RE-READING LUKE 18:1-8 IN THE ANGOLAN CONTEXT THROUGH THE AFRICAN HERMENEUTICS OF LIBERATION TOWARDS THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

By

NELSON SAPUPA SAMARIA

MTHLMR192920

This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master Degree in Theology from St. Paul's University

November, 2022

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SUPERVISORS:

The Rev. Prof. Kabiro Wa Gatumu

&

Rev. Dr. Julius K. Kithinji

November, 2022

DECLARATION

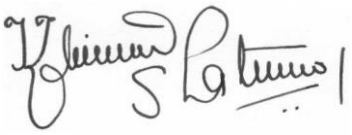
This dissertation is a result of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution. I agree that this dissertation may be available for reference and photocopying at the discretion of the University.

Signature of the Student  Date: 22. 03. 2022

Declaration by Supervisors

This dissertation has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisors.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is especially dedicated to my beloved family: the love of my heart Claudia Samaria and our two princes Paulo Samaria and Lucas Samaria, for standing there with me and loving me unconditionally even when things got really tough. It is also dedicated to my treasured parents Paulo Miguel Samaria and Florence Chissengo Samaria to whom I am deeply indebted.

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Above all, I render all the honour and all the glory to the Almighty God for His faithfulness. I acknowledge all the support from my beloved ones, my wife Claudia Samaria and our sons Paulo and Lucas Samaria. To my parents Paulo Samaria and Florence Samaria as well as my seven siblings, I am really grateful. I am equally deeply indebted to my supervisors, the Rev. Professor Kabiro Wa Gatumu and Rev. Dr. Julius Kiambi Kithinji, for the careful guidance and supervision.

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and their families. I also thank Karura Community Chapel Kabuku for their warm welcome in this land Kenya. To all those anonymous Kenyans who have done good to us, thank you.

ABSTRACT

The present research was informed by scholars who have documented the cries of the oppressed and marginalized people generally in Africa, represented here by the Angolan context, due to the injustices they face daily. It has chosen Luke 18:1-8 and its teaching on persistence on justice seeking. Luke 18:1-8, referred to as the Parable of the Widow, though occupying a mere eight verses of the gospel is a challenging text and has been a source of broad and challenging theological reflections. The history of reception has shown that, like other parables, Luke 18:1-8 has also been interpreted as an allegory or a metaphor of prayer and divine response. It has been identified that little attention is given to the issue of justice in the interpretation of the parable. Therefore, the problem of this research was stated with the following questions: How does Luke 18: 1-8 relate to the quest of social justice in the context that produced Luke's gospel and what can be the implication of re-reading this parable in the Angolan context text through African hermeneutics of liberation lenses? The main objective of this research consisted in unveiling Jesus' intended meaning for the parable and identifying a Lukan model which can help in bringing social justice in the Angolan context, by carrying out an assessment of the sitz-im leben as well as an exegetical analysis of the parable. To address this main objective, the research was divided into five chapters, including a general introduction as chapter one, an assessment of the socio-historical setting of parable in chapter two, a lexical and grammatical analysis of the Luke 18:1-8 in chapter three, an African hermeneutical re-reading of the parable in chapter four, and in the chapter five it brings a summary of the findings as well as a general conclusion and recommendations for further studies. The analysis of the socio-historical setting of the parable, supported by the lexical and grammatical analysis of the Greek text, provided a valuable grounding to understanding the behavior and motivations of both the widow and the judge, as well as to identify the justice motif as the central concern of the parable. The African hermeneutical reading within the context of this study was the application phase where the analysis of social justice in Luke's gospel was applied to the Angolan context, taking into consideration the socio-historical, political and economic realities of the country. The study finally found out that this parable fulfills a liberationist-educational function to its listeners and readers by becoming a reflection and analytic instrument of their socio-historical reality.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADMIN	– Administration
CE	– Common Era
Chap.	– Chapter
COVID-19	– Coronavirus Disease of 2019
Deut.	– Deuteronomy
EIA	– US Energy Information Authority
HIV	– Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ID	– Identification Card
IECA	– Igreja Evangelica Congregacional em Angola
INE	– Instituto Nacional de Estatística
INFO	– Information
Lk.	– Luke
LXX	– The Septuagint
n.p	– No Page Number
Nacosti	– National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation
NIV	- New International Version
NRSV	– New Revised Standard Version
RSV	- Revised Standard Version
UN	– United Nations
UNDP	– United Nations Development Programme
US	– United States
USDS	– United States Department of State
v.	– Verse

vv. – Verses

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The present research is on the quest of social justice in Luke 18:1-8, commonly referred to as the "Parable of the Widow and the Judge." This chapter mainly discusses introductory issues for this research. These include the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the study and the research questions. It also includes the significance of the study, as well as the assumptions of the study. Also included are the scope of the study, the preliminary literature review and the theoretical framework, the methodology to be applied in the study, and finally a conclusion.

1.2 Background of the Problem

The present research was conducted within the field of New Testament's parabolic studies, focusing on the interpretation of Luke 18:1-8, the "Parable of the Widow and the Judge." From the early second century the authorship of Luke's gospel has been attributed to Luke a Gentile doctor and companion of Paul, based in evidences both internal and external (Guthrie, 1990: 114). In chapter 1:1-4 the author states that his purpose in writing the Gospel was to provide Theophilus with an orderly account of the things he had already been taught. Luke was for long regarded as the New Testament writer most supportive of the interests of the marginalized, women in particular (Spencer, 2012: 1-2). Luke's gospels demonstrate a particular concern and sensitivity for the social evils of their time and place. These includes and not limited to, caring for the needy, the oppressed, the poor and outcast, especially women, children, tax collectors, the Samaritans, and the sick. Luke evidences it with passages such as the Mary's Magnificat (1:51-

55); the Nazareth Manifesto (4:16-21); the sermon on the Plain (6:20-31); the parable of the good Samaritan (10:30-37); the rich man and the beggar Lazarus (16:19-31) and many other, as well as the emphasis on healing ministry, with stories which peculiar to his narrative (10:25-37; 13:13-17; 17:11-19; 14:1-6). The wide use of οἱ πτωχόι "the poor" (from the Greek root πτωχός - poor) evidences also Luke's concern for the victims of such an unjust and corrupt society. Οἱ πτωχόι appears 10 times in Luke's gospel out of 34 times it appears in the New Testament and out of 20 times in the synoptic gospels. This can also be associated with Luke's use of *Χήρα* "widow", which occurs thirteen times in the four gospels, but nine occurrences are in Luke's gospels. In some occurrences Luke associates *Χήρα* directly with poverty, such as *Χήρα ἡ πτωχή* "a poor widow" or *Χήραν πενιχράν* "needy widow" like in Luke 21:2, 3.

Most scholars, among them Horsley (1994), Cassidy (1978), Brown (1974), Weaver (2002) and more recently Cotter (2015), Dickerson (2017), and O'Conor (2019), agree that the social context of the first century Mediterranean society, was indeed characterized by lots of oppression and social injustices against the vulnerable. The Palestinian Jews were majorly "peasants living in villages and working the land to support the Temple, priests, Herodian régime(s), and Roman tribute as well as their own families" (Horsley, 1994:88). The marginalized, among them the poor, publicans or tax collectors, women and children, lepers, Samaritans, and others suffering from other diseases, constituted a considerable majority and had completely no dignity within their society (Horsley, 1994: 88).

This research, however, was informed by scholars who have documented the cries of the oppressed and marginalized people generally in Africa, represented here by the Angolan context, due to the injustices they face daily. As observed by D. Santos (2015) and Blanes and Zawiejska

(2019) the Angolan context is currently characterized by lots of corruption at all levels, extreme poverty, with poor or no access to basic social services, violations of human rights, limited freedom of expression and information, making it almost impossible for the majority of the Angolans to fully realize their humanity as social beings. Therefore, this research has chosen Luke 18:1-8 and its teaching on persistence on justice seeking. The research embarked on an assessment of the socio-historical context behind the parable (reading behind the text) and an exegetical analysis of the text through the historical-grammatical method. It also attempted to re-read the text through the lens of African hermeneutics of liberation (application), with the aim of identifying a Lukan model which can eventually help in bringing social justice in the Angolan context.

Luke 18:1-8 was preferred for this study to many other Lukan stories addressing the issue of social justice, because the story Jesus told (on persistency on justice seeking) provides a potential biblical model to address the quest of social justice in a context of perpetuating injustices against the most vulnerable such as Angola. This view is supported by scholars such as Herzog II (1994), Weaver (2002), Curkpatrick (2002), and Dickerson (2017), O'Conor (2019) who, among others, strongly hold that justice is one of the main motifs of Jesus' parable: "At its heart this story is a plea for justice" (Weaver, 2002: 318). Through this story, Jesus shows how one can succeed in gaining justice through one of the most improbable approaches – Persistence (Herzog, 1994:44). Through the characters of the judge and the widow Jesus paints a picture of, not only two characters, but also of two worlds diametrically opposed in the Mediterranean society. The judge is culturally the symbol of power, authority, and honour, while the widow symbolizes powerlessness, vulnerability, and shame. Jesus therefore, launches one of his major

social critic to the legal system, which could allow injustice to persist because its leadership, as represented by the judge, "neither feared God nor regarded man" (Luke 18:2).

The interpretation of this parable, however, has been a subject of intense debate. Apart from its authenticity and unity of its text, scholars are also divided about its teaching. Traditional interpretations render the parable as an allegory of prayer and divine response. Luke's frame of the parable proper in v.1 led to the interpretation of the widow's persistence in justice seeking, "vindicate me… *ἐκδίκησόν με",* as an allegory for perseverance in prayer, while the judge on the other side, the granter of justice, a "negative or counter-image" for God. Recent scholarship, such as Curkpatrick (2002) and Weaver (2002) show that there is tension between the parable itself (vv.2-5) and the author's narrative frame (vv. 1, 6-8), which in consequence creates a hermeneutical concern, giving space for various interpretations.

As it is seen ahead, the reception history of Luke's gospel shows that traditional readings (Saint Augustin, Ciril of Alexandria, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and others) generally follow Luke's interpretive frame (v.1). The parable has traditionally been taken as an allegory of prayer and divine response (Dickerson, 2017:3). Traditional interpretations, however, do not only shift the focus of the interpretation to the judge as the main didactic character and centre of the meaning of the parable, but also divorce the parable from its original sitz-im-leben (Curkpatrick, 2002: 117). And more critically it raises a theological concern, that God can be pestered to action. Both Jesus and Luke had different audiences (different sitz-im-leben), and therefore, different purposes in telling and re-telling the parable. As Luke states in v.1, by telling the parable Jesus intended to teach his listeners to pray always. However, issues of justice seeking and faith are

also vividly present. Therefore, the research engaged in assessing the sitz-im-leben of the parable as told by Jesus with the aim of unveiling its intended meaning.

Though a global issue, social justice is one of the most neglected issues in the African context. Africa is known by its high levels of poverty, infectious diseases such as malaria and HIV, corruption, impunity, armed conflicts, violation of human rights, maternal and infant mortality before five years, environmental degradation, ethnicity, abuses of political power, tribalism, and so on (Coninck, Culp and Taylor, 2013: 6). In most parts of the continent women and children are still kept hostage by some cultural and religious practices, stripping them out of their dignity as human beings. As in the rest of the continent, a vast majority of Angolan population has been living in extreme poverty, with poor or no access to basic social services which include, among others, health, education, quality of life and employment. Infant mortality rates among the highest in the world, and also very high illiteracy rates, as well as an extremely wide gap between rich (a tiny minority) and poor (a vast majority). Concrete situations show the perpetuation of political intolerance and impunity. Being the most recent the January 30th, 2021's massacre in the mining village of Cafunfu, Lunda Norte where a group of people, from the Lunda Cokwe ethnic group, were massacred by agents of the national police forces.

Therefore, this research engaged the text and the Angolan context through the historical-grammatical criticism and then applied its teaching in the Angolan context through the African hermeneutics of liberation's reading. The aim was to challenge the unjust structures perpetuating suffering and oppression, stripping out people's dignity as human beings created under God's image and likeness. The main aim was to identify available resources in Jesus' story which would address the prevailing quest for social justice in Angola.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Luke 18:1-8 has been mainly interpreted as an allegory of prayer and divine response. The Greek *'Εκδίκησόν με* "vindicate/avenge me" or "do me justice" is interpreted as an allegorical image for being persistent in prayer. However, Luke 18:1-8 is clearly focused on prayer, the pursuit of justice and faith. The gap identified is that little attention is given to the issue of justice in the interpretation of the parable. Therefore, this study aimed to engaging the parable in Luke 18:1-8 through the historical-grammatical criticism, to unveil Jesus's intended meaning and purpose which explicitly identify social justice elements. It also intended to apply the teachings of parable in the Angolan context of prevalent social injustices through the African hermeneutics of liberation's re-reading of this text. The problem of this study is therefore stated with the following questions: How does Luke 18: 1-8 relate to issue of social justice in the context that produced Luke's gospel? What is the implication of re-reading the text through African liberation hermeneutics in the Angolan context?

1.4 Research Objectives

The research was informed by the following objectives:

1. To assess the sitz-im-leben of the parable alongside the approach to social justice in Luke's context of production.
2. To carry out an exegetical analysis of Luke 18:1-8.
3. To establish the implication of re-reading Luke 18:1-8 through African liberation hermeneutics lens in the Angolan context.

1.5 Research Questions

The research was based on the following research questions:

1. How Luke 18: 1-8 does relate to issues of social justice in the context that produced Luke's gospel?
2. How do previous allegorical interpretations fail to unveil Jesus' intended meaning and purpose for Luke 18:1-8?
3. What can be the implications of re-reading Luke 18:1-8 through African liberation hermeneutics lens in the Angolan context?

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

Luke 18:1-8 has been mostly used to propagate a message of prayer. Very little attention is given to the issue of justice in its interpretation, despite being at the heart of the parable's teaching. Luke 18:1-8 in context suggests the need for further reflection on our knowledge and understanding of the Lukan Jesus' approach to social justice. This study was also necessitated by the fact that the plight for a fairer and just society in Angola can no longer be silenced. Social justice is one of the biggest challenges in the Angolan context today. Therefore, the findings of this study will contribute new knowledge to the contemporary interpretation of this parable by generating a message of liberation and adding theological value to the parable in particular and Luke's Gospel in general. It should also create room for further research, especially in the study of parables. It is also expected to be helpful in addressing issues of social justice and informing policy makers both in church and society the necessity of taking into consideration the plea of the oppressed and marginalized in their decision-making process.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The research was conducted within the field of New Testament's parabolic studies, focusing on the interpretation of Luke 18:1-8. The research did not engage on a deep analysis of Luke characterization (Narrative criticism). Rather, it focused mainly on assessing the Sitz-im Leben of the parable as told by Jesus, the examination of particular expressions and grammatical aspects which explicitly identify social justice elements, as well as the application of its teaching to the Angolan context through African hermeneutics of liberation re-reading.

1.8 Preliminary Literature Review

This section comprises the preliminary reviewed literature that informed this research. The selection of material for this work was informed by the proposed objectives, being the main criterion the relevance of the material to answer the main question of the research and accomplishment of such objectives. Therefore, under this section are included the following subsections: the quest for social justice in Jesus' ministry; Luke 18:1-8 from an historical perspective; and, social justice and the Angolan context.

1.8.1 The Quest for Social Justice in Jesus' Ministry

According to Westbrook (2009: 160), for the Jewish people and most of the Mediterranean societies, social justice meant maintenance of the existing socio-economic hierarchy, the preservation of the status quo – "as the privileges owed to each citizen as member of a family unit with a certain recognized socio-economic status." Westbrook (2009: 144) also observes that social justice was conceived as protecting the weaker strata of society from being unfairly deprived of their due, such as: the legal status, property rights, and economic condition to which

their position on the hierarchical ladder entitled them. For this reason, as stated by Finkelstein (1961: 103), as part of his divine mandate, it was expected from the king to guard against oppression resulted especially from abuse of administrative or economic power: "a principal function of the king was to intervene in cases of oppression, for the legitimacy of a king's reign was based upon a divine mandate, the terms of which included ensuring social justice in his realm" (Finkelstein, 1961: 103),

Jesus's society was clearly marked by socio-economic and cultural imbalances between different social groups, under the Roman rule. Very little concern was demonstrated for the poor and other social outcasts. According to Longenecker (2007: 41) the economic systems were deeply entrenched in ways that promoted the interests of the elite in detriment of the disadvantage of the poor and economically insecure. However, Jesus took these vulnerable and marginalized groups at the heart of his ministry and proclamation. Longenecker (2007: 41) also shows that by beginning his teaching and preaching ministry in the gospel of Luke, with a proclamation from the prophet Isaiah, in the Synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus shows a clear intimate connection between his ministry and the vulnerable people on the margins of his society (Luke 4:18-19).

Anders Noren (2021: n.p) observes that the gospels not only show Jesus association with the needy, oppressed, poor and other outcast (women, children, tax collectors, the Samaritans, and the sick – blind, the demon possessed). They also show Jesus' deep concern about abuse of power and the socio-cultural structures that perpetuates suffering and poverty; about injustice against the poor and outcast; and about poverty and its causes. "Jesus was concerned for far more than the redemption of individuals – he wanted to redeem the very powers that shape the domination system" (Noren, 2021: n.p). On the same tune, Longenecker (2007:64) states that

Jesus message in the gospels is not only a message of universal and eschatological salvation, but also a message focused toward redressing social issues such as poverty, redistribution of wealth, restoring people's dignity, and the status of women and other outcasts. He overturned the tables by radically dealing with the established 'social powers,' challenging the status quo: "Jesus' own concern for the poor went hand in hand with his opposition to those in the halls of power, both in Jerusalem and in Rome, whose use of the codes of honor and shame resulted in dramatic abuses of the poor" (Longenecker, 2007:64).

Longenecker (2007: 41-42) suggests that the miraculous healings, releasing of demon possessed, raising of the dead, the gospel to the poor, was a restoration of the dignity and honour of "those who found themselves to be despised within the ancient system of honor and shame that had entrenched much of the Greco-Roman world, including much of life within Palestine." Jesus exposed the evil of racial prejudice by fellowshipping with Samaritans and Gentiles and He even praised them in His teachings (Mat. 8:5-13; Luke 10:25-37). He not only restored women's cultural dignity, but he also exposed the ugliness of a patriarchal system, by befriending them. So, the quest for social justice was at the centre of Jesus teaching and preaching ministry.

1.8.2 Luke 18:1-8: An Historical Perspective

Dominant readings entitle the passage as the "Parable of the Unjust Judge" based on Jesus' description of the judge in v.2 "… a judge who neither feared God nor regarded man;" and v.6: "Listen to what the unjust judge says." As Weaver (2002:317) narrates, the parable depicts a judicial encounter in a certain city "ἔν τινι πόλει" between a widow "χήρα" seeking justice or revenge (*'εκδίκησόν με*) against her adversary or opponent, and an "unjust" judge "κριτὴς τῆς

ἀδικίας" who for some time refused to attend to her plea, but who at the end granted the widow her request. The narrative neither disclose what her suit was (money, land or any other issue), nor who her opponent was. It simply shows that she ended up getting the justice she persistently bothered the κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας for. According to Dickerson (2017: 1) apart from the linguistic and grammatical concerns and the selection of characters (a widow and a judge) and their significance, a more accurate understanding of the meaning of the parable is further complicated by its reception history.

1.8.2.1 Reception History of Luke 18:1-8

The history of reception of this parable has shown that until the rise of redaction criticism Luke's introduction and frame (vv.1, 6-8) have guided the interpretation of the parable. For centuries the parable was viewed as an allegory for prayer and divine response (Dickerson, 2017: 16). Through allegorical and *minori ad maius* or 'lesser-to-greater' hermeneutics the widow, who was supposed to be the main didactical character of the parable became an allegory for tenacious prayer, while the judge, who received more prominence, stood for God (negative image). However, recent studies have demonstrated that these interpretations seem not to capture the real ethical issue Jesus was addressing. Through these interpretations "the parable offered neither challenge nor empowerment other than that of spiritual warfare… The parable's challenge to the legal system is dismissed and Jesus' social critique and his interest in human relationships is domesticated into a teaching on personal piety" (Dickerson, 2017: 17; 46).

Church Fathers interpreted Jesus' parables mainly as allegories. Therefore, this parable was mainly viewed within the relationship between the church or the soul and God. So, the widow

was generally depicted as either the image of the desolate church awaiting the return of her spouse or the human soul seeking vengeance against her oppressors – Satan or heretics. The judge usually stood for the deity. St. Augustine for example, allegorizes the widow as the Church awaiting in apparent desolation for the Lord:

> The whole Church there is one widow, whether in men or in women, in married men or married women, in young men or in old, or in virgins: the whole church is one single widow, desolate in this world, if she feels this, if she is aware of her widowhood; for then is help at hand for her. Do ye not recognize this widow in the gospel, my brethren, when the Lord declared "that men ought always to pray and not to faint? (Augustine, 1989: 620)

Cyril of Alexandria on the other hand, allegorizes the widow with the soul, the opponent with Satan, and the judge with God. The widow represents the soul, "which having divorced her first husband the devil, is therefore persecuted by him as her adversary. On which account she prays to God, the Judge of injustice, because He condemns the unjust" (Cyril of Alexandria, 1983: 478). Building up on Augustine's view, Isidore of Seville (560-634) – Medieval Church, likens the widow to God: the widow is the "likeness of the Lord" (Wailes, 1987: 262). During the Reformation period, Martin Luther, like Augustine and other Church Fathers, argued that the widow was a representation of the Church: "But in the meantime the Church is sighing and groaning in the midst of danger and wishing for vengeance on her enemies: as Christ shows in his parable of the unjust judge, Luke xviii" (Luther, 1987: 484).

Starting with the German scholar Jülicher (1888), followed by Dodd (1935), and Jeremias (1963), modern interpreters of Jesus' parables shifted the focus, arguing that allegorical interpretation of parables by the early church was incorrect because it necessarily had the parable divorced from its original *sitz-im leben*. One of the main concerns of Jeremias became the recovering of Jesus' authentic voice (*ipsissima vox*) in the process of interpreting the parables.

Therefore, he suggests that parables should be studied in their original socio-historical settings. This has led scholars to recover not only the theology of the parables (Patristic Era), the parable of the Widow and the Judge in particular, but also the ethical challenge this parable poses: the quest for justice.

Weaver (2002: 317) suggests that this parable, as told by Jesus, is "a parable of the real world and no fairy tale," emerging "straight from the ugly and oppressive socio-legal world of first century Palestine." Reading the parable against a *minori ad maius* or lesser-to-greater hermeneutics, Curkpatrick (2002: 117) shows that Luke's interpretive frame shifts the focus of the interpretation of the parable from the widow to the judge, who is a counter-image of God, as the center for the meaning of the parable: "The widow's challenge to injustice and her potential achievement of justice are rarely the focus of interpretations of the parable, except by analogy." According to him, through *minori ad maius* or lesser-to-greater arguments "the widow is effectively eclipsed, and her actions allegorized to the point of eclipsing her stunning, audacious quest for justice" (Curkpatrick, 2002: 117).

1.8.3 Social Justice and the Angolan Context

There is no doubt, social justice is a global concern. Poverty, violation of human rights, corruption, power struggle, can be seen almost everywhere. Access to justice is, everywhere, a privilege of the elites. It is believed that the vast majority of the people experiencing extreme poverty are from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (Donnenfeld, 2020: n.p). In their 2013 research on the issue of Social Justice in East Africa, Coninck, Culp and Taylor (2013: 7) found out that justice systems are almost inaccessible to the poor. Most people do not know their rights and entitlements. Civic, social, economic, and political rights are frequently violated; women and children are persistently neglected and the gap between rich and poor is extremely wide.

Porter (2017: n.p) observes that the Southern region of the continent (which Angola is part of) has the highest level of inequality in the world. The region has the third-lowest life expectancy in the world. It has also been demonstrated by several scholars that despite the country being the second largest oil producer in Sub-Saharan Africa, Angolan population have been living in extreme poverty for decades. Santos (2015: 101) argues that infant mortality which rates among the highest in the world, a chronic drinking water deficit, also very high illiteracy rates, as well as periodic epidemics of infectious and contagious diseases such as malaria and cholera, characterize the social reality of the country. Frequent violations of human rights can be sensed almost everywhere, and change seems to take long to appear. Despite the great role in inspiring the struggle for independence, the church, which was expected to be in the frontline in the fight against injustice, has been discredited in many circles, being identified as aligning with the State, providing moral and social legitimation to the government unjust policies (Blanes and Zawiejska, 2019: 39).

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The current situation of Angola calls for a hermeneutical approach which in view of Gichaara (2005: 81), does not turn a blind eye to the concrete existential African situation. For this reason the African hermeneutics, more specifically hermeneutics of liberation, has been found suitable to respond to the main questions of this research. A re-reading and interpretation of Luke 18:1-8 through this hermeneutical lens sheds light so as to understand how the text does respond to the Angolans' struggle for social justice. As a theological reflection, liberation hermeneutics emerged out of the social and political context of Latin America in 1960s-1970s, and its major

exponent scholars include Gustavo Gutierrez, L. Boff, C. Boff, J. L. Segundo, J. Cambrine, J. M. Bonino and J. Sobrino. According to Boff and Boff (1987: 34) it "seeks to discover and activate the *transforming energy* of biblical texts."

In the African perspective, liberation hermeneutics is viewed as a hermeneutical process which takes the African context of struggle as the ground for interpretation of the Bible by the believing community. It is a circular process which is described in three moments – contextual analysis, theological reflection, and praxis, conceptualized by Gerald West as: See – Judge – Act (West, 2015: 1980). It is a Bible-reading process whose horizons is to lead the readers to actions that must change reality.

1.10 Research Methodology

The study applied the historical-grammatical method (chapters 2 and 3). As an inductive method, the historical-grammatical method uses a three-fold approach to the text: observation, interpretation and application (Hendricks, 1991: 349). At the application stage (chapter 4) the research employed the African hermeneutics of liberation as hermeneutical lens, applying the teachings of the parable to the Angolan context. Being basically a library research, in order to generate data, the study applied mainly secondary material such as books, journal articles, theses, internet material and other related publications. After the data was collected, it was analyzed using thematic analysis, according to the objectives and the main questions asked by the study.

1.11 Conclusion

The present chapter has mainly dealt with introductory issues including the background of the study, the problem statement, objectives of the study and the research questions, justification and

significance of the study, ethical considerations and scope of the study. It also dealt with the preliminary literature review, the theoretical framework, as well as the methodology to be applied in developing and answering the study's main question. What was discussed in this chapter was developed in detail in the next chapters as each of them was handled a specific research objective.

CHAPTER TWO: THE GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT AND THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN LUKE'S GOSPEL

2.1 Introduction

With the aim of examining the approach to social justice in the context of production of Luke's gospel, this chapter begins with an overview of the study of parables involving their genre, and the parables in Luke's gospel. This is followed by an assessment of the socio-cultural context, including gender and power relations, the political and economic, as well as the legal contexts of the first century Greco-Roman world. It then surveys the issue of social justice within the ancient context, Jesus' approach on social justice, and finally social justice in Luke's gospel. The chapter highlights Luke's approach wealth and poverty, as well as his view on women and widow.

2.2 The World of the Parables

Building upon Dodd's views that the parables of Jesus present scenes from daily life, Herzog (1994:53) believes that Jesus' parables are only understood properly within the framework a socio-historical and sociological analysis of their original context: "parables cannot be understood without first attending to the social construction of reality that they imply. This involves reconstructing, on a large scale, the social, political, and economic systems operating in

Palestine in the first century." This means that both micro (Galilean) and macro contexts (ancient Mediterranean society) must be scrutinized. On the same way, Luise Schottroff, cited by Zimerman (2015: 26) observes that parables can only be understood "by precisely situating the texts or their first listeners in a socio-culturally defined social setting". According to Oakman (2008:25) "the basic meaning of the parables must always be assessed *vis-à-vis* their original audience and socio-political context", since "the emergent context for most of the parables of Jesus is that of the exploitative situation of the peasantry in first-century Palestine, as result of the ideologies of the kingdom of the *pax Romana* and the kingdom of the Temple."

2.3 Genre of the Parables

It is consensual among New Testament scholars that using parables was the means Jesus applied most frequently to teach those around him about the character of God and His Kingdom, humanity and what God expects from them. When usually one hears the word parable the first thing that comes to mind is "it is a story." For this reason, Herzog (1994:53) defines parable as "earthly story with heavenly meaning". However, since it seems too simplistic to reduce a parable, as told by Jesus, to a simple story, many definitions have been proposed. But none has been able to fully cover the wide range of meanings as they appear in the Synoptic gospels. The Greek word παραβολή, from which the English word "parable" is derived, usually entails a wider range of meanings, from short statements where only one idea is conveyed to longer narratives conveying multiple meanings. They cover a variety of literary forms and genres.

The interpretation of Jesus parables has been a significant challenge from the time they were told by Jesus Himself (Mark 4:13, Luke 8:9). One of the main issues has been the definition of a comprehensive genre for the Synoptic parables. Traditionally, according to Zimmermann (2009:

167), parabolic texts were simply treated as παραβολή by early Christian writers, who apparently had no concept of subgenres, but yet had consciousness of the parable-genre. For centuries parables were interpreted as allegory, up to the late eighteenth century. However, from there on, the study of the parables took a different direction. Jülicher (1888) dismissed the allegorical interpretation, and categorized the parables into minor subcategories, namely similitude, parable (restricted sense), and example story, to which later on Rudolf Bultmann added another one, "figurative saying" (Zimmermann, 2009: 167).

In one of the most frequently repeated definition Dodd (1961: 16) states, "at its simplest the parable is a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought." This however has been criticized by Snodgrass (2008: 22), showing that a parable is much more than a metaphor or simile, and that while some parables are neither vivid nor strange (e.g., Mark 13:28), some are very clear, leaving no doubt about their application. In his proposal Manson (1935: 69) defines parable as "a literary creation in narrative form designed either to portray a type of character for warning or example, or to embody a principle of God's governance of the world and men." The question, therefore is: are all parables narratives?

Sacks (1967) cited by Herzog (1994: 45) in his analysis of the social setting of the parables focus his attention on what he considered to be the three most important forms of the parables: satire, apologue, and action. To this typology, Crossan (1975: 56) adds two others, namely myth and parable (restricted sense). However, these categorizations have been dismissed on the grounds that they do not fit within the larger purposes of the gospels' narratives. Therefore, following on

Zimmermann's (2009: 169) criticism of all other categorizations it seems reasonable to treat the parabolic material found in the synoptic gospels under a category of "Parables" even though it is still debatable if "Parable" can be classified as a literary genre per excellence. As a working definition, in this research Parables were treated shortly as "narrative realism in miniature," (a definition borrowed from Dodd [Herzog, 1994: 52]), with the ultimate purpose of awakening insight, stimulating the conscience, and moving the hearer to action (Snodgrass, 2008: 23). Parables are not just stories, rather "invitations to the audience; they are calls to action" (Mann, 1999: 146).

2.4 Luke and the Parables

In his account of Jesus' ministry, Luke has included a great number of parables not found in Mark and Matthew gospels, revealing that parables play a crucial role in his proclamation. It is not very clear the reasons for doing so. However, Mann (1999: 147) suggests that Luke may have done so because, first he wished to show the importance of the parables within the framework of Jesus' ministry, and second, he was simply filling in the gaps left by Matthew and Mark's accounts, since he most probably had access to parables' source unknown to Matthew and Mark. To these two reasons can be added the fact that Luke might have understood the power of parables in achieving his overall purpose.

Looking at Lukan parables within the overall purpose of the Third gospel, as expressed in 1:1-4, Lischer (2014: 94) observes that Luke's parables are more tightly woven into the larger narrative of the Gospel: "Luke integrates them more organically into the larger narrative of Jesus' ministry." This is expanded by Forbes (2000: 328) who states that "it is evident that each of the Lukan parables reinforces a theme that is prominent in Luke-Acts, whether it be the use of wealth and possessions, concern for the poor and marginalized, conflict, repentance, reversal, or

prayer". Through the parables Luke not only reveal Jesus (and his) sensitivity to the outsiders and marginalized groups, in line with the Nazareth Manifesto (4: 18-19), but also express a certain contrast with some contemporary Jewish views of God, particularly in the areas of attitudes toward non-Jews, concern for sinners and outcasts, and so on (Forbes, 2000: 328). In contrast to other synoptic parables, in Lukan parables God is presented in a varied and developed portrayal as one who is kind and loving of all people, merciful and compassionate, and yet the sovereign judge (Forbes, 2000: 328).

2.5 The First Century Greco-Roman Milieu

Since each parable was given in a first century context, therefore, it seems reasonable to grasp at the world in which parables originated from as they appear in Luke's gospel, in order to properly locate the specific scenes of the parable of the Widow and the Judge.

2.5.1 Socio-Cultural Context

First century Mediterranean societies lived under economic, political and cultural domination of the Roman Empire. The use of Greek and probably Latin, as official language, despite the fact that dialects of Aramaic continued to be spoken and heard more especially in rural areas and small villages, and the occurrence of Greek names can evidence to such fact (Chancey, 2005: 121). The family was the basic and central social institution of the Jewish society and the Roman Empire at large. It shaped economic and political relations, and was central to religion. According to Cohick (2013: 180) an average household consisted of parents and their children in the following order: the father was the head of the house, followed by the son, the wife, the children, and finally servants and slaves. Being a patriarchal society, the father held the highest

social and legal standing in the family and possessed power over his children and property (Cohick, 2013: 180). Each individual had and knew his or her specific status and role within the family. The leader of the house, according to Dube (2013: 85) had to ensure that all stayed in their places, since it was believed that political stability was dependent on the maintenance of this basic structure. For example, if women, children and slaves were not kept under control by the master of the house the political peace of the Roman Empire itself would be violated. As Meeks (1986:112-113) observed, "the household as paradigm of the political order, like the polis itself... is made up of people of different ranks. Some are fit to rule (free males, owners, and fathers) others serve (women, children, and slaves). Upset the order of home, people believed, and the whole society was in trouble."

The society was highly stratified with a small elite group having control over most of the land and holding most of the wealth, and also having the control of the armies and the administration of the cities (Stewart, 2010: 156). The vast majority, on the other hand consisted of peasants and artisans, slaves, and other marginalized groups, those unable to work or to support themselves due to illness or some other misfortune. These included widows, orphans, beggars, disabled, unskilled day laborers, prisoners, who estimated to be around 68% of the entire population (Downs 2013: 160). These, in the view of Rodriguez (1997:28), "suffered from a loss of dignity and had very few rights", since, according to him, they were not only socially marginalized, but also economically, culturally, politically and even religiously. These groups therefore took prominence in Jesus ministry within Luke's narrative (Lk. 4:16-21).

Honour and shame were the most dominant socio-cultural value in the world of Jesus and Luke. According to Kuhn (2015: 9) the quest for prestige and honour constituted a significant driving

force in the formation of social, cultural, and political identities and relations. Dynamics of honour and shame ruled in almost every aspect of daily life (O'Connor, 2019: 30). Lack of prestige or bad reputation, "which in [that] culture [was] more precious than gold", resulted in being deprived of access to the larger community and any vestiges of social status (Malina and Neyrey, 1991: 63). So, it can then be speculated that the judge's decision (in the parable) to vindicate the case of the widow and grant her the justice she requested, on the basis of ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με (that she does not end up coming to weary me out), might be informed by the principle of preserving his honor, his reputation, even if it implied to go against what he believed, "he had no fear/reverence for God and had no regard for man" (…τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος).

2.5.1.1 Widows and Judges

Widows

The noun widow is a 'gender-specific' term, which in the ancient world, according to (O'Connor, 2019:25), identifies not only a woman's marital but also economic status: "Bereaved of her her husband the widow suddenly becomes deprived of financial support, rendering her potentially destitute" (O'Connor, 2019: 25). According to Jones (1982: 244), widowhood was the most abhorred fate by women in the ancient world. Widows are often featured with a precarious and marginal social status; they are powerless, especially within a patriarchal structured society. The Jewish marriage contract (*ketubah*) did not give a woman the right to inherit, but the right to support out of her husband's estate (Scott, 1989:180). Since women depended majorly on men for protection, support, and a place to belong, after the death of their husbands widows could remarry (Ruth 3:1-4:17), but in many cases were not allowed to remarry,

being therefore, left normally with few alternatives: to return to their parent's home and live under his protection (Gen 38:1; Lev 22:13), or to remain in the husband's family in a very subordinate status and depend on her son(s), if she had, to provide her with the necessities of life and continue the family line (2 Sam 14:4-7; 1 Kgs 17:8-24; Luke 4:25-26; 7:11-17) (Weaver, 2002: 317). In the case when the dead husband had not left any male offspring levirate marriage was practiced.

A reading of 2King 4:1-7 shows that widows in ancient Jewish culture were often mistreated by the socially powerful and even sold as slaves to pay debts. Despite legal provisions for their protection, "widows are at the mercy of the powerful, who take their garments (cf. Deut 24:17), their oxen (Job 24:3), and their houses (Luke 20:47), leaving them virtually penniless (Luke 21:2-3)" (Weaver, 2002: 317-318). Under the ancient principle that marriage is not dissolved by death, as observed by Jones (1982: 244), they were expected to wear their mourning clothes for the rest of their lives; no bracelets, earrings, rings or ornaments were allowed, reflecting their low social esteem. In the book of Acts 6:1 Luke reports that in Jerusalem Hellenistic widows were being neglected in the daily distributions of food. If, according to Seim (1994:192), widows were seen as models of piety in the Jewish tradition, on the other hand Toorn (1995: 7), supported by Scott (1990: 143-144), points out that a widow in the ancient near East represented a potential threat to the established order of the patriarchal society. A widow could be too independent, a potential seductress and witch, and in short, a danger to the public order. As an independent woman, her role was ambiguous: "[I]n the public's perceptions, she is a monument of devotion, wisdom and chastity; on the other hand, she is known as an easy prey for religious fanatics, a prattler, and a woman of loose sexual habits" (Toom, 1995: 2).

Judges

Within the biblical context the term judge generally connotes power and authority (Weaver 2002: 317). In Israel pre-monarchy a judge was a ruler, military leader, and someone who presided over legal hearings. So, in times of crisis or war, they were expected to lead the people. They were believed to be chosen and commissioned by God to shepherd the people of God (1 Chr. 17:6), rescue them from their enemies and establish justice and the practice of the Torah amongst them. At this point they were expected to perform two main tasks: martial (military) and judicial, being their main task to obtain justice from their enemies, drive out their oppressors, and bring salvation, rest and peace to the land (Weaver 2002: 317). Hebrew judges were tribal leaders, recognized as wise and reputable individuals (Deut. 1:15). Their primary judicial task was to decide "righteously" on cases brought to them (Deut. 1:16). However, their decisions had to be based on "diligent inquiry" or thorough investigation (Deut. 19:18). They were given powers to strictly enforce their decisions, and a disregard of their rulings (as that of the priest) was punishable with death (Deut. 17:12).

According to Derrett (1972:180) "in Palestine the customary courts amongst the Jews were sought to be run on lines laid down by the Torah". However, under the Roman rule, though judges were still so powerful, the court system had collapsed to corruption (Harries, 1999: 154). As Harries (1999: 171) observes, the judicial system was a closed circle of ambitious elites driven by the desire to amass greater wealth and increase personal prestige. Judges were motivated by ambition, "especially those at the lower level: 'lowly *judices* needed powerful friends. Such was the way the system had worked throughout the Roman imperial history." Cotter (2015: 332) shows that being within the circle would provide prestigious contacts or wealthy connections. Even though Palestinian Jews would have expected the holy Law to be

resorted to for the solution of their legal problems, being most of them non-elites, they have been left outside that circle. Therefore, justice was often denied to them (Darret, 1972: 181).

2.5.1.2 Gender and Power Relations: Misogynistic Stereotype

It seems consensual among scholars that the Greco-Roman society was structured along class and patriarchal lines. Power was primarily held by rich men. As stated by Wordelman (1992: 391) "full participation in Greco-Roman culture, economics, and politics required wealth. Citizenship, which gave the right to own property and transmit that property to heirs, was granted on the basis of wealth, adoption of Greco-Roman culture, sympathy with the interests of those already holding economic and political power". Therefore, even women who possessed property would gain public recognition and consequently given leadership role (Dube, 2013: 88).

Apart from the economic aspect, power relations were also gender based, with women acting almost always in the periphery of the structures of power. Like women in general, widows are often described in almost similar way with other disadvantaged group, especially the orphans. They were generally powerless. According to Oakman (1996: 169), "in a highly politicized, redistributive economy, the powerless were the standard victims," and widows' goods and their household were often "prey for legal disputes" (Lk 18: 3; 20: 47). This consequently resulted into a "loss of adequate means of subsistence", incurring therefore, to "loss of honor or status within the community." Building on the same, Seim (1994: 233-243) states that being a woman without a man made the widow the prototype of the unprotected and unprivileged in Israel, which is a symbol that made her dependent on God.

Women, especially widows, were also accused of gossip and witchcraft, including in some New Testament writings. The phrase φλύαρος και περιεργος translated as "gossip or talking nonsense and witchcraft" (1Timothy 5:13) which Paul uses, shows that these activities were exclusively the habits of female and widows. It is also found in the gospels that the women's report of the empty tomb in Luke 24:11 is labelled as λῆρος "empty talk" (Kartzow, 2009:152). Scott (1990: 143-144) talks about gossip being seen as the forerunner to witchcraft with the objective of attacking the existing power structure, since it could give women power and influence. Kartzow (2012:152) echoes the same sentiments, attesting that gossip and witchcraft were seen in the ancient context as means to gain power and control for vulnerable and subordinated groups: "Gossip is often reinforced by witchcraft; gossip and witchcraft are, therefore, means to challenge the power structure; means for social protest." Therefore, these stereotypes limited widow's social involvement and made her the weakest side in power relations.

2.5.2 Political and Economic Context

Roman Palestine was a politically aristocratic society – ruled by a dominant political elite, and economically agrarian in nature, like most of other ancient societies. Three main social levels were evident within their society in terms of economy: "the rich who benefit from taxation or at least escape it; the hardworking poor kept on subsistence by taxation; and the destitute who have given up the unequal struggle" (Brown, 1976: 78). Politics of the Empire were politics of subjugation. Romans ruled the Palestinian territory through cooptation of the existing Jewish political hierarchy. They set up institutions to hold the people in subjection and to extract revenues from them (since the economic system was mainly based on a 3Ts structure: tribute, taxes and tithes), as well as measures by the heads of those institutions to ensure political order

(Horsley, 2014:28). According to Dube (2013:85), Roman representatives such as governors, soldiers and client kings were placed in the colonies to ensure that the subjugated did not rebel.

Frequent conflicts and struggles between the Roman imperial rule and the Jewish aristocracy on one said and the Palestinian ruled class on the other characterized the political context of the time. Tribute was one of the fundamental causes (Horsley, 1994: 31-32). According to Horsley (1994: 31), tribute to Rome was not only a source of revenue (economics), but also a means of political humiliation and subjugation, since "the Romans viewed failure or even slowness to render the tribute as tantamount to rebellion and retaliated with a vengeance." Cassidy (1978: 20) noted that the social policies and practices of the political leaders were too oppressive and discriminatory, and it is for this reason that Jesus did not only respond to the situation of the poor, infirm and oppressed, but he also responded to such policies and practices. Through his parables, especially in Luke, Jesus offers not only a glimpse into this world of the first-century Palestine, but also an inference of "the larger whole of which those glimpses are a part" (Herzog, 1994: 53).

So, it seems right to conclude that injustices and oppression at all levels were the order of the day in the Jewish context of First Century CE Palestinian world. Considerable disparity in wealth distribution was the main characteristic of the economic system, with cities tending to be centers of consumption rather than production (Downs 2013: 157). For this reason, Lenski (1966: 210) calls Roman Palestine an "advanced agrarian society", a society marked by social inequalities prompted primarily by institutions of government. Wealth and power, including land ownership, were concentrated in the hands of urban elites, particularly in Jerusalem, while the vast majority of the peasant population in Judea and Galilee, living at or near subsistence level, had to work

the land to pay taxes to support luxuries and comfortable lifestyles of the wealthy elites, mainly as a result of Herod's political and economic policies (Downs 2013: 160; Hanson & Oakman, 2008: 111). Another major characteristic of this socio-economic system was the phenomenon of indebtedness on which it was entirely based. The parable of the "Dishonest Manager" or "Crafty Steward" in Luke 16:1–13 seems to clearly attest to that. "Loan-sharks were a familiar feature of Palestinian agrarian life in the first century. When stocks of corn and oil ran out people were forced to borrow from the sharks at exorbitant rates of interest" (Horsley, 1994:86).

Taxes of different kinds, both official and unofficial were levied to the Jews, including tax on land property and the poll tax (tributum soli and tributum capitis) the Temple tax, tolls and many others. So, this taxation system together with other economic policies had a devastating impact especially on the peasants, promoting an increasing impoverishment of the masses. As stated by Brown (1976: 78), "there was widespread poverty and hunger. Many of the most widespread diseases can undoubtedly be traced to this condition". In addition, Knight (2005: 172) observes that "oppressive taxation wore down not just individuals and families but whole communities too." Inequalities between rich and poor were so sharp, and in consequence social protests became very frequent, including the guerrilla triggered off by the Zealots (a resistance movement).

2.5.3 Legality and Legal Disputes

Matthews (2015:323) shows that during the Greco-Roman period there were several shifts of authority in the law enforcement for the Jewish people. Sometimes foreign governments and their representatives enforced the law by imposing order, imprisoning offenders and carrying out capital punishment. At other times, the Sanhedrin council assumed main responsibility for the

administration of justice, and there was very little distinction between civil and religious law. There were several levels of judicial authority. Local courts were established throughout the Empire to handle local civil and criminal cases, such as dispute over land or property ownership, or financial issues, which were handled by scribes or lawyers – judges (Jeremias, 1963: 153). Acts 6: 8–15 shows that religious matters were handled by the leaders of the local Synagogue or by the high priest and the Sanhedrin. According to Josephus (1976), there were also higher judicial authorities to handle capital crimes and cases of treason or civil unrest (such was Jesus' trial, who was first brought to Caiaphas the high priest, and then sent to Pilate), which were based in Jerusalem or Caesarea (Jewish Antiquities 7.10.412–14). However, the highest legal authority in the empire was the emperor himself, to whom those holding Roman citizenship would appeal their cases, as did Paul, in avoidance of being prosecuted by Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 25:1-12).

As Gowler (2021: n.p) stated, "similar to the ancient law code of Hammurabi that established different laws for different groups of people, there was often a separate set of expectations for the wealthy and privileged, and a contrasting set of expectations for other groups" – the poor and unprivileged. Therefore, and according to Thurston (1989: 10), the legal position of widows varied "from culture to culture, age to age, and within the same historical period, from place to place" during the Greco-Roman period. Contrary to the Romans, the Jewish widows lacked freedom, and under the Torah, they were not qualified to appear as witnesses in court. They barely had any rights to initiate legal action and imperial prescripts since it was beyond a widows' responsibilities to represent their fatherless children (Ferguson, 2003: 58). Though there was a thin possibility for women to be made defendants in civil or criminal cases, they had preferably to be represented by a male (Grubbs, 2002: 62). So, as it will be seen in the next

chapter, despite all the legal provisions to give precedence to widows and orphans, the judge's initial refusal to respond to the widow's case in the parable, is a clear illustration of the structural injustices people faced in their daily lives throughout the Roman Empire (Gowler, 2021: n.p).

2.6 Social Justice in Luke's Gospel

As Green (1997:11) attests, Luke's Gospel "is not simply a narrative, but a cultural product…. It is itself a representation of the values and contexts with which it was generated." Therefore, "any attempt to dislodge the gospel from its own world will render it in some ways incomprehensible". The concern about social issues such as suffering and poverty, injustice against the poor and outcast, those who were being abused, violated and oppressed (women, children, tax collectors, the Samaritans, and the sick and demon possessed), take a very special place in Luke's gospel. For this reason, scholars agree that Luke's focus on social justice is one of the most notable themes of his Gospel.

2.6.1 The Lukan Jesus and the Quest for Social Justice

In the words of Marshall (1978: 830) "in his presentation of the ministry of Jesus, Luke calls particular attention to the interest that the Lord showed in outcasts; all the gospels give witness to this undeniable fact, but it is Luke who takes greatest delight in making it clear". In this gospel Jesus is depicted not only as a teacher, but also as a prophet of the poor, who travels around Galilee fulfilling the messianic prophecies, as it can be read in his response to John the Baptist's disciples: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them" (Luke 7:22). Apart from his great dedication to the poor and other destitute,

two major dimensions of Jesus' standing on the quest of social justice are highlighted in this gospel: Jesus' attitude towards women and his healing ministry.

In the words of Senior and Stuhlmueller (1985: 354) "more than any other evangelist Luke emphasizes Jesus' association with women - a stunning crossing of a social and religious barrier in the patriarchal society of his day." Writing on the same perspective, Gustavo Gutierrez (1973: 317-318) summarizes his view observing that "the attitude of Jesus to women represented, therefore, a real break with this distortion among his people and with the dominant categories of his time." Dube (2007: 361) depicts Lukan Jesus as the one who empowers and heals women who are sentenced "to violence and to the decease of gender injustice." Healing was another special feature of Jesus' ministry emphasized by Luke, more than other evangelists. Luke reports many healing stories which are particular to his narrative – *Sundergut* (a German word for material unique to a particular Gospel), as part of Jesus' salvation or social justice approach. Included in this category are the parable of the Good Samaritan (10: 25-37), the woman with a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years (13: 13-17), the ten lepers (17: 11-19), and the man with dropsy (14: 1-6). All these and many other healing stories show Jesus' real concern to human suffering.

2.6.2 Wealth and Poverty in Luke's Gospel

Although there are many themes and motifs in the Luke's Gospel, it is clear throughout the entire narrative that Luke's concern for the poor and marginalized is one of the major interests of the Third Gospel. Luke makes it clear that the poor and the outcast take prominence not only in Jesus' preaching and teaching ministry, but especially in his actions (Lk. 4: 18-21; 6: 20-24; 7:

18-23). For this reason, Luke stands on the quest of poverty and wealth has been variously interpreted. According to Moxnes (1988: 162) and Mary Park (2004: 16), for some, Luke intended to challenge the economic system by calling for a radical redistribution of wealth and power, while others believe that Luke's position was just limited to his specific audience, which were either poor and in need of encouragement (Moxnes, 1988: 163), or rich and needed correction (Karris, 1978: 112-115).

Evans (2011: 11) states that "Luke's gospel is in a very real sense the Gospel of the Good News to the poor." The extended use of οἱ πτωχόι "the poor" and *Χήρα* "widow" both in the gospel and in the book of Acts, shows clearly that this did not only take special place in Jesus' ministry but was also a very important concern for the Lukan community. Apart from repeatedly highlighting the plight of the poor through Jesus' words in his gospel, Luke also depicts, in the early chapters of the book of Acts, how the early community of believers were concerned about poverty and the case of the widow (Longenecker, 2007: 58). On the other hand, through a number of parables which include, among others, the Rich Fool (12: 13-21), the Great Banquet (14: 15-24), the Prodigal Son (15: 11-32), the Shrewd Manager (16: 1-13), the Rich Man and Lazarus (16: 19-31), and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18: 9-14), also known as "socio-economic parables," wherein Luke strongly expresses is position on the subject of possessions. In a very significant observation Marshall warns against taking the contrast of wealth and poverty in the Third gospel to extremes: "Luke does not present poverty as an ideal in itself, nor wealth as intrinsically evil" (Marshall, 1988: 210). According to him Luke presents a criticism to the rich's attitude towards the poor. So, Luke represents a radical message within the worlds of Greco-Roman culture.

2.7 Conclusion

The main task of this chapter was to assess the world that produced the parables of Jesus, especially the parable of the Widow and the Judge in Luke 18:1-8. Starting with an overview of the parables which included their genre and the parables in the Third gospel, it turned the focus to the world behind these parables through an assessment of the socio-cultural, political and economic, as well as the legal context of the first century Greco-Roman world. A short survey on the quest of social justice in the view of Jesus and Luke's gospel, as well as Luke's approach to wealth and poverty, and women, concluded the chapter. The next chapter concentrated mainly in Luke 18:1-8 by carrying on an exegetical analysis.

CHAPTER THREE: LEXICAL AND GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF LUKE 18:1-8

3.1 Introduction

This chapter deals mainly with the exegetical analysis of the parable. After translation of the Greek text, an analysis of the parable's background information is followed by the analysis of its literary context (general and literary setting). A verse-by-verse exegesis and analysis of the relevant theological and pastoral observations, highlighting the three main themes: prayer, faith and justice, was followed by analysis of the lessons that can be learnt from both the judge and widow – the two main interlocutors.

3.2 The Greek Text

1. Ἔλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν, 2. λέγων, κριτής τις ἦν ἔν τινι πόλει τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος. 3.

χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα, Ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου. 4. καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον· μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι, 5. διά γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον τὴν χήραν ταύτην ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με. 6. Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος, Ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει· 7. ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς; 8. λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ποιήσει τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἐν τάχει. πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;

3.2.1 Working Translation

1. Then He told them a parable so that they must pray always and not lose heart 2. Saying, there was a certain judge in a certain city, he had no fear for God and had no respect for people. 3. Then there was a widow in that city and she kept coming to him saying, 'avenge me against my opponent.' 4. And for a long time, he would not. Afterward he said to himself, ‘even if I do not fear God nor respect man (people) 5. yet because this widow gives me trouble, I will grant her justice [so] that she does not end up coming to weary me out.’ 6. The Lord said, listen to what the unjust judge says. 7. Will God not do justice for his elect crying out to him day and night, and be patient towards them? 8. I tell you that he will do justice for them quickly. Nevertheless, having the Son of Man come, will he in fact find faith on earth?"

3.2.2 Other Versions and Translation Problems

Three different translations were compared: the New International Version (NIV), the Revised Standard Version (RSV), and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). There are small variations between these translations, mainly about words' selection and phraseological construction, without affecting deeply the structure and the meaning of the parable. In v.1 the issue has to do just with the phraseological construction. *Then **Jesus** told his disciples a parable **to show them that they should always pray** and not give up* (NIV); *And **he** told them a parable, to the effect that **they ought always to pray** and not lose heart* (RSV); *Then **Jesus** told them a parable **about their need to pray** always and not to lose heart* (NRSV). NIV and NRSV identify Jesus as the speaker of the parable, what does not appear in the Greek text, while in the RSV like in the Greek text the discourse seems to be a continuation of chap 17, and the speaker is only identified as "he", *Ἔλεγεν δὲ…"* (then he told…)

The most significant difference occurs with the words *ἐκδίκησόν* (vv.3 and 5) and *ἐκδίκησιν* (vv.7 and 8). NIV translates it as "to get justice" and "to grant justice", RSV translate as "to vindicate", and NRSV as "to grant justice" (is more consistent than NIV). However, in terms "*ὑπωπιάζῃ με…"* in v.5 is the most challenging word in terms of translation. Apart from being a rare word in the entire New Testament (appearing only once more in 1 Corinthians 9:27), it's mostly employed in a metaphorical way. NIV translate it as "attack me," while RSV and NRSV translate it as "wear me out." As it will be seen ahead, this work uses the metaphorical meaning "wear me out" instead of the NIV perspective of physical attack. Finally, *"ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας* "(the judge of injustice) in v.6 is translated by NIV and NRSV as "unjust judge" and in RSV as "unrighteous judge". If attempting to the construction of v.2 and the fact that Luke uses in this text legal language "ἀδικίος" (opponent or accuser in the court), RSV seems to capture best the sense.

3.3 The Parable's Background Information

This section deals with matters involving the background information of the "parable of the Widow and the Judge." The section is modest in content dealing only with what seems relevant to the interpretation of the selected *pericope*.

3.3.1 Authorship, Date of Writing, and Audience Location of Luke's Gospel

According to Guthrie (1990: 114) strong external evidence from the second century – the later second century' surviving manuscripts – reveals that tradition had been established that Luke was the author of the Third Gospel. This tradition attributes common authorship to both the gospel and the Acts of the Apostles: "the Muratorian Canon, the anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke, lrenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all specifically state that Luke was the author, not only of the gospel, but also of the Acts of the Apostles (Guthrie, 1990: 114). On the other hand, internal evidences among them the possible unity of authorship of the Third gospel and the book of Acts, being Acts the second treatise from the same author to Theophilus (Acts 1:1), as well as the suggestion that the author was an eyewitness and a travelling companion of Paul, evidenced by the "we passages" in the book of Acts (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16) (Guthrie, 1990:115- 119). Therefore, Carvalho (2017:13) concludes that "a combination of external evidence and internal analysis of the Luke/Acts enterprise identified Luke as a physician that had not seen the Lord and a companion of Paul… Luke was from Syria, proclaimed Paul's gospel, was unmarried, was childless and died at an old age."

It has been a huge issue within Luke's scholarship to establish a specific date for the writing of the Third gospel. Based on the hypothesis of the unity of authorship of the gospel and the book of Acts, most scholars take the approach of setting a date for Luke in relation to the date of Acts.

Others, however, apply the documentary theory, trying to establish a relation between Luke and other gospels especially Mark and Matthew. They show that Luke had a prior contact with other documents especially Mark's gospel. Therefore, Guthrie (1990: 125-130) groups all possibilities into four major arguments: an earlier date previous to AD 70, a late first-century AD, and a second-century AD. However, a more plausible argument sets Luke not far from Mark and Matthew's gospels, neither earlier than AD 70 nor later than AD 85.

In terms of audience, in its preface Luke dedicates this Gospel to a certain Theophilus, referred to as *κράτιστε* (most excellent). Guthrie (1990: 109) suggests that this term was a title of honour and respect pointing to a holder of some procuratorial or similar office within the Roman Empire. It is traditionally proposed that Theophilus was a Greek and that he already had a previous contact with Christianity, even though Richard Lenski suggests that by the time he had not converted yet (Lenski, 1961: 11). What seems clear is the fact that if he represents a generic address, and especially if one attempts to the universalist character of this gospel. According to Marshall (1978: 38) Luke "is confessedly writing a piece of literature, no doubt meant for a wider audience than would be from within the circle of the Christian church." Marshall (1978: 33) also states: "That he wrote for an urban church community in the Hellenistic world is fairly certain."

3.3.2 Origin, Purpose and Audience of the Parable

There is no specificity about the precise setting of the parable in the ministry of Jesus. Therefore, different possibilities have been suggested about the origin of this parable. The analysis of the literary background of the parable has led some scholars to look at Ben Sirach 35: 15-25 as the prototype of Luke 18: 1-8:

[15] and do not rely on a dishonest sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him there is no partiality.[16] He will not show partiality to the poor; but he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged. [17] He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan, or the widow when she pours out her complaint. [18] Do not the tears of the widow run down her cheek [19] as she cries out against the one who causes them to fall? [20] The one whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted, and his prayer will reach to the clouds. [21] The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and it will not rest until it reaches its goal; it will not desist until the Most High responds [22] and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment. Indeed, the Lord will not delay, and like a warrior will not be patient until he crushes the loins of the unmerciful [23] and repays vengeance on the nations; until he destroys the multitude of the insolent, and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous; [24] until he repays mortals according to their deeds, and the works of all according to their thoughts; [25] until he judges the case of his people and makes them rejoice in his mercy (Sir. 35:15-25 NRSV).

The idea is that the parable in the mouth of Jesus was borrowed from Sir 35: 15b-25 and then transformed: "Thus it is obvious that some material from Sirach has been used, some transformed and some omitted" (Bailey, 1994: 128). According to Green (1997: 638) echoes of Sir 35: 15b-25 can be heard throughout this periscope, in which the figure of the widow similarly serves a prototypical function and God is portrayed as one whose justice is unquestionable. Based on the numerous similarities, Bailey (1994: 128) concludes that there is conscious borrowing from Sir 35: 15b-25. On the other hand, there is also a possibility that the parable has its origin from the same *stiz-im-leben* which gave rise to Luke 11:5-13 (the parable of the Friend at Midnight).

As said in chapter 2, and according to Forbes (2000:20) for Luke, the purpose of the parables is their function as action model. His ultimate concern is the moral behavior of the Christian community. Within the Third gospel it is only in 18: 1 (the Widow and the Judge) and in 18: 9 (The Pharisee and the Tax Collector) where Luke prefaces the parables with a motif statement (Hicks, 1991: 213). However, different from 18: 9, related to "how" to pray, 18: 1 is concerned with the need to pray and to pray without losing heart (ἐγκακεῖν) (v.1). This might have been motivated by the possibility that believers within Lukan community were denying their faith

under severe persecution (which many scholars testify was the situation at that time), and delaying of the parousia (Hicks, 1991: 213). Focusing on the socio-economic context of both Jesus and Luke contexts, Weaver (2002: 318) suggests that Jesus tells the parable to empower his disciples, while Luke retells it to encourage his community: "But it is into this story world of the judge and the widow that Jesus speaks words of empowerment for his disciples and Luke speaks words of courage for his own church."

3.4 The General Setting of the Parable

Weaver (2002: 317) observes that this story emerges straight from the ugly and oppressive socio-legal world of first century Palestine, a world of corruption and major power imbalances. The parable has its setting in a world peopled by powerful officials who practice injustice and powerless peasants who suffer the consequences, as observed above. The two characters in the parable "a judge" and "a widow," are stereotypically symbols of those who held power and those who did not, within the biblical world. The parable depicts a court with a single judge deciding cases, suggesting that the widow's suit was most probably money matter, because, according to Jeremias (1963: 153), fiscal dispute was the only kind of case that an individual judge could decide. As suggested by Jones (1982: 243), regulations in Mishnah called for three judges in cases regarding property. Depicting the judge as neither fearing God nor respecting people suggests that he was most probably a Herodian official, or a secular metropolitan judge.

3.4.1 Literary context of the Parable

According to Jones (1982: 242), the parable of the Widow and the Judge belongs to the reflections on last things and is most probably connected to Luke's exclusive source (*Sondergut*).

It is part of a long narrative known as "Travel Narrative," which puts together materials from Jesus long journey to Jerusalem, a trek that occupies a bit more than a third of the entire Luke's narrative (9:51–19:44). In its literary context this parable functions as the conclusion of an interesting eschatological unit and provides the transition to the following parable, which is also about prayer (Jones, 1982: 242). It is not very clear Luke's intention in placing the two parables side by side. But Luke's location of the parable in his narrative, following the teaching of Luke 17, discloses a strong possible connection to Luke's account of Jesus' eschatological teaching. This can be evidenced by the fact that in the preceding series of eschatological sayings (17: 20-37), he portrays the second coming of the Son of Man as an event happening suddenly and unexpectedly, and before it happens some might grow anxious (17: 22; 18: 1).

In terms of genre, the parable is about a very specific situation which calls attention to a particular judge and a particular widow in a particular city. Apart from employing past tenses, the narrative also contains direct discourses in terms of a strong-willed request from the widow and a nervous interior monologue from the judge (Jones, 1982: 245). The parable follows ordinary language of the court, and it is from this perspective that the terms ἐκδίκησόν, ἀντιδίκου, and ὑπωπιάζῃ are rightly interpreted. This parable is not just a simple story, it is a call for action. It is a call for justice and freedom from oppression, as suggested by the contextual meaning of these terms.

3.5 Grammatical Analysis

Verse 1

Ἔλεγεν δὲ παραβολὴν αὐτοῖς πρὸς τὸ δεῖν πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι αὐτοὺς καὶ μὴ ἐγκακεῖν,

Then He told them a parable so that they must pray always and not lose heart

The imperfect tense of λέγω (I speak, I say, I tell) is a characteristic way of Luke to introducing parables (5:36; 13:6; 14:7), even though in most cases he uses the aorist tense εἶπεν, such as in 6:39; 8:4; 12:16; 15:3; 18:9; 19:11; 21:29. The phrase πρὸς τό with δεῖν (the present active infinitive of the impersonal δεῖ) marks the necessity to do something, being therefore rendered as "in order to" or "so that." Since the term δεῖν implies the necessity of doing something, then it requires another verb that identifies "what needs to be done," and in the context of this parable it is προσεύχεσθαι (the present infinitive middle of the verb προσεύχομαι - *to pray*). Though the adverb πάντοτε implies the continuous sense of προσεύχομαι, the exhortation πάντοτε προσεύχεσθαι (*to pray always*) does not suggest intermittent or continuous prayer, rather, to pray 'consistently and persistently', again and again without "losing heart" or "giving up" (ἐγκακέω) – perseverance in prayer (Edwards, 2015:497). This view is supported by Johnson (1991: 268-269) who suggests that the context of ἐγκακεῖν (present infinitive active of ἐγκακέω – to get tired or discouraged), translated predominantly as "giving up," or "becoming weary" because of discouragement (2 Cor. 4:1, 16; Gal 6:9; Eph. 3:13; 2 Thes. 3:13), does not support any technique of "perpetual prayer," but rather consistency and perseverance in praying.

Verse 2

λέγων, κριτής τις ἦν ἔν τινι πόλει τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος.

Saying, there was a certain judge in a certain city, he had no fear for God and had no respect for people.

The Greek noun **κριτής** (judge) generally connotes power and authority within the biblical context (Weaver, 2002: 317). With exception of Acts 10:42 where Luke applies κριτής to Jesus referring him as "judge of the living and the dead," Luke generally uses the noun for local

magistrates (12:14, 58; Acts 18:15; 24:10). A judge in the Jewish context was meant to be a stock character (Johnson, 1991: 269). He was expected to stand up for justice and execution of the law according to God's moral standards: "Indeed, fear of the rule of God was expected of a judge" (Matsoso, 1992:92). However, this particular judge is here described as τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος καὶ ἄνθρωπον μὴ ἐντρεπόμενος (neither feared God nor had regard/respect for man), showing his moral decadence. According to O'Conor (2019:49-50) the language of **fear** (φοβέομαι) in the New Testament is frequently used in different senses. Here Luke uses **φοβούμενος** (present participle middle of φόβος – fear, reverence, respect) to emphasize the fear of God (18: 2, 4). To fear God and keeping his commandments was a mandated in Hebrew Scripture. Therefore, τὸν θεὸν μὴ φοβούμενος paints a very negative picture of the judge. The word **ἐντρεπόμενος** (present participle passive of τρεπω – put to shame) belongs to the vocabulary of shame, meaning, in the active voice, "to make ashamed."

Verse 3

χήρα δὲ ἦν ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ καὶ ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτὸν λέγουσα, Ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου.

Then there was a widow in that city and she kept coming to him saying, 'avenge me against my opponent!'

The Greek noun **χήρα** translated as "widow" means "forsaken" or "left empty" (Stahlin, 1974: 440). According to Thurston (1989: 9-10) **χήρα** originally meant "a person 'without' or 'left without'. In the New Testament **χήρα** can mean not only a widow in the modern sense of the word, but also a woman living without a husband, destitute, miserable, who lived in solitude. As stated by Kartzow and Maseno (2010: 141) **χήρα**, in antiquity and other Christian texts, was a

generic term which covers a wide spectrum of women: "virgins and women living apart from their husbands, divorced women and women whose husbands were dead are called widows". Both Thurston (1989: 9-10) and Curkpatrick (2012: 216) agree that the Greek term χήρα has social and economic connotations. It implies someone with "precarious and marginal social status, particularly within a patriarchal structure; she is powerless, a notion reflected in the Hebrew term *almanah* (widow) or 'silenced one' in society." Neither Jesus nor Luke tell much about the widow. She is only described as being in the same city with the judge - ἐν τῇ πόλει ἐκείνῃ, and that she was repeatedly coming to the judge, and action described by the use of an imperfect iterative **ἤρχετο** (from ἔρχομαι – to come), which indicates an action performed repeatedly by the same person. Luke's use of the participle **λέγουσα** (saying), implies that the widow was not just coming again and again, but she presented her request to the judge again and again. So, ἤρχετο…λέγουσα can be rendered as 'she kept coming and kept saying'.

In this verse, Luke makes use of the technical language of the court: ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου (do me justice against my opponent). The verb **ἐκδικέω** (to avenge in the LXX) in judicial process means to fight for someone's cause or to help someone to get justice by securing the rights of the wronged person or by punishing the offender (Marshall, 1978: 672). According to Freed (1987: 45) the 2nd person aorist imperative ἐκδίκησόν με (avenge me, do me justice) demands that the judge deliver her from her adversary (ἀντιδίκου) for the sake of justice to which she is entitled. The noun **ἀντιδίκου** refers to a legal opponent or adversary in a lawsuit (Hicks, 1991:216). So, Marshall (1978: 672) observes that "what the widow wants is not the punishment of her opponent but the payment of whatever is due to her". Therefore, the interpretation ἐκδικέω as 'to help someone to get justice by securing the rights of the wronged person' is implied here.

Verse 4

καὶ οὐκ ἤθελεν ἐπὶ χρόνον· μετὰ ταῦτα δὲ εἶπεν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, εἰ καὶ τὸν θεὸν οὐ φοβοῦμαι οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπον ἐντρέπομαι,

And for a long time, he would not. Afterward he said to himself, even if I do not fear God nor respect people,

The imperfect **ἤθελεν** (of θελεν – wish, want, desire) is negated with **οὐκ**, rendering the sentence as "for a while he did not want" or "he refused for a while." However, if the imperfect ἤθελεν is interpreted in the light of ἤρχετο in v.3, an imperfect iterative, it means that the refusal of the judge was a repeated action, he refused over and over again. According to Hicks (1991: 216), ἐπὶ **χρόνον** (for a time) is the only indication of time the text provides. χρόνον refers generally to time/duration (an undefined length of time). However, with the preposition ἐπί plus the phrase μετὰ ταῦτα (after these things; afterwards) which follows, it gives a temporal sense as "for a 'while' the judge refused", implying that an end is in view (O'Conor, 2019: 56).

Verse 5

διά γε τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον τὴν χήραν ταύτην ἐκδικήσω αὐτήν, ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με.

yet because this widow gives me trouble, I will grant her justice [so] that she does not end up coming to weary me out'.

Verse 5 continues with the judge's interior monologue as he now seeks an outcome. The reasons for the judge's next move are introduced by the combination διά γε (because). The infinitive τὸ παρέχειν μοι κόπον rendered as "to continuously bothering me" is considered by Green (1999: 640) a weak translation, since it is "neither the duress the judge was under nor the level the

widow's shocking behavior had reached in the judge's view." Therefore, he suggests a stronger word should be proposed, such as proposed by Johnson (1991: 270) "giving me such a beating." ἵνα μὴ εἰς τέλος ἐρχομένη ὑπωπιάζῃ με **(**she does not end up coming to weary me out). The main verb in this clause **ὑπωπιάζω** (ὑπό + ὤψ – face just under the eye) means, literally "to hit under the eye," "give a black eye to," in a metaphor drawn from boxing (Marshall, 1978: 673; Zerwick and Grosvenor, 1993: 253). It is a rare verb in the New Testament appearing just once more, figuratively, in 1 Corinthians 9: 27. The literal meaning of **ὑπωπιάζω (**giving someone a black eye) has to do with a physical assault on one's face. Many translations adopt the metaphorical meaning "to wear out" (Jeremias, 1963: 154; Grundmann, 1966: 345; Scott, 1990: 185). However, this is considered a weak translation by Marshall and Forbes (Marshall, 1978:673; Forbes, 2000: 203). According to Derrett (1972: 190), the **ὑπωπιάζω** means "*blacken my face*, that is, a 'loss of prestige' thus incurring shame and dishonor," based on a later use of the word and a common Oriental expression "to slander or destroy one's good name." This view is also shared by Johnson (1991: 270) who states that the term can also mean "to damage the reputation." Derrett and Johnson's proposals fit in the context of this parable, in the sense that the judge was much worried about his own reputation. Although the judge has "no regard for humans," he may depend on some sort of reputation to continue being a judge" (Johnson, 1991: 270). After all, his position as a judge relied on respect in the broader society" (Kartzow and Maseno, 2010: 142).

Verse 6

Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος, Ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει·

The Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says"

This verse introduces what some termed as the application of the parable (vv.7-8a). The narrator redirects his hearers' attention to the lesson to be learnt from the judge. As it was said in the previous chapters, many scholars argue that v.1 and vv.6-8 are not part of the parable proper (vv.2-5), rather Luke's addition. According to Hicks (1991: 210), εἶπεν δὲ ὁ κύριος (then the Lord said) may be considered as Luke's editorial notation in order to set the parable off from its application. "Luke's use of the post-resurrection title **ὁ κύριος** adding authority to the pronouncement" (Forbes, 2000: 204).

Ἀκούσατε τί ὁ κριτὴς τῆς ἀδικίας λέγει ("Listen to what the unjust judge says") If on one said Reiling and Swellengrebel (1993: 597) suggest that imperative **ἀκούσατε** (listen) here refers to what has been said, on the other side Freed (1987: 50-51) maintains that Luke has ἀκούσατε used by Jesus to refer to what follows. The judge is declared outright by the Lord as ὁ **κριτὴς** τῆς **ἀδικίας** "the unjust judge" (meaning literally 'the judge of injustice'). According to Hultgren (2000:256), the expression "unrighteous judge" represents a Semitic idiom in Luke's text, with a similar characterization applying to the "dishonest manager" in 16:8- τὸν οἰκονόμον τῆς ἀδικίας (the manager of injustice).

Verse 7

ὁ δὲ θεὸς οὐ μὴ ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ τῶν βοώντων αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός, καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς;

Will God not do justice for his elect crying out to him day and night, and be patient towards them?

The application of the parable is applied by means of a rhetorical question, with an emphatic negative future (οὐ μὴ) employed to accentuate the situation (Forbes, 2000: 204). Combined with

ποιήσῃ (an aorist active subjunctive of ποιέω – to do, to execute), the clause becomes a very strong imperative, rendering "will he (God) not certainly do justice…" or "Will not God *absolutely* bring about justice?" (Edwards, 2015: 499). According to Marshall (1978:673) "οὐ μὴ" construction is normally used to ask a strong question, expecting an emphatic affirmative "yes".

The combination of ποιήσῃ τὴν ἐκδίκησιν with the genitive τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν (the chosen ones/ the elect) links the verse to the use of the same verb in v. 3 'ἐκδίκησόν' and in v. 5 'ἐκδικήσω,' where in each case the accusative that follows draws attention to the widow's purpose (O'Conor, 2019: 67). According to Freed (1987: 52), **τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν** (the elect) in Luke refers to those who are constant in prayer, as the widow in her coming to the judge: "… whereas the expression 'elect of God' occurs several times in the New Testament … with reference to a select group, Luke never uses it that way. For him, Christ is 'the elect one' (23:35; cf. 9:35)." The temporal genitives ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός (day and night) presuppose a description of incessant or uninterrupted prayer. Reiling and Swellengrebel (1993: 598) observes, however, that the order of "day and night" reflects a Gentile idiom, while "night and day" reflects a Hebrew idiom (as in 2:37).

The understanding of **μακροθυμεῖ** in second clause of this verse καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς is much debatable and fundamental for the interpretation of the entire verse. The term **μακροθυμέω,** etymologically from μακρό + θυμος (long-tempered), can mean: to wait patiently, to be dilatory or slow, to be slow to get angry, to be long-suffering. It can also mean to be forbearing, especially in the sense of being patient with recalcitrant people, which according to Marshall (1978:675) is used especially of God delaying his wrath in the hope that sinners will repent before it is too late (Mat. 18:26, 29; 1 Cor. 13:4; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Pet. 3:9). In the light of

the context of what follows this verse, it appears that καὶ μακροθυμεῖ ἐπ' αὐτοῖς has to do with an apparent delay in God's action. The notion of "delay" is emphasized by Rogland (2009: 300) who suggests that the clause seems to derive its meaning from Sir 35:19, as an encouragement to continue petitioning.

Verse 8

λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ποιήσει τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἐν τάχει. πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;

I tell you that he will do justice for them quickly. Nevertheless, having the Son of Man come, will he in fact find faith on earth?

The first clause of this verse λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ποιήσει τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν ἐν τάχει (v.8a) is Jesus' answer to his own question in v.7a, emphasized with the conjunction ὅτι (that). As observed above, the emphatic negative **"οὐ μὴ"** construction normally expects an emphatic affirmative answer. And this is clearly visible in Jesus authoritative affirmation that God will do justice to, or will vindicate his elects (ποιήσει τὴν ἐκδίκησιν αὐτῶν) and that it will be done quickly or speedily (ἐν τάχει) (O'Conor, 2019:69). According to Marshall (1978: 676) the use of this phrase in the context of the Old Testament can refer to something which happens after a very short interval (soon), or which happens in a very short space of time (quickly), or even which happens before men are ready for it and when they do not expect it (unexpectedly). However, if the notion of "delay" is to be taken in v.7b, then the context suggests that "soon" (a temporally near action) is the ideal interpretation for ἐν τάχει.

The question in v.8b πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς; (will indeed the son of Man find faith on earth when he returns?) marks an abrupt shift in Jesus' teaching from faithfulness of God (v. 8a) to human faithfulness. Jesus seems concerned if the disciples can remain faithful amidst of tribulations and delaying in the response of their prayers. "The concern indicates awareness of the tendency of faith to falter as time passes – what will the Son of Man find when he comes?" (Parsons, 2015: 265). The expression ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (the Son of Man) has an eschatological character and seems to mark a link between this parable and 17: 22-37. "The Son of man is the eschatological vindicator of the elect" (Marshall, 1978: 676). The particle **ἆρα** (indeed) is an interrogative particle implying anxiety or impatience, acting here as an interrogative intensifier, which different from οὐ μὴ, expects a negative answer. As the application of the parable, "it is meant as an exhortation to take seriously the lesson of the parable that God will certainly act to vindicate them. Thus, an interval before the Parousia is presupposed, but the sense of imminent expectation is not abandoned" (Marshall, 1978: 677).

3.6 Theological and Pastoral Observations: Three Main Themes

Freed (1987: 40) observes that this parable is an excellent example of Luke's "imperative parables," which suggests what Christians must do. According to him, "Luke introduces an almost unbroken element of imperative parables into an almost unbroken tradition of indicative parables" (1987: 40). Therefore, the emphasis of this research has been placed in highlighting the "imperative" nature of the parable, focusing on the widow's ability to challenge injustice and to potentially achieve justice. Luke clearly states that the parable was told in order to spur the disciples to continue praying until the Parousia and not lose heart. However, as seen above, the parable also exposes the concerns for the marginalized and materially poor of their society

(widow). It has also been noted that Luke intentionally places the parable following the eschatological teachings that immediately precedes it in chapter 17, redirecting the disciples' attention on how to function after Jesus' departure and before the Parousia. According to Curkpatrick (2002: 110), Luke's text has two major movements, from prayer (v. 1) to the story of a quest for justice (vv. 2-5), and from there it returns to prayer again, but with eschatological features. Therefore, according to Weaver (2002: 318) and O'Conor (2019: 90), three prominent and interconnected theological motifs or themes can be extracted from the canonical telling of this parable: prayer, justice and faith.

3.6.1 Prayer

Luke introduces the parable by expressing the imperative tenor of the purpose of the parable. According to Weaver (2002: 319), in the eyes of Jesus or the mind of Luke (within the context of the Third gospel) prayer is not just a sedentary, cerebral, or even safe activity. Rather, it "is those sturdy audacious perhaps even outrageous acts that go by the name of faith." Prayer is a practice. "It can be considered metonymic for a person's dispositions and practices" (Green, 1997: 644). For this reason, Jesus is portrayed in the gospel praying at all times and in all places (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28; 9:18; 11:1; 22:41, 44; 23:34). "It is in the midst of prayer that Jesus is transfigured with heavenly glory (9:29), and it is through prayer that he receives the strength to face his death (22:43)." He also "repeatedly calls his disciples to their own life of prayer (6:28; 11:1-13; 18:1-8, 9-14; 20:47; 22:40, 46)" (Weaver, 2002: 319). In this parable Luke views prayer as the essential medium through which the injustice of the world is overcome by God's justice. It is through prayer the disciples find the courage to 'not lose heart' in the present unjust world (18:1), and the elect ultimately receive the justice which they long for (18:7-8) (Weaver, 2002: 319).

3.6.2 Faith

The parable ends with a rhetorical question: "πλὴν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθὼν ἆρα εὑρήσει τὴν πίστιν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς;" (When the Son of Man comes, will he indeed find faith on earth?) (v.8b). It is clear that Jesus was not asserting or communicating if faith should be found or not. He also was not expecting any answer from his audience. Rather, "He wishes to encourage his disciples to preserve that attitude of confident trust in God" **(**Warfield, 2015: 138**)**. Faith in the context of the Third gospel is described by Weaver (2002: 319) as the desperate digging through roof tiles or clawing through people to reach the healer on the other side (Lk. 5: 17-26; 8: 40-48**)**; the unimaginable trust to believe in a miracle sight unseen (Lk. 7: 1-20); "the utter impertinence to cry out loudly and persistently for justice (18:1-8) and healing (18: 35-43) until those cries are heard." In this parable specifically, it is meant a faith which sustains and manifests itself in persistent prayer with unabated confidence in the character and purposes of God **(**Warfield, 2015: 138).

3.6.3 Justice in an Unjust World.

The justice motif opens and closes the plot of Jesus' parable, meaning that a plea for justice is at the core of the parable. It is a story about justice seeking and justice guaranteed, which begins with the widow's earnest plea, Ἐκδίκησόν με ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀντιδίκου μου "Grant me justice against my opponent" (v. 3), and ends with the judge's decision to attend to the widow's request and grant her the justice she had tirelessly bothered him for, even against his will (v. 5). In an analogous way, even though through a *minori ad maius* or from lesser to greater argument, the

elect, those who tirelessly cry to God day and night for justice, have the guarantee that God will act speedily and grant them the justice they cry for (vv.7-8) (Weaver, 2002: 318).

The quest for justice is a pervasive theme in the Third gospel, after the vision of the Magnificat (Luke 1: 46-55) (Curkpatrick, 2002: 115). This is evident in Luke's concern for the poor, oppressed and marginalized throughout the gospel, as it has been demonstrated in this research. This is the gospel of salvation for all, with priority to those on the periphery. Salvation in Luke is not only spiritual, it takes also an economic, social, political, and even physical dimension (Bosch, 1991: 114-115). This really shows that salvation for Luke is not merely futuristic, rather it embraces life in the present, restoring the integrity of human life, revitalizing human communities (Green, 1997: 24-25), and it takes the form of justice for all. The need for justice, according to Weaver (2002: 318) is deeply rooted in the real, and often unpleasant, world of daily life. It is not utopia. A reading of this parable in its socio-historical setting (chapter 2) has proved it, and the syntactic analysis of the text showed that this is a great concern for both Jesus and Luke. This is emphatically expressed by Weaver (2002: 318) as she states that "vocabulary of justice *(*ἐκδικέω*:* 18:3, 5; ἐκδίκησις*:* 18:7, 8) runs like a red thread throughout the Lukan text, identifying the central concern both of Jesus' story itself (vv. 2-6) and of its interpretation (vv. 7-8)". Finally, as Weaver (2002: 318) would say, the message of the parable is that "God is a God of justice. And God will not fail to bring that justice into being for God's chosen ones. Injustice is not the final word."

3.7 The Judge of Injustice and the Abuse of Power

According to Wright (2002: 84) fearing God and respecting people is a phrase that is formulaic and proverbial, and abuse against both elements condemns the judge as dishonorable and shameless: "not fearing God is unequivocally negative in biblical terms." He not only represents a contradiction to the primary expectation, but also, his resolute lack of fear of God would make it almost impossible to expect justice in his judgment. In the Hebrew tradition he is a quintessential expression of resistance to Yahweh's justice (Curkpatrick, 2002: 220).

In his examination of the Roman judicial system, Harries (2010: 171) observes that it was a tight circle of ambitious judges (elites) eager to amass greater wealth and enhancing personal reputation. Non-elites like the widow were left outside that circle, which would provide prestigious contacts or wealthy connections: "'lowly *judices* needed powerful friends." For centuries that corruption went without public denunciation, since there was no internal adjudication of their membership, until Constantine exposed it in his edict of CE 331, which can be read: "The judge's curtain shall not be up for sale; entrance shall not be gained by purchase, the private council chamber shall not be made notorious by auction. … The ears of the judge shall be open to the poorest on equal terms with the rich." (Harries, 2010: 154). In agreement with Harries, Herzog (1994: 227) and Cotter (2015: 332) observe that the judge in this parable is epitomized as no exception, he represents the rule, well versed in iniquitous dealings using his position to line his pockets. "Totally self-assured and exercising a prerogative he presumes he has, he adopts the approach he does in resolving to maintain his ground against the widow" (O'Conor, 2019:83).

3.8 Injustice to the Widow and The Widow's Agency

The widow of the parable is victimized in many different levels: i) she is part of an androcentric socio-cultural world which discriminates her on the basis of a gender (female) and her marital status (widow); ii) she was expected to be protected by a judicial system which is now described as systematically corrupt and discriminates her on the basis of her economic status (poor); iii) she is victimized by an opponent (not identified in the parable) who takes advantage of her powerlessness to strip her of are means of survival (O'Conor, 2019: 95); iv) finally, and for her misfortune, it gets worse as she brings her case to a judge who admits by his own "having neither reverence for God nor respect for people" (v.4); he is an unjust judge, and for a long time he refused to attend to her appeals. So, she is a victim of an ongoing structural injustice.

Conventionally women in general and widows in particular were seen as captives within vulnerable and compromising situations. For this reason, the widow of the parable is traditionally interpreted as a symbol of individual non-public piety (Dickerson, 2017: 18). However, in this research she is understood to be a human being in a judicial situation seeking for justice against all the odds. According to Herzog (1994: 228), she is self-motivated, takes the initiative, and is unrelenting with persistence, the only weapon she possesses: "the case could be a life-and-death issue for the widow. She is faced with poverty and starvation if her rights are not respected. She has no male family members or kinship support; everything is in her hands" (Herzog, 1994: 228). She knows her rights; she knows that God's law is on her side. Therefore, like the woman with hemorrhage (8:43-48) she proactively assumes unusual responsibility for her own well-being, trusts in her own capacity, and with steadfast faith keeps coming continually until the judge's attention is drawn to her rights and is moved to action

(Green, 1997: 640). In her obstinate and resolute determination to achieve her purpose, she breaks all the protocols, the culture of silence, and other cultural boundaries that make are captive, and she speaks for herself.

This widow of Jesus' parable belongs to all ages and all cultures. She represents the masses – the outcasts of our society; "the vulnerable person at the bottom of the heap, whose urgent and continuous appeals are met only by endless delay (v. 4) and ongoing injustice (v. 6)" (Weaves, 2002: 318). The agency role Luke assigns to her is a model to exemplify and demonstrate the way to justice in an unjust world. It is the widow's tenacious and unwavering persistence what propels the plot from conflict to resolution (Weaver, 2002: 318-319). As Ringe (1995: 244) states: "the effect of the woman's persistence accomplishes: She shames him into action."

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the matters involving mainly the syntactic analysis and interpretation of the parable. It started with the analysis of the background information of the parable as well as its context. A lexicographical and grammatical analysis of the parable was followed by theological and pastoral observations, highlighting the themes of prayer, faith and justice, and showing that justice is the main theme of the parable. An intertextuality analysis with 11:5-13 was followed with analysis of the lessons from both the two main interlocutors in the parable – the judge and widow, concluding that the widow is the main pedagogical character of the parable, a character to emulate. The next chapter will focus on the application of the finds of this chapter into the Angolan context through the African hermeneutics of liberation reading of the text.

CHAPTER FOUR: RE-READING LUKE 18: 1-8 IN RELATION TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE ANGOLAN CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

Liberation hermeneutics is a circular process with three different moments: contextual analysis (see), theological reflection (judge), and praxis (act) (West, 2015:1980). Therefore, this chapter is divided into three main sections: the first analyses the Angolan current socio-political and economic context, that of corruption and impunity, and extreme poverty (see); the second focus on the interaction of Luke 18:1-8 and the Angolan context, with an incursion in the relevance of Luke's gospel in Africa (judge); and finally, the third section highlights some implications of reading Luke 18:1-8 through the African hermeneutics lens and of course the pastoral to be adopted by the church (act).

4.2 African Liberation Hermeneutics

Liberation is a very dynamic concept and it is manifest in times of desperate need. In this context it is understood as removal of all which keeps the Africans in bondage, all that makes Africans less than what God intended them to be (Nwadialor & Nweke, 2013:83). As seen above, African contemporary reality, that of bondage of several social-cultural, political and economic evils fostered by injustices, poverty, marginalization, ignorance, and exploitation, makes liberation a very serious and urgent matter to the African people in this twenty-first century.

Croatto (1978: vi) defines liberation hermeneutics as a way or a process of "re-reading the Bible from the standpoint of our own situation." It is an interpretive process which consists in reading the biblical text through the eyes of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized, with the aim of discovering and activating the *transforming energy* of biblical texts (Boff and Boff, 1987:34). From the African perspective it is a "critical reflection on the experiences of the African people down through the ages and a total commitment to the process of development and the building of a new social order, all in the light of the gospel" (Nwadialor and Nweke, 2013:83). As an interpretive tool African liberation hermeneutics takes the African context of struggle as the ground for interpretation of the Bible by the believing community. In other words, this is a hermeneutical approach that aims at presenting Jesus in terms of his intention to set Africans free from all forms of oppression. It is not just a reflection on the experience of the people but also a commitment to a practical process in building of an equitable humane society having the Bible as a yardstick (Nwadialor and Nweke, 2013:83).

As a cyclic process, conceptualized by West (2015:1980) as: See – Judge – Act, it begins with social analysis of a context, moves into a systemic analysis of the Bible, bringing text and context into dialogue, and then moves into community-controlled action (West, 2015:1980). So, its primary function is to lead the readers to actions that must change reality. As observed by Herzog (1994: 46-47) "Theo-praxis has to be the starting point and ultimate court of appeal." This means that the Christian message has to be placed in and evaluated on the basis of its practical application to the ethical, social, political and economic agenda left by Christ himself (Nwadialor and Nweke, 2013:86). The fundamental idea is that action is at the heart of liberation

hermeneutics. And action here, according to West (2015:1981) refers to actual action in a particular struggle.

Different kind of actions can be proposed by liberation hermeneutics which includes, but not least actions such as education, health and sanitation programs, professional training centers, community water tanks, orphanages, rehabilitation centers which can accommodate even women who have been abused, advocacy programs, peace and conflict resolution centers, and many other programs that could empower the people and generate funds and employment for the masses. It is important to understand, as reminded by Ukpong (2006: 275) that modern Liberation Theology, like African liberation hermeneutics, appeals to peaceful reformation and not violence. Therefore, in the context of this research the African church and the Angolan in particular, is expected first of all to empower its people through educating the masses as a liberative action; to reform the theological training curriculum; advocating for constitutional reforms for political and economic changes.

4.3 The Socio-Historical, Political and Economic Context of Angola

The current socio-political and economic context of the country seems to reflect its historical background as an independent Republic, founded in 1975, with the end of the Portuguese colonial regime present in the country for almost five centuries. The proclamation of the independent country was immediately followed by a period of civil conflict 1975-2002, and a post-conflict period, from 2002 to date. A one-party state political regime prevailed in the country up to 1991 with the inauguration of the multiparty system leading to the first democratic elections in September, 1992. A centralized economic system inspired on a socialist Soviet and Cuban model that included a high degree of state participation in the economy drove the

country's economy up to late 80s and early 90s with the emergence of the "open" market economy (Faria, 2013: n.p).

With a population between 30 to 33 million people in a territory of 1.246.700 km^2, and one of the richest countries in Africa in terms of mineral resources – the second largest oil producer in Sub-Sahara Africa (U.S. ENERGY INFO. ADMIN. [EIA], 2021: n.p), Angola is characterized by one of the highest levels of social inequality in the world. A vast majority of the population cannot afford their basic needs, while a tiny elite share among themselves the "goods of the land". Poverty, illiteracy, high levels of unemployment and corruption are among the biggest social evils bringing the country among the poorest in the world. As stated by Porter (2017: n.p) and Santos (2015: 101), most of the population cannot access basic infrastructure and health services; infant mortality rates among the highest in the world; periodic epidemics of infectious and contagious diseases such as malaria and cholera; limited access to public service such as birth certificate for children, and ID for adults; are all part of the chaotic reality. Unlawful deprivation of life; judicial inefficiency; forced evictions without compensation; limits on freedoms speech and press; official corruption and impunity; lack of effective accountability and prosecution in cases of rape and other violence against women and children; discrimination against indigenous communities, are among the most significant and prevalent human rights issues (USDS, 2021:1).

Like in other parts of the continent, societal discrimination against women and children are widespread. In a similar fashion with the Lukan context (chap. 2), women have their legal rights to inherit property negatively impacted by the customary law which in many places prevailed over civil law. In some communities, women and children are victims of abuse due to accusations of practice of witchcraft. Despite all the constitutional provisions, with some

exceptions women are still operating outside the center of power, generally holding low-level positions and lower salaries in the workplace (USDS, 2021: 21-22). The economy of the country has been almost completely dependent on the extractive industry (oil and mining). The already fragile economic system has been badly impacted by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which saw the prices of the main driver of the economy – oil, being brought to the lowest. As a result, it also reduced the country's capacity for importing goods in an economy which relay largely on imported goods, and consequently lowered people's level of consumption.

Politics of intimidation, exclusion and marginalization are the order of the day. According to Faria (2013: n.p) the relationship between the state and society is characterized by the existence of "an authoritarian postcolonial elite of rent seekers maintaining a state system of clientelistic relationships by virtue of parallel and unofficial channels." Despite the constitutional provisions for an independent and impartial judiciary, the judiciary is still the weakest link of the government, being kept hostage by the executive and its decision-making process interfered by political influence. In summary, most scholars agree that, simply putting, the socio-political context of Angola is that of authoritarianism of the political regime and the disenfranchisement of the ordinary population.

4.3.1 Forty-Six Years of Corruption and Impunity

Angola is one of the most corrupt countries in the world. According to the Transparency International – "Corruption Perceptions Index, 2020" Angola ranks 142nd out of 180 countries. In spite of showing a slight decline in corruption levels, compared to the previous year (146th in 2019). However, it is considerably below the average, compared to other countries. Studies

revealed that corruption is endemic in Angola and its historical roots can be traced from the colonial period. Speaking in the National Assembly, Carvalho (2021: n.p) stated that "Corruption in the country was installed in the organs of the Central Administration of the State, in the judicial apparatus, provincial governments, local administrations and defense and security agencies, having, over time, created branches and its own structure, with hierarchy and voice of command." Corruption in Angola occur at all levels, ranging from petty corruption (occurs at a smaller scale in small places like registration offices, police stations, state licensing boards, etc.) to grand corruption (occurs at the highest levels of government in a way that requires significant subversion of the political, legal and economic systems). It is prevalent, as part of the everyday structure of society – systemic or endemic corruption: "The corruption that became endemic became part of the agenda of the procedure of the public operation" (Carvalho, 2021: n.p).

Petty corruption is widespread in Angola happening mainly in form of bribery, best known locally as "gasosa" – soda (soft drink). As suggested by Badlam et al (2021: 1) "corruption schemes have been wide-ranging, including widespread petty corruption as part of the 'gasosa culture.'" Gasosa (soda) became the guarantee for accessing basic public services including health, education, justice, and other administrative services. Levying additional charges for bureaucratic services became the norm for public servants (Santos, 2018: 3). Corruption in high offices – grand corruption, is also factual and rampant, involving high ranking government officials including the presidency. In his 2012 report on corruption in Angola, Morais (2012: 26) showed through documented evidence that corruption in the presidency had reached unsustainable levels, posing a major threat to the sovereignty of the country: "the Presidency of the Republic of Angola has become the site of shady business deals, a fact that has consequences

for citizens' freedom and development, as well as for the country's political and economic stability." This is reinforced by Transparence International – Global Integrity 2018, showing that Government and business elites are closely interlinked in Angola: "conflicts of interest extend to state-owned enterprises, where government ministers and other high officials commonly and openly own interests in companies regulated by their respective ministries."

Statements by powerful individuals (including the then president and his ministers) such as: "A goat eats where it is tied up" (*o cabrito come onde está amarrado*); "A soda is the understanding between the officer and the citizen" (*A gososa e o entendimento entre o polícia e o cidadão*); "That who distributes but does not keep the best part, is either dumb or does not understand the business" (*Quem parte e reparte, e não fica com a melhor parte, é porque não entende da arte*); "People do not live on salary alone" (*Ninguém vive só do salário*). These, according to Santos (2018: 3-4), were taken as an authorization to perform unlawful acts, and the legitimation and indirect institutionalization of corruption by both ordinary citizens and those in high ranking positions in public institutions.

Finally, it is believed that impunity is one of the main reasons for the prevalence of such levels of corruption in the country. As suggested by Santos (2018: 1), corruption in Angola became highly rewarding since people involved in acts of corruption are not lawfully punished, encouraging those who are not yet into such an inhumane behavior. On the same note Sakala (2021: n.p) states that "impunity flourished within the superstructure of the one-party system, unlawfully enriched a minority of Angolans and created, for decades, strong tentacles abroad and internal complicity in the basis of personal interests." Therefore, it seems to have become a generalized belief that misappropriation of public funds is very normal. "At a certain stage in the

history of the country, the abnormal became normal and the immoral was a pandemic, but a minority with the political power told the populations that everything was normal and moral" (Neto, 2021: n.p). Very few, among the so called "big fishes" have been brought to book for malpractices of corruption, since it is done in a selective and discriminatory manner – selective impunity.

4.3.2 Corruption and poverty

According to Transparency International (2020: n.p) apart from eroding trust, weakening democracy and hampering economic development, corruption exacerbates inequality, poverty and social division. In Angola, associated to these issues are inequities in the judicial system, nepotism, cronyism, and patronage networks (Badlam et al, 2021: 1). As observed by Andrade (2021: n.p), the socio-economic ideologies implemented by the political regime, in power for almost five decades, "led to the almost absolute impoverishment of Angolans." The situation, however, has been aggravated by the global socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. As stated by Guterres, the UN Secretary-General (2020:12), the Covid-19 pandemic has created opportunities for corruption: "anger and frustration have exploded against corrupt leaders and governments... Among these deep concerns, the Covid-19 crisis creates additional opportunities for corruption."

According to the Angolan Instituto Nacional de Estatística – INE (National Institute of Statistics) 2020's Report, around 54.0% of the Angolan population live in multidimensional poverty,

meaning that they are deprived from the basic social services which include, among others, health, education, quality of life and employment (INE, 2021:45). In terms of monetary poverty around 40.6% (about 41 out of every 100 Angolans) have a level of consumption below the poverty line, less than Usd 1.00 per day (INE, 2021:15). An extremely huge gap exists between a tiny rich elite and a vast majority poor, who are "often ignored or despised both by false discourses and by the unfair practices of the State policies and the elite of predators" (Santos, 2015: 103). These people live without a minimum of dignity, calling for immediate reforms to the country's social context. Poverty in Angola is not merely an academic subject but the ugly existential reality.

4.3.3 The Church: A Voice of the Voiceless and the Culture of Silence

A culture of silence has been installed within the Angolan context throughout different phases of the history of the country. Fear of direct reprisal or retaliation has kept people from expressing their sentiments and fully exercising their rights, not only during the colonial period, but even after independence, since an authoritarian government choose to perpetuate some injustices practiced by the colonialists. A criticism of the social situation leads someone to be identified as opposing the regime, resulting in retaliation (Martins and Cardina, 2019: 59). Very recent cases with religious leaders, especially from the Roman Catholic Church, can attest to that. Scrutiny by the political regime, at all levels of public pronouncement (including sermons and homilies) led most of the people to maintain a culture of silence for fear of being reprimanded.

For decades the church has actively spoken on behalf of the most vulnerable on the social margins. According to Jensen and Pestana (2010: 42) churches in Angola (traditional Catholic

and Protestant) have maintained their critical voice and work towards creating an engaged citizenship. On the other hand, however, in his criticism Jensen (2018: 21) observes that the Angolan church has demonstrated the capacity for peace and addressing the social issues of the post-war period through an ecumenical movement. But the church has been facing some challenges in this new dispensation, not being able to effectively advocate its positions vis-à-vis the government. Acts of corruption including misappropriation of church funds and property (land, houses, cars, etc.), power struggle and tribalism, have become common within the church (Cristóvão, 2017: n.p). Discrimination against women, especially single mothers who in many places are still not allowed to sit at the Lord's Table, to baptize their children, or to take leadership roles, is also part of the reality of the church.

When it was expected that the church would have the plight and the liberation of the oppressed the topmost in their agenda, many of its leaders choose to sideline with the oppressor and become part of the elites against the poor and outcast. This is reinforced by Blanes and Zawiejska (2019: 39), stating that the church in Angola has been discredited in many circles, being identified as aligning with the State, providing moral and social legitimation to the government's unjust policies. The "Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). However, some are preaching it to exploit the poor instead of setting them free both spiritually and physically. The Angolan church is therefore called to move its theological discourse beyond this. She must not only question the roots of poverty and injustices but also promote actions to empower the poor and marginalized to speak by themselves against injustice and poverty, and any other kind of social evil hindering them to live life in its fullness.

4.4 The widow and the Judge in the Angolan Socio-Political Context

As observed above, the majority of Jewish people in Jesus' time were in the lower strata of the economy, under the Roman rule. Poverty, oppression and hopelessness were their constant companions. Most people were born into their social and economic positions for life with little chance for improvement (Park 2004: 3). Responsive to the needs of his listeners in their circumstances, Luke challenges the wealthy to greater awareness and responsibility for the poor (Park 2004:16). Like first century Palestine, contemporary Angolan social-economic and political context is one marked by a huge disparity between a small minority rich elite and a majority poor, who consequently operate on the margins of the society. Luke's gospel, therefore, becomes very relevant for its potential to speak particularly to the Angolan readers, through the African hermeneutics of liberation lens, focusing especially on the need to liberate from all forms of oppression. Luke also challenges Angolan leaders, both in the government and in the church, to urgently deal with the issues of poverty and oppression and its causes.

Therefore, the Parable of the Widow and the Judge offers a great opportunity for the country's government, political and religious leaders, represented here by the "judge", to re-examine their relationship with the people, especially the oppressed citizens, represented here by the "widow". As it was seen above, this relationship is that of exploitation, indifference and abuse of political and religious power. The socio-political regime – Marxism and Leninism – adopted by the pot-colonial government (Faria, 2013: n.p), which seems to prevail (indirectly) up to now shows clearly the lack of fear for God by the political leaders. Likewise, the behavior of many religious leaders also shows clearly that like the judge they do not fear God and consequently have no respect to people. Within the context which produced this parable such a behavior paints a very negative picture of the judge (political and religious leaders) (O'Conor, 2019:49), rendering him as a shameless person, unworthy of any kind of honour. By not fearing God and not respecting people, the judge

demonstrates strength, and pride above all, but lack of wisdom. The book of Proverbs 1:7 shows that to fear God is the beginning of wisdom and to despise wisdom is foolishness (paraphrased). Like the judge, Angolan leaders both political and religious are really proud of themselves, who cannot see beyond their own stomachs. They incarnate the true image of the judge, lavishing luxury at the cost of the "widow's" (marginalized people) misery. Therefore, the Angolan people are here called, like the widow, to free themselves from the "spirit of fear" that has hold them back for decades and incarnate the widow's boldness, and speak up their own minds. There is no "male relative" who can speak for the Angolan people, unless they use the power they have to overturn the tables. It is in Angolan people's power to **ὑπωπιάζω** the judge (destroy the judge's reputation) using all the available resources, but especially their right (power) to vote and elect their public and even religious representatives. According to Park (2004:16) Luke presents Jesus as "the fulfillment of God's purpose to restore men and women to their proper dignity." So, by presenting Jesus on a mission of restoring people's hope (Gaula, 2012: 166), Luke unveils a new world of possibilities for the marginalized people in Angola.

4.4.1 Luke 18:1-8 and the Quest of Social Justice in Angola – A Liberative Reading

How would an Angolan audience have heard the parable of the Widow and the Judge? Traditionally Jesus' parables have been interpreted from a Western androcentric perspective. However, with the emergence of different hermeneutics perspectives, dominant theological perspectives have been looked at with suspicions, as being used to serve the interests of the oppressors. Referring specifically to Luke 18: 1-8, Dickerson (2017: 17) observes that by reading this parable as an allegory of prayer and divine response, traditional readings leave unremarked opportunities for interrogating stereotypes of gender, social roles, and structures of power. As a

result, they keep on victimizing women and other marginalized. So, "the challenge of the parable is eliminated," and "reading communities miss the chance to receive the unconventional insights from this unconventional story" (Dickerson, 2017:18). For this reason, Angolan readers are to challenge traditional readings of this parable, not because they are not right, but because they unfortunately do not empower them, denying them the golden opportunity to change their destiny. These readings will continually keep them as victims without a chance to open their eyes to reclaim their full citizenship and liberate themselves. They are invited to read this parable with a perspective of receiving insights to empower them against social and economic injustices, and this is what can happen by re-reading this parable through the African hermeneutics of liberation lens.

According to Meleshko (2013: 65) issues of justice and the right attitude to the poor and oppressed, to poverty and human rights provoke believers to read the Bible with the purpose of finding answers to the hard questions of life. Therefore, a liberative reading of Luke 18:1-8, through the African hermeneutics lens in the Angolan context consists in re-reading this parable in a way that the Angolan readers are empowered and influenced by the power of the Gospel to be actively involved in a life-transforming mission, which brings forth hope and justice to the Angolan communities, especially the poor and marginalized. Through this reading the reader not only see how the Lukan Jesus addressed the issue of injustice, but also how this parable is applicable to their local social-political and religious context, that of oppression, poverty and marginalization.

The current context of Angola is in many ways an authentic picture of Luke's world. Almost five decades of independence all the former oppressive structures are still operating effectively in the country. As Blanes (2019: 220) attests, the country has embarked in a process of degeneration,

"going back to the inequalities, injustice and exploitation proper of colonial times, in becoming the very thing they fought against in the liberation wars." Therefore, in line with Matsoso's (1982:105) argument, Luke 18: 1-8 becomes a source of renewed hope for the suffering people in Angola. The widow's victory teaches the Angolan people that justice delayed is not justice denied. However, patience alone is not enough to destroy the established status quo. The boldness of the widow and the ability to use the very small resources available, are crucial for the Angolan people to get out of this battle victorious. Jesus guarantees that justice shall be served to those who cry to God day and night (v. 7), as long as they persistently pursue their endeavor without losing heart (v. 1). Injustice will not prevail. The widow's unrelenting and persistent pursue for justice from an unjust judge becomes "a paradigm for how we should unrelentingly pursue justice for those denied justice in our society, with a reminder that justice should not only be fair and equitable; it should be compassionate and restorative" (Gowler, 2021: n.p).

4.5 Practical Implications of Re-Reading Luke 18:1-8 in the Angolan Context

In views of Herzog (1994: 29) and Oakman (2008:172–173) the parables of Jesus despite providing a picture of the Palestinian context under the Roman rule, raise awareness and expose the ugly face of the exploitation and settings of social oppression of the peasantry by the elite, calling into question the established status quo. For this reason, Herzog (1994: 29) suggests that Jesus' parables "fulfill a liberationist-educational function for the first listener by becoming a reflection of and analytic instrument for societal reality." Therefore, the practical implications of re-reading Luke 18: 1-8 through the African hermeneutics lens in the Angolan context are, above all, the text to speak to the hearts of the Angolan people and offer them an opportunity to construct a biblical model to curb injustices in their own context. Angolans need the power to

speak by themselves against the social evils which keep on enslaving them in their own land. Like the widow, Angolan people are expected to not grow weary, not to give up, but to stand firm, to be persistent in their pursuit for justice and freedom from all forms of evil and oppression. Reading through the African hermeneutics of liberation lens, this text appears pressingly relevant to the Angolan situation. The argument here is that by using African hermeneutics of liberation as hermeneutical lens, the Angolan Church can recover Luke's holistic view of salvation and so expand its limited theological praxis to better reflect the mission of Jesus. In this way, the Angolan church will be equipped to exercise the holistic gospel that is transformative for the whole Angolan community, in particular the oppressed and marginalized.

A re-reading of Luke 18: 1-8 in the Angolan context is expected to raise awareness and expose the ugly face of human exploitation and all the oppressive structures hindering the majority of Angolans to live life in its fullness. This approach rejects the metaphorical identification of the judge with God or a counter-image of God, but rather, like Herzog (1994: 46) suggests, as a representative of an unjust society where people like them exploit and oppress the poor. Consequently, this is will provoke the Angolan readers to read the Bible with the purpose of finding the right answers to their current situation and to question the established status quo. Not speculative answers, but practical ones to be practiced by every believer at the basic communities in their daily lives (Meleshko, 2013: 65). By challenging Angolan political and religious leaders and their practices, the parable of the Widow and the Judge becomes a call to political and economic repentance. Reconciliation with God and others is an imperative in the current context of the country. Contextualizing the words of Buffel (2010: 7) theological reflection and pastoral actions in the country’s context cannot afford to proceed unchallenged with their usual apathy towards the socio-economic and political conditions and the plight of the

poor and marginalized. The church is therefore called to not only *reflect* but *do* theology. Finally, contextualizing Boff and Boff (1987:34) words, re-reading of Luke 18: 1-8 from the standpoint of the Angolan situation will unveil and activate the *transforming energy* of the parable and consequently compel them to the way of liberation.

4.5.1 Persistence pays

As said above, the justice motif opens and closes the plot of Jesus' parable (vv.2-5). However, the widow's tenacious and unwavering persistence is what propels the plot from conflict to resolution (Weaver, 2002:318-319). The parable tells that the widow kept coming to the judge seeking justice "ἐκδικέω" against her opponent (v. 3). For a time the judge kept on refusing. But she didn't quit until the judge decided to take action. He says that the widow keeps bordering him, and therefore, he is concerned that she would damage his reputation "ὑπωπιάζω" by constantly coming (v. 5). At the end, through the widow's tenacious persistence the judge reacts to her appeals. As summarized by Penny (2015: 740), "She annoys him until he finally decides to give in just to get rid of her." It is clear that he acts neither out of love for God nor out of love for neighbor, since he neither feared God nor had respect for people (vv.2 and 4) but out of pure selfishness – his own reputation.

In view of O'Conor (2019: 86) the way Luke draws out the inner dynamic of the parable reveals how skilful the widow becomes in navigating her difficult course through this crisis. On the same note, Schottroff (2006: 192) observes that it is the widow's persistence that draws the judge's attention to her rights. She acknowledges that her obstinate persistence is possible because she knows that God's law is on her side. She, therefore, "becomes the central prime motivator and accomplisher, an instructor no less, demonstrating what is essential to get justice in an unjust

world." (Schottroff, 2006: 192) She overcomes patriarchal constraint and impels the judge to administer justice. As Ringe (1998: 244) observes, "the effect of the woman's persistence accomplishes." It is those who endure who will rejoice at the end (Marshal, 1978: 672). So, has it can be seen, she thickens her persistence with the ability to use skillfully the sparing resources available to her, as well as her boldness (character), and accomplishes her mission: justice is granted to her.

4.6 Conclusion

The main task of this chapter was to highlight the implications of a liberative re-reading Luke 18:1-8 in the Angolan context through the African hermeneutics lens. The chapter was divided into three main sections, corresponding to the three different moments of hermeneutical circle in liberation hermeneutics. The first section focused on the analysis of the Angolan current socio-political and economic context; the second, on the interaction of Luke 18:1-8 and the Angolan context and finally, the third on the implications of a liberative re-reading Luke 18:1-8 through the African hermeneutics. It has found out that this liberative re-reading activates the transforming energy of the parable, and consequently empower the Angolan people to speak by themselves against social and economic injustices. The next chapter focus on the findings of the research, conclusion and further recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter embarked on re-reading Luke 18:1-8 in the Angolan context though the African Hermeneutics lens with a liberative perspective. This chapter, however, highlights the summary of the research findings as well as the conclusions of the research, and finally points out the further recommendations of the study.

5.2 Summary of the Research Findings

Through the historical criticism and within the limits of the first objective and the respective assumption, the study sought to access the *sitz-im-leben* of Luke 18: 1-8 in order to examine the approach to social justice in Luke's context of production – a reading behind the text. The study found out that the world behind the parable was dominantly a peasant society, economically

agrarian in nature and politically aristocratic under the Roman Imperial rule. It was a world peopled by powerful officials, like the judge, who practiced injustice and powerless peasants, like the widows who suffered the consequences. Injustice, oppression, corruption and major power imbalances at all levels were the order of the day, resulting in extreme poverty. The ugly and oppressive justice system was almost inaccessible to the poor, marginalized and outcasts, with a lot of corruption within the court chambers. Tribute – a symbol of oppression and exploitation – was clearly a focal point of fundamental political-economic-religious conflicts between Jewish peasants and elites.

Through the historical-grammatical analysis, and guided by the second objective and the assumption therein, the research found out, in agreement with Dickerson (2017: 1), that Luke 18: 1-8, the parable of the Widow and Judge, is a problem text. The detailed analytical exegesis of the text revealed the complexity of the exegetical questions that are addressed in the scholarship on this text. The grammatical syntax and vocabulary revealed that Luke makes use of technical language of the court, especially in v.3: ἐκδικέω, ἀντιδίκου. The occurrence of vocabulary of justice throughout the text, ἐκδικέω (vv. 3 and 5), ἐκδίκησις (vv.7 and 8) shows that the justice motif is at the core of the parable. It opens and close the plot of Jesus' parable. One of the most contentious Greek term ὑπωπιάζω (giving someone a black eye) has frequently been used literally or metaphorically with connotations of physical assault on one's face. However, it has been found that the term has a connotation of "to slander or destroy one's good name." This led to the conclusion that the judge is moved by fear of ruining his own reputation. Finally, three prominent and interconnected theological motifs were identified in the reading of the parable: prayer, justice and faith. These are firmly grounded with the themes of firmness of purpose and persistence, evidenced and supported by intertextuality reading of Luke 11:5-8 and 18:9-14. It

also identified that the parable is an imperative to action. It demands a resoluteness and fulfilment of purpose enabling a deeper appreciation of necessity and persistence in addressing injustice, prayer, and faith.

The third objective intended to discuss the implications of re-reading Luke 18:1-8 from the Angolan context through the African hermeneutics lens with a liberative perspective. The research found out that current context of Africa and Angola in particular is in many ways an authentic picture of Lukan setting. Social inequalities, poverty, illiteracy, diseases, unemployment, corruption and impunity are part of the daily reality of majority of Angolans. So, there is need for liberation, since scholars agree that Africans, and Angolan specifically are poorly empowered to make demands for justice. Notwithstanding, the Angolan context offers a rich background for the understanding of Jesus' ministry to the poor and marginalized. The research has also found that through the African hermeneutics of liberation lens, the Angolan Church can recover Luke's holistic view of salvation, and therefore, expand its limited theological praxis to better reflect the mission of Jesus.

In conclusion, the African hermeneutics re-reading of the Bible enables the Angolan readers to discover and activate the *transforming energy* of biblical texts, and consequently empower the Angolan people to speak by themselves against the social evils which keep on enslaving them in their own land. Therefore, a reflection on the widow's determination, discipline of purpose and ability to use the only resource she had – persistence, towards accomplishing her objective, makes the parable a source of renewed hope for the suffering people in Angola.

5.3 Conclusions

The aim of this research was to identify a model in Luke's gospel which can help in bringing social justice in the Angolan context, through an African hermeneutical re-reading of Luke 18:1-8 with a liberative perspective. To accomplish such a task three major objectives were pursued: to assess the *Sitz-im Leben* of the parable through the historical-critical method; to carry out an exegetical analysis of the parable, and re-read the parable through the African hermeneutics of liberation and apply the findings into the Angolan context. After accurate research the study reached the following major conclusions:

First - the presence of social injustices is very evident both in the context where the parable was initially told and heard as well as in the Angolan context.

Second - the encounter between the widow and the judge in Luke 18:1-8 presents an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that an understanding of the socio-historical environment behind this text can highlight possible ways to deal with the quest of social justice in the current context of Angola.

Third – the lexicographical and grammatical analysis (in chapter three) has shown that Luke constructs and delivers this parable with particular artistry that leaves it clear Jesus' demonstration of how, in seeking justice, while confronted with institutional corruption even at the judiciary level, a vulnerable widow is yet able to effectively take up her cause (O'Conor, 2019: 98). It also shows that three main motifs can be identified in the parable: prayer, justice and faith. However, justice is at the center of the parable.

Fourth – the parable of the Widow and the Judge is a liberative text, serving a liberationist-educational purpose. Re-reading this text through the African hermeneutics lens has not only revealed features of the parable often ignored by the traditional hermeneutists, but also

contributes towards empowering Angolan readers to overcome the problem of social injustices being perpetuated in their own time and place.

Fifth – with this parable Luke offers a biblical model to curb injustices – persistence. Through this parable Jesus shows how one of the most unlikely approaches to gaining justice can succeed (Horzog 1994:229). Motivated by her self-determination, and the acknowledgement that she was right, the widow persistently endures the process and is definitely able to successfully accomplish her objective. Her resolute initiative challenges any hermeneutics of suspicion that only depicts women, and widow in particular as passive, docile and prayerful.

Sixth – Persistence pays. Persistence, tempered with endurance, boldness and determination, discipline of purpose and ability to use the available resources, is the ingredient to overcome social evils enslaving Angolan people, and bring about social justice.

Seventh – finally, the study concluded that a liberative understanding of the place of the χήρα in Jesus and Luke's world suggests that if the least in the community can initiate measures to counter the status quo and succeed against an entire shamefully corrupt system, so the suffering people in Angola have the power in their hands to change their destiny. The Angolan people have the power to overturn the tables and transform their present and their future without necessarily applying to violent means. The wise exercise of their constitutional rights, especially the right to vote, can play a crucial role in fighting this battle. The Bible is still the greatest source of power, as the liberating word of God. As Weaver (2002: 219) would say, "This story of the audacious widow occupies a mere eight verses of Luke's gospel. But it opens out onto a vast and challenging world of theological reflection."

5.4 Recommendations

As it was seen Luke 18:1-8 is a problem text, whose interpretation has divided scholars. However, a re-reading of this text through the African hermeneutics lens has revealed features of the parable often ignored by the traditional hermeneutists. Therefore, this research recommends a continuing re-reading of Luke 18:1-8 through different lenses to explore the parable from different perspectives and consequently contribute to the greater understanding of this parable. It will enable the African and Angolan readers in particular to identify with the text in a more convincing manner, as well as breaking up the myth of established readings resulting from traditional exegetical approaches. It is also recommended that attention must be paid to the freedom of interpretation, without considering exegesis, as some African hermeneutists and other liberation theologians do by misusing or rejecting exegesis.

The acknowledgement by many African believers and Angolans in particular of the dissonances between the traditional biblical interpretations and their own realities, calls for a new hermeneutics able to respond to the hard questions of their daily lives. An outstanding feature of a liberative reading is the emphasis on the participation of the people in reading the biblical text from their own reality and in interaction with one another (Arias, 2009: 225). Therefore, this research reinforces what has already done by many scholars, but this time specifically for the Angolan context, that the reading of the Bible should come out of the "holy pulpits" and be read with the people – participatory reading. Reading the Bible should cease being an academic exercise. Angolan believers are yet to experience the saving power of God's word. So, Luke 18:1-8 should be read in the Angolan context as the liberating word of God, a word that gives hope, connect the believers and empower them to struggle for justice.

The research also recommends the Angolan church to capitalize on empowering the poor and marginalized to demand for social justice. Alongside with its advocacy role the church should also empower the people to speak by themselves, emulating the widow's agency, whose voice breaks the culture of silence and bring about the justice she fought for. The church is called to continue using the bible as a source of power for its liberative mission. The church in Angola to rethink its God's given mandate and realign its discourse on social justice with its praxis. Meaning, as stated by Herzog (1994:46-47), "Theo-praxis has to be the starting point and ultimate court of appeal for the church". These efforts should then lead the country to constitutional reforms for not only an effective independence of the judicial, legislative and executive powers, but also to enable all public stakeholders to participate in the solution of social struggles in the country. Finally, this research also recommends that the Angolan church must also capitalize on investing more on theological education and to uptake and integrate in the theological curriculum subjects on African hermeneutics.

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