

JESUS THE *FIAOLA* (OPPORTUNITY SEEKER):
A POSTCOLONIAL SAMOAN READING OF
MATTHEW 7:24–8:22

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This chapter responds to the call to “return to the Bible” in the *RumInations* volume, with warm affirmation of the proposition that “biblical texts are like islands, and readers are like islanders” (Davidson, Aymer, and Havea 2015, 1). This proposition reflects how I see islanders in Samoa. There are, of course, other islands, other islanders, and other Pasifika languages, but an islander in Samoan is *tagata o le motu* (person or people of the “motu,” a Samoan word that means “island” as well as “broken” or “disconnected”). The *tagata o le motu* is not one who is cut off or disconnected from civilization but one who is at a special place (in Tongan, a *motu atu* place) in and because of its ways, cultures, and peoples.

The word for “crowd” in the Samoan Bible—*motu o tagata* (island of people)—comes from the phrase *tagata o le motu*. In this connection, I propose that a Samoan islander (*tagata o le motu*) reading draws attention to, as well as takes the side of, members of the crowd (*motu o tagata*). This chapter accordingly explores discipleship from the *tagata o le motu* worldview, emphasizing the significance of the local *motu o tagata* in Galilee, arguably a *motu* (island) in Jerusalem-oriented minds.

Discipleship in Samoan Churches

One of the contentious subjects in contemporary Christian communities in Samoa is the ministry of the churches in relation to traditional interpretations and practices of discipleship, such as the expectation that “a disciple should leave her or his family and follow Jesus.” The implication of this traditional interpretation and practice is the belief that the

church's needs are more important than family needs. Public criticism of this tradition is beginning to emerge among Samoans, in particular the new generation, who consider it to be one of the main causes of the increase in domestic problems such as poverty¹ and abuse, especially of women (see Ah Siu-Maliko 2015, 270–75; Ah Siu-Maliko 2016) and children. As a Samoan reader of the Bible, I consider the voicing of that concern important, both for the new generation and for members of the older generation who regard the traditional understanding of discipleship as an important part of who they are as Samoans. Thus, a tagata o le motu understanding of how Jesus dealt with the needs and rights of the local people in a local place needs attention, and as such, is the focus of this chapter.

The chapter offers a Samoan postcolonial reading of Matt 7:24–8:22. Within this unit, Matt 8:18–22 contains traditional characteristics of discipleship. In verse 22, one could see the characteristic of “leave the family and follow Jesus”: Jesus said to one of his disciples, whose father had just passed away, “Follow me and let the dead bury their own.” This chapter revisits these words of Jesus in the literary context of Matt 7:24–8:22 as a rhetorical and narrative unit. For a tagata o le motu (islander), Jesus's response is insensitive and insulting. A Samoan would not disregard her or his dead parent. But for the sake of the motu o tagata (crowd), Jesus's response makes sense. Because the exchange between Jesus and the disciple took place toward the end of the day, when it was getting dark, the help of the disciple in serving the crowd was needed. In the next morning, he could then go and pay his respects to his father and mourn together with his family. So, the issue was not lack of respect for the dead or the disciple's responsibility to his family. Rather, Jesus's response has to do with timing. Seeing that Jesus will go in the direction of the disciple's home the

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1. A letter to the editor of *Samoa Observer Newspaper* (February 5, 2012) titled “Charity and the Church” provides an example. This letter speaks of the problem of poverty in Samoa in relation to church ministers' status in Samoan society. The author states: “the arguments of poverty and the church are more complex than we give them credit for [*sic*] but one thing is for sure, the church (in Samoa) has become an institution whose servants (church ministers) live less like Christ and more like Rock stars.... The membership of the more established churches are leaving because many of its servants (church ministers) do not inspire the true meaning of faith, hope and charity, because they themselves do not lead by example nor want to live it but wish to receive it.”

following day (Matt 9:1), the disciple could safely go along with the crowd and Jesus.

Toward a Postcolonial Samoan Reading

My reading is informed by my experience of life in Samoan society and shaped by the concept of hybridity, one of the analytical tools of postcolonial thinking proposed by Homi K. Bhabha. This postcolonial approach is transcultural, allowing the marginalized or colonized situation of a reader to become a key to interpretation. This approach does not impose the hybrid situation on the text but provides a departure point for seeking in the text an understanding that would enable transformation. I take advantage of the room that the concept of hybridity gives for the Samoan situation to be a key to interpretation. My hermeneutic nonetheless goes beyond intercultural criticism as a reading strategy in that I recognize the complexities of the interdependence between the colonized and the colonizer (Bhabha 1994, 2).

The concept of hybridity has limitations.² It identifies and describes something or someone that is *not* pure, but conceiving subjects as (social, cultural, or religious) impure is impolite and inappropriate. However, the weaknesses of the concept of hybridity—its biased roots, impure offspring, over- and under-emphasis of distinctions in different times and spaces—makes attention to subjects who fit the hybridity profile (e.g., the marginalized and minoritized) more urgent. To give up on the concept because of its ideological blind spots does not help hybridized subjects. For the purpose of this essay, I offer the Samoan *fiaola* as a supplement to the postcolonial concept of hybridity. *Fiaola* is what Samoans call someone who does not give up but seeks opportunities to improve her or his situation. A *fiaola* does not depend on the charity of others but seeks meaningful survival in the Samoan society. Upon the concept of hybridity, I construct my *fiaola* reading of Matt 7:24–8:22, in which Jesus is a strong-willed person who seeks opportunities for himself and for his followers. In this reading, Jesus is neither passive nor naïve. Jesus is driven and strategic—two of the marks of a Samoan *fiaola*. Reading Jesus as *fiaola* means that Jesus wanted and was seeking life. This reading

2. For discussions of these limitations, see Young 1995, 6–19; Gilroy 2004, 105–06, 117, 250–51; Engler 2005, 357–78; Hutnyk 2005, 96–99.

problematizes the assumption that life (eternal, or otherwise) was always in Jesus as well as challenges readers in Samoa and beyond who imagine that Jesus was apolitical and otherworldly.

Fiaola

The motivation for this revisitation of Matt 7:24–8:22 is twofold. First, it is an opportunity to introduce *fiaola*—drawn from my life experience of seeking survival in the Samoan social, cultural, and political worlds—as a lens for reading. Second, it is an opportunity to complement sociorhetorical criticism with a Samoan lens—*fiaola*.

Fiaola

Fiaola is the combination of two words: *fia* meaning “wanting to” or “willing to” and *ola* meaning “life.” *Fiaola* therefore means “wanting life” or “seeking life.” Put another way, *fiaola* means “vying for survival.” *Fiaola* expresses my experience in seeking ways and opportunities, such as selling Samoan hot cocoa drink and collecting bottles around the town area of Apia day and night to help my family survive on a leased piece of land near the town area of Apia in the 1980s.³ Those experiences evoked characteristics of *fiaola* that I propose as elements in the *fiaola* lens that I use in my reading of Jesus’s relationship to the local people (crowd) of Galilee portrayed in Matt 7:24–8:22. These elements include:

1. *Fiaola* considers family needs more important than anything else;
2. *Fiaola* sees life from position of hybridity—fluctuating in between moments, situations, spaces, and opportunities, *fiaola* chooses what would provide the best option in meeting the family’s needs;
3. *Fiaola* is courageous, strong-willed, and strategic and is not afraid to enter unfamiliar spaces or relationships to seek help for the family;
4. *Fiaola* seeks help from a *faaola* (savior or disciple) when necessary;
5. *Fiaola* who is able to provide for her or his family is considered a *faaola*.

3. I have explained my experiences in relation to educational opportunities and church responsibilities in Nofoaiga 2014.

Fiaola Reading

In life, *fiaola* is linked to *lotoifale* (household, local context). Concerning texts, the *lotoifale* I call *lotoitusiga* (literary world of the text). From *fiaola*'s point of view a *lotoitusiga* has *tuaoi faatusiga* (literary boundaries) in relation to time, space, people, and culture shown in the *gagana* (language, rhetoric) of the *tusiga* (text). These *tuaoi faatusiga* form a *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga* (*fiaola* rhetorical and narrative unit).

The first task of *fiaola* reading is to identify a *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga* by identifying its *anofale* (the local world that is encoded in the unit). This is indicated by signs (e.g., opening and closing signs). Finding the *anofale* involves identifying how the language of the text shows the relationship of *fiaola* and *faaola*; how the *fiaola* and *faaola* are linked to specific households (families); and how the movements of *fiaola* and *faaola* relate to time and space (such as time of day and movement in between spaces).

Fiaola reading involves analyzing the *mamanu* (textures) of the *anofale*. This reading includes analyzing the *faasologa* (progression), *tagata-auai* (characters), and the *mamanuina o faaupuga* (word patterns). Part of the analysis explores how *upusii* (a recitation) is used in the *anofale* of the *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga*. The questions that guide the analysis include: Who is *fiaola* in the text? Who is *faaola* in the text? What needs does the *fiaola* seek from the *faaola*? How is *fiaola* and *faaola* each linked to local households in the text? How does the *fiaola* seek help in the text? How does *faaola* respond to *fiaola*?

A *Fiaola* Reading of Matt 7:24–8:22

Analyzing Matt 7:24–8:22 as a *siomiaga fiaola faa-le-tusiga* (*fiaola* narrative unit) involves exploring how Jesus's ministry to the local place of Galilee reveals Jesus's attention to the needs and rights of local people. Galilee is the *anofale* (local place) encoded in the text.⁴ Jesus's ministry brings hope to the local people of Galilee and to Jesus as well in relation to his "kingdom of heavens" ministry.

4. The importance of Galilee for Jesus's ministry has recently received some attention, mainly in the quest for the historical Jesus (see Freyne 2004; Moxnes 2003, 23).

Our consideration of Matt 7:24–8:22 as a *siomiaga faa-le-tusiga* (narrative unit) focuses on the links between Jesus and the crowd to the local place of Galilee, emphasizing Jesus’s relationship to different households in that unit. Jesus’s use of the imagery of building a house in the parable of the wise and fool in Matt 7:24–27 anticipates his healing of sick people from different households in Matt 8:1–17. We also see in the *faasologa* (progression) of the unit Jesus’s movement toward entering local households, which culminates in a transition of movement from one side of the sea to the other, as anticipated in Matt 8:18–22. The relations with local households and the movement over the land across the sea are presented within the frames of discipleship. Elaboration on that interpretation is based on the following structure:

1. *Amataga* (Beginning) Matt 7:24–29 Discipleship as rebuilding of local households
2. *Ogatotonu* (Middle) Matt 8:1–17 Discipleship as healing of the crowd
3. *Faaiuga* (End) Matt 8:18–22 Jesus commands continuation of discipleship

The analysis is twofold. First, because Jesus teaches the crowd how to listen through the imagery of house building, we see every member of the crowd as belonging to a household in the local place of Galilee. We identify those local households as familiar, local dwelling spaces to which certain members of the crowd belong, and as their roles within their families. Second, we explore how the *gagana* (language), *faasologa* (progression), and *faamatalaina* (narration) of the text show how those spaces, relationships, and roles motivate certain characters to enter unfamiliar spaces in order to meet their needs. In this reading, *fiola* is part of the motivation for entering unfamiliar spaces.

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Amataga (Matt 7:24–29)

The words “will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock” are at the background of the setting in which Jesus undertakes his healing ministry. The parable is narrated with the images of building houses as metaphors for those who hear and act upon Jesus’s teachings. These different households exhibit the familiar relationships with which various members of the crowd are linked and which determine their roles in particular rela-

tionships. This reflects how Jesus's ministry, in this part of the story, considers the needs of different local people in relation to their households. Thus, the imagery of house building foreshadows the locality of Jesus's ministry in the following parts of the unit.

Ogatotonu (Matt 8:1–17)

The narrator's presentation of Jesus's relationship to the crowd is carried into the middle part of the unit. This time, the narrator refers to different members of the crowd, suggesting different types of households in Galilee.

Leper as a *Fiaola* (Matt 8:1–4)

The healing of the leper reveals the first local household that Jesus deals with in the unit. This subunit expresses the locality of the leper's need. Jesus's moving down from the mountain with the crowd forms a transition from his proclamation of the kingdom of the heavens with words to his establishment of it with deeds. This transition also shows the setting of Jesus's healing activities as a public area within the background of local households. Those healing activities demonstrate the time of healing, reflected by his call to the crowd to listen in the first part of the unit: that time is now. More importantly, the healing of the leper begins with Jesus's demonstration of the type of listening about which he preached.

The local space to which the leper belongs is the Jewish religious household, according to which he is unclean, and thus he is an outcast. The leper fits the hybridity profile. But being a member of the Jewish religious community means that the leper has a role, namely, to seek cleansing for his leprosy. In seeking his own cleansing, he exhibits the signs of *fiaola*.

The hybridized unnamed leper is the first member of the crowd who responds in action to Jesus's appeal (7:24–27). The interaction between Jesus and the leper shows the movement of the leper from familiar to unfamiliar spaces and relationships. The leper is a sick person, uncertain how to make himself clean. The text suggests that he is a marginal character seeking help from Jesus, reflected in the use of the subjunctive "if you are willing" in his appeal to Jesus. These words do not show that the leper doubts Jesus's healing power but rather that he sees Jesus's teaching with authority as a means of help for his condition. As a result, the leper is cleansed.

The eradication of the leprosy does not mark the end of the healing event. Jesus wants the leper to go and show himself to the priest. "See that

you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself” (Matt 8:4 NRSV). This command exemplifies how a local person should deal with her or his role as a member of a household. First, “not to say a word to anyone” reminds the audience of what Jesus says in his teaching of a good listener in Matt 7:24. Words are not enough to show that one has listened. Actions are also required, and actions speak louder than words. Second, part of this service to the Jewish household requires giving material gifts as determined by the purity laws. Thus, acceptance into his own religious household depends on the leper’s own actions. He himself has to fulfill his duties.

The leper is a disciple sent by Jesus to return to his Jewish religious household and to continue being a Jew according to the Jewish custom. Jesus sends the leper, as the first healed of the crowd, to return to the household to which he belongs, and in and through him, Jesus’s proclamation of the kingdom of the heavens reaches the Jewish household. The leper, in the end, is a *fiaola* who becomes *faaola*. He seeks opportunity for himself, and he becomes an opportunity for others in his household.

The Centurion as *Fiaola* (Matt 8:5–13)

The healing of the centurion’s servant concerns a gentile household (Matt 8:15–13). The place of belonging for the centurion and his servants was the Roman imperial household. This healing story introduces a different familial relationship in the local world of Galilee, namely, the centurion as the master and his relationship to his slaves, his servants.

The centurion as a man of authority leaves the familiar space of his imperial household to enter the unfamiliar space of the crowd, a space containing people with different purposes and goals in following Jesus. The centurion is an example of a local person who seeks help from Jesus’s ministry to fulfill his role as a leader of his imperial household.

The main purpose of this unexpected approach from a Roman leader (unusual because it is made to a Jew) is to save a servant. The unnamed centurion goes beyond the boundaries of being a Roman leader for the sake of his hybridized servant. As a person with recognized status, the centurion could send one of his servants to bring Jesus into the house. Rather, the centurion deals with the situation himself in a new space, in the eyes of the crowd. He enters unfamiliar spaces for the well-being of his servant.

The narrator tells of Jesus’s amazement at the centurion. But it is not the end of the event. Like the healing of the leper, the healing of the centurion’s servant finishes with Jesus saying to the centurion, “Go; let it be

done for you according to your faith” (Matt 8:13 NRSV). The centurion who enters the unfamiliar spaces of the crowd and of Jesus’s vision of the kingdom of the heavens returns to his imperial household. His positive response is an example of a member of the crowd who listens to and acts on Jesus’s teachings. Jesus’s command to him to “go” could be read as the sending of the centurion as a disciple back into his own household. Thus, the centurion’s return to his household is a return not only to witness the healing of his servant but to rebuild his household.

Compared to the leper, the centurion seeks an opportunity for someone else (his subject). But similar to the leper, the centurion is a *faola* who becomes a *faola* for his household.

Peter’s Mother-in-Law as *Fiaola* (Matt 8:14–15)

The healings of Peter’s mother-in-law (8:14–15) and of the sick and those possessed with demons (8:16–17) show other local households and relationships that Jesus engages in the story. First, we look at the local social and cultural household to which Peter and his mother-in-law belong. Second are the households of the sick and those possessed with demons. Including the healing of these characters shows the diversity and richness of the members of the crowd in Galilee and suggests that Jesus deals with each one of them.

There is one slight difference between these healing stories. The healing of Peter’s mother-in-law is different because, this time, Jesus takes the initiative by approaching the sick. Jesus takes his ministry into the homes of local people. This demonstrates Jesus’s ministry as a place-based ministry in relation to the situations encountered by local people linked to the households to which they belong.

The woman’s response shows how she deals with her own situation. She is an example of a person in need who deals with her situation from her local place, where she is recognized in her society. The verb *διηκόνει* (began to serve) in the imperfect shows not only the beginning of her serving Jesus but also its continuation, which will take her beyond the boundaries of the patriarchal system that held her in her own home. She is a disciple not to the world but to her household. She, too, is a *faola* who becomes *faola*.

Jesus as *Fiaola* (Matt 8:16–17)

The healings of those possessed by demons in verses 16–17 are climaxed

with Matthew's use of Isaiah's prophecy in verse 17, where an assertion is made that the authority of Jesus the healer comes from his being a servant of God who "took our infirmities and bore our diseases" (NRSV) In this reading, Matt 8:17 uses Isa 53:4a as a *upusii* (recitation):

LXX (Isa 53:4a): οὗτος τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν φέρει καὶ περὶ ἡμῶν
ὀδυνᾶται
He bears our sins and is pained for us

Matt 8:17: Αὐτὸς τὰς ἀσθενείας ἡμῶν ἔλαβεν καὶ τὰς νόσους ἐβάστασεν
He took our infirmities and bore our diseases

Matthew recites traces of Isaiah's reference to Israel's return from exile in Babylon, the time when the Persian Empire led by Cyrus displaced the Assyrian Empire (see Brueggemann 1998, 9). With that background, some scholars identify the servant as Israel, Cyrus, or a prophet himself. It is not certain who the servant was, but it is important to note that the thought world of Isaiah the servant has already arrived. This aspect is reflected in the Matthean use of the verbs *ἔλαβεν* ("took") and *ἐβάστασεν* ("bore"). In the aorist tense, these verbs express completed actions. The narrative placement of the recitation, after the healing actions of Jesus, suggests that the taking of infirmities and diseases (to which the recitation refers) are those undertaken by Jesus in Matt 7:24–8:16. Thus, the Matthean recitation of Isa 53:4a endorses Jesus's actions in line with the understanding in Isaiah of a servant (in the present) who has achieved the tasks in question.

The Matthean use of the verbs *ἔλαβεν* ("took") and *ἐβάστασεν* ("bore") differs, however, from what the LXX suggests. The Matthean use of these words is about taking away suffering (see Nolland 2005, 361–62; Schweizer 1975, 217) in the form of *ἀσθενείας* ("sickness") (Nolland 2005, 362), which means physical sickness. The Matthean use of *ἐβάστασεν* in the second part of the recitation affirms the narrator's link to the immediate context of Jesus's preaching, teaching, and healing ministry. This is different from the LXX, which speaks of the servant's bearing other people's sins as part of the vicarious suffering mentioned in the first part of the sentence (he bears our sins).⁵

5. According to Martin Hengel (2004, 119), the LXX's rendering of Isa 53 strengthens the vicarious suffering emphasis, but such is lacking from the Jewish sources.

In Matthew, ἐβάστασεν relates not to Jesus's carrying of diseases upon himself but to his endurance of the long day of work. The first Matthean utilization of this verb is βαστάσαι ("to carry or bear") in 3:11, which is in the aorist infinitive active and describes John the Baptist's admission that he is not fit to carry Jesus's sandals. The context in which John the Baptist proclaims the kingdom of the heavens is in the wilderness of Judea (3:1), where he wears clothing of camel's hair and eats locusts and wild honey (3:4). That type of environment presents a picture of the kind of work John encounters. It is not easy work, and the Matthean narrator's use of βαστάσαι links John's words (he is not fit enough to carry Jesus's sandals) and John's long days of work in the heat of the wilderness (3:1–4). Thus, John the Baptist's words (3:11) are not about unworthiness as humility but unworthiness as not having physical strength to carry on the proclamation of the kingdom of the heavens. John was exhausted. He has been working long days, and he is too tired to carry even the sandals of Jesus.

Another use of βαστάζω ("I carry or bear") is its aorist participle active (βαστάσας), which describes the actions of the laborer who have worked all day long in the heat in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard in Matt 20:11. This use of βαστάζω is linked to "evening," the time of the day in which the owner of the vineyard gives the laborers their pay (20:8). The Matthean recitation of Isa 53:4a also links "carrying" to a "long day of work" in the use of ἐβάστασεν in 8:17. The function of βαστάζω in the Matthean recitation is linked to "evening" in verse 16, the end of a long day of preaching (7:24–29) and healings (8:1–16).⁶ This link is important for my *fiaola* reading. The connection expresses the kind of suffering Matthew speaks about in this part of the story.

The Matthean use of Isa 53:4a also appeals to the burden of carrying another person's suffering, but not in the sense of vicarious suffering. The use of Isa 53:4 points to the long day of work (since Matt 5:1) that Jesus endures in order to help those in need.⁷ Carrying away other people's suffering in and through a long day of work is significant in the whole unit (7:24–8:22). The comment closes the middle section of the unit, anti-

6. France (2007, 321) claims that "evening" in verse 16 has little significance to the meaning of the sentence. For France, the focus of verse 16 was mainly to anticipate the uttering of fulfillment in verse 17, whose central emphasis is the authority of Jesus as healer.

7. I agree with Schweizer's (1975, 217) consideration of the day that ends in the evening (Matt 8:16) to have begun from Matt 5:1. So, it was a long day!

pating the reasons for Jesus's responses to the scribe and another of his disciples at the end of the unit (8:18–22).

Faaiuga (Matt 8:18–22)

At the end of the unit, Jesus gives orders to the crowd to go over to the other side of the water. A scribe approaches him and says, “I will follow you wherever you go” (Matt 8:19 NRSV). Jesus replies, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head” (8:20 NRSV). Here, the Son of Man fits the hybridity profile. Applied to himself, and in light of the story of the centurion, Jesus would benefit from the aid of a faola.

One of the traditional interpretations of these words suggests that Jesus intends to be homeless in his ministry. With the faola lens, on the other hand, I see Jesus's response as an explanation that discipleship is a restless mission. This is evident in the phrase οὐκ ἔχει ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνει (“has nowhere he might lay the head”), in which the word κλίνει (“to cause something to incline or bend” or “to sleep”) plays an important part. κλίνει is the word used to describe Jesus bowing his head before he died in John 19:30. “Lay the head” carries the sense of voluntary death.⁸ Jesus's response to the scribe could thus be looked at as Jesus voluntarily helping the local people in need despite the danger that his ministry brings and that Jesus attends to the demands of his ministry without rest. Jesus is exhausted.

After the scribe's request, another disciple approaches Jesus. He wants to go and bury his father. This disciple is a family person who knows his role as a son. But Jesus's response shows the opposite. Interpreters see this dialogue as calling attention to the cost of discipleship, where the family is to be abandoned when one becomes a disciple. In such interpretations, Jesus places more value on the disciple following him than on the disciple's commitment to his family. Would a son leave his dead father behind without saying goodbye? Such a son should not consider himself part of the family that he has left behind. Is this what Jesus wants from and for this disciple?

The disciple speaks to Jesus in the evening; it was not an appropriate time of the day to bury a family member. Later in the story (9:1), Jesus gets into a boat and returns to Capernaum. The disciple would be a part

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8. Cf. BDAG, s.v. “xxx.”

of Jesus's return to Capernaum, and that would be a better time for the disciple to fulfill his family responsibilities. Thus, Jesus's response to the disciple is not a command to abandon his obligation to his family but to make use of his time as a disciple to help the local people in need. Jesus wants the disciple to remain *faola*, rather than to go away as *faola*.

In this reading, Jesus's response to the scribe is not about Jesus not having a home or house to rest. Rather, it is an indication that the mission of carrying away the suffering of local people is not easy. Dealing with suffering people is a restless mission, requiring much time and energy. Because the story continues on to the other side of the sea, Matt 8:18–22 is both an end (to this unit) and a point of transition (going across to the other side). In this way, 8:18–22 is not only the conclusion of Jesus's ministry to local households on this side of the sea, but it also anticipates his proclamation of the kingdom of God to the other side. Our consideration of 8:18–22 as the ending part of the unit is related to the word “evening” in verse 16. The time of the day that Jesus's ministry in this part of the story has reached is near darkness.

Conclusion

The analysis of Matt 7:24–8:22 with a postcolonial Samoan *faola* lens shows how Jesus deals with the needs and rights of the local people in a local place, Galilee. I have looked at Galilee as if it was an island (*motu*). Jesus's relationship with the crowd (*motu o tagata*) requires that he deals with the needs that are pertinent to the local place of Galilee. The reading proposed shows that Galilee is not broken (*motu*) from the other side of the sea. Similarly, the events narrated in Matt 7:24–8:22 are not isolated from those in the surrounding stories.

The *faola* reading shows that Matt 7:24–8:22 as a *siomiaga faa-le-tusiga* (rhetorical and narrative unit) reveals important characteristics of becoming Jesus's disciple. First, Jesus summons *faola* members of the crowd to listen, and those who listen are sent back as *faola* to their households. In this regard, there are other disciples apart from the twelve who are favored in the Matthean presentation of Jesus's ministry. Second, local discipleship is not easy. It requires endurance and patience because it is a “long day” of work. Discipleship involves *tautuatoa* (courageous serving; see Nofoaiga 2017).

Jesus attends to the *faola* in the crowd and sends them back as *faola*. Local households and families are important to Jesus, contrary to the way that some Samoan local households and families are marginalized

because of the discipleship models that churches favor. Finally, this chapter is both an introduction to *fiola* as a frame for reading biblical texts and an invitation for Samoan and like-minded churches to reconsider their discipleship models.

In finding Jesus to have had a moment of *fiola* himself, this reading challenges the popular assumption that Jesus was always *faaola*. Like John the Baptist, Jesus was physically and emotionally exhausted, and like the leper, the centurion, Peter's mother-in-law, and members of the crowd who were possessed by demons, the status of Jesus as *fiola* does not mean that he was hopeless. *Fiola* is not just about being weak and vulnerable but also about having the capacity to seek a way out of one's struggle. In other words, *fiola* is not a position of despair. Rather, *fiola* is a position of strength, and in Matthew 7:24–8:22, this applies to Jesus as well as to the Jewish leper, the Roman centurion, the local mother-in-law, and the ones possessed by demons. Finally, the invitation for *fiola* reading issued in this essay comes with a plea that hybridized subjects (whether on basis of race, gender, class, color, sexuality, or citizenship) in texts and contexts be engaged as characters of strength in a *motu o tagata* that includes the leper, centurion, mother-in-law, demon-possessed, Jesus, and John the Baptist.

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