one cannot fail to observe in this episode another leitmotif of prioritizing arising from Jesus’ words. Jesus accords priority to the disciple who is willing to learn from him. The use of the leitmotif, in emphasizing two types of prioritizing in a single episode is common in Luke’s Gospel. One other instance of this category of leitmotif is in Jesus’ discourse in chapter 12:

Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: [. . .] Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; [. . .]. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? [. . .]. Ye are of more value than many sparrows. (12:4-7)
Man’s power over man is strictly limited. A man can destroy another man’s life; but not his soul. When a man realizes that his soul belongs to God and that it is in God’s power to fashion it in accordance with his will, he would feel obliged to accord priority to God, obey him and be on guard all the while not to incur his displeasure. The leitmotif of prioritizing God over man is followed by the leitmotif of God giving priority to man over the whole of creation. In verse 12:28 Jesus comforts the people saying: “If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?” God’s care is the most detailed of all. Not even the sparrow is forgotten by God (12:6). However God gives priority to man over other creation.

The leitmotif of prioritizing God over the world is discernible in chapter 16 in the discourse of Jesus. Jesus affirms, “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (16:13). Jesus considers God as the most exclusive of masters, and that one belongs to him totally or not at all. The essence of the Kingdom is that loyalty to God must take precedence over one’s loyalty to the world. One cannot please God and the world simultaneously. Priority cannot be shared between two entities, and priority must be accorded to
God rather than to the world. On another occasion Jesus appreciates the widow who accords priority to God over her life itself. She offers only two mites, but it far outvalues all the other offerings because it is everything she has (21:2-4).

The leitmotif of prioritizing the word of Jesus over circumstances is observed in Chapter 5. Peter is one who accords priority to the word of Jesus. He is a fisherman fishing for his life. He gives his boat to Jesus to be used as a pulpit for his ministry. After using his boat from which to preach a sermon, Jesus tells him to head out and go fishing. Conditions are not right for fishing as Peter notes, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (5:5). This indicates a potential in Peter to accord priority to Jesus' word over the unfavourable circumstances. The effect is remarkable and beneficial. The boat overflows with fish. The leitmotif of prioritizing Jesus' word over other things, observed here, recurs in another miracle. An army officer gives priority to Jesus' word over his physical presence at the spot where he expects the miraculous healing of his servant to take place. He tells Jesus, "Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed" (7:6, 7).
The leitmotif of prioritizing one thing over another is a constant leitmotif in the Gospel. Following the garment and wine analogy in 5:36-38, Jesus points out the tendency among people to give priority to old religious practices in the verse: “No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better” (5:39). The implied meaning here is that the elect should check their priorities and set them in the right order. Another leitmotif of prioritizing occurs when Jesus’ disciples rejoice over the triumph, which they wrought in the name of Jesus, to which Jesus replies, “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (10:20). Here the disciples are told that priority for rejoicing must be accorded to the fact that they are the elect, on account of which they are enabled to bring the devils under subjection. Bradley’s view ‘It will always remain true that a man’s greatest glory is not what he has done but what God had done for him” (136) is worthy of mention here.

The leitmotif of prioritizing is observed in Jesus according priority to the elect over others. When the Pharisees accuse Jesus of healing a crippled woman on the sabbath, Jesus’ question to the Pharisees brings out the fact that the woman has been accorded priority for she is an elect: “And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from his bond on the Sabbath
day?” (13:16). On another occasion, in chapter 8, when Jesus is told his mother and brothers are waiting to see him, he retorts, “My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it” (8:21). Jesus accords priority to the elect, who obey God over his human relations. The deepest relationship in the Kingdom of God is the relationship of mind to mind, and heart to heart. It is where people have common aims, common principles, common interests, and a common goal that they become one family. The leitmotif of prioritizing the elect over human relations is discernible here. Further, a woman in the crowd compliments Jesus by remarking how marvellous it must be to be his mother. But to Jesus it is the spiritual relationship with him that counts. He points out where the superior blessedness lies, and what is the blessing prioritized over kinship with Jesus, in the words, “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (11:28). Earlier in 10:39-42 to sit at his feet and hear his word was prioritized over serving him. It was hearing only that was accorded priority; but the keeping of the word of God is now emphasized as far superior. The leitmotif of according priority to the call of discipleship to Jesus over duty towards one’s own family is observed in Jesus’ words to a man, who prioritizes his duty to go to the funeral of his father over his duty to follow Jesus. Jesus says to him “Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God” (9:60).
Another leitmotif of God setting his priorities is noticed in his search for the lost-elect in the parable of the lost sheep (15:3-6). The fact that the lost-elect are accorded priority over the believer-elect is observable in the implied analogy of a shepherd going in search of the lost sheep in the wilderness, leaving all the other sheep in the fold. Interestingly, the leitmotif is further extended to include prioritizing the new entrant into the Kingdom over the ones already present there. In the parable of the lost son (15:11-32) when the elder brother sees his father celebrating the arrival of his younger brother, who has wasted all the money, he is peeved that no such celebration has been even thought of in honour of a good, loyal son. The father tells his elder son, “Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found” (15:31, 32). An elect redeemed is accorded priority in God’s appraisal.

The leitmotif of prioritizing is discernible in the parable of importunity in chapter 11. A man arrives late at his friend’s house. Since his larder is empty he goes out to borrow from a friend. The friend though annoyed at being disturbed, lends food to him because of his importunity. The word importunity here has the implied meaning of “right” as well. The friend responds to him because of the right he has to persist in asking on the
The leitmotif of prioritizing God's will over one's own will emerges from Jesus' prayer before his arrest. He visualizes all the events that lead to his crucifixion. For a moment he seems to shrink away from such a horrible prospect. But that is the way assigned to him by God for the manifestation of the power of the Kingdom. He prays, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (22:42). Jesus wants the cup of wrath to be passed from him, but then gives priority to God's will over his own will.

The leitmotif of prioritizing the elect, prioritizing Jesus and his word over everything on earth, the elect being accorded priority over the rest, and God himself prioritizing the lost-elect over the believer elect, consistently enlightens the implied reader as to the character of the Kingdom of God. This leitmotif also elucidates how in the spiritual Kingdom of God, spirituality gets prioritized over religiosity.

The leitmotifs of reversal, division and prioritizing, function as narrative codes in Luke's Gospel and serve in the identification and comprehension of the stoff, of the Gospel narrative, namely the Kingdom of God. In the words of Weisstein, "the identification of stoff can be accomplished only by breaking it down into components" (137). The leitmotifs as structural components also provides the Gospel with narrative
strength of their friendship. Importunity, or rather more precisely, the right to ask is prioritized over the strains that might be imposed on friendship.

On another occasion a Pharisee invites Jesus to a dinner. He is surprised to observe Jesus not washing his hands before dinner. Jesus advises the Pharisee that if he prioritizes cleansing his heart over washing his hands he would be a better man. Jesus' words are:

But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and behold, all things are clean unto you. [. . .], ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgement and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. (11:41,42)

It is also observed that for Jesus giving alms to the poor is more important than tithing. The leitmotif of prioritizing in this discourse stresses the importance of spiritual purity as well as alms giving.

In chapter 12 it is pointed out that seeking the Kingdom of God is to be prioritized over seeking food and clothing. If they do not get their priorities right, then, their major pre-occupation in this world will be a quest for material things, to the neglect of or even to the complete exclusion of far more important things pertaining to the Kingdom. It is
vital, then, that the elect see food and clothes in their right perspective. Both are necessary to keep life going. But the main purpose of life is to seek the Kingdom of God. The leitmotif of prioritizing the Kingdom of God over basic necessities of life is recognizable here.

Prioritizing acknowledgement (of one's inadequacies) over assumption (of self importance) is the leitmotif of Jesus' advice to his people to take lower places at feasts (14:10). Jesus suggests that they should not assume honour and occupy higher seats; their honour should be acknowledged by the host who will then call them to higher seats. The leitmotif of according priority to genuine hospitality over hospitality that expects to be recompensed, is evident in the following words of Jesus:

When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, maimed, the lame, the blind: (14: 12-14)

Bock avers, "The best hospitality is that which is given not exchanged” (393).
The leitmotif of prioritizing God’s will over one’s own will emerges from Jesus’ prayer before his arrest. He visualizes all the events that lead to his crucifixion. For a moment he seems to shrink away from such a horrible prospect. But that is the way assigned to him by God for the manifestation of the power of the Kingdom. He prays, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (22:42). Jesus wants the cup of wrath to be passed from him, but then gives priority to God’s will over his own will.

The leitmotif of prioritizing the elect, prioritizing Jesus and his word over everything on earth, the elect being accorded priority over the rest, and God himself prioritizing the lost-elect over the believer elect, consistently enlightens the implied reader as to the character of the Kingdom of God. This leitmotif also elucidates how in the spiritual Kingdom of God, spirituality gets prioritized over religiosity.

The leitmotifs of reversal, division and prioritizing, function as narrative codes in Luke’s Gospel and serve in the identification and comprehension of the stoff, of the Gospel narrative, namely the Kingdom of God. In the words of Weisstein, “the identification of stoff can be accomplished only by breaking it down into components” (137). The leitmotifs as structural components also provides the Gospel with narrative
unity. Evidently, they serve as the pervasive unifying factors, as the connecting threads, that hold the narrative together. The implied author employs these leitmotifs as structural devices with a view to enlightening the implied reader as to the mysterious Kingdom of God, and thereby enhances the literariness of Luke’s Gospel narrative.