

MESSIANIC MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN

COMMENTARY ON BOOK OF LUKE

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST

Paul Apple (July 2020, rev. Dec. 2023)

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

Luke 19:10 -- "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

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BACKGROUND NOTES

Blueletterbible.org: The Gospel according to Luke was probably the last Synoptic Gospel to be written. Since Luke precedes Acts, it is essential to date Acts before a date for Luke can be determined. The abrupt ending of Acts may be the single most important factor in deriving a date. Luke leaves the reader with Paul being in Rome and waiting to present his case before Caesar. The best explanation for this is that Acts was finished before he Paul's final outcome was known. This would place Acts in the early Sixties with the Gospel of Luke being written in the late Fifties or early Sixties.

William Barclay: There is no passage of the Bible which sheds such a floodlight on the doctrine of the inspiration of scripture. No one would deny that the gospel of Luke is an inspired document; and yet Luke begins by affirming that it is the product of the most careful historical research. God's inspiration does not come to the man who sits with folded hands and lazy mind and only waits, but to the man who thinks and seeks and searches. True inspiration comes when the seeking mind of man joins with the revealing Spirit of God. The word of God is given, but it is given to the man who is seeking for it. "*Seek and you shall find*" (**Matthew 7:7**).

Donald Miller: The book is dedicated to one called "*most excellent Theophilus*" (**1:3**). Theophilus is a Greek name, strongly suggesting that the man was a Gentile. The title "*most excellent*" hints that he was a person of high rank. It was customary in Luke's day, as in ours, to dedicate to an individual a book intended for a much wider group. Theophilus, however, would be representative of this group, which must have been composed of Gentiles of high intelligence and culture. This is confirmed by the style of Luke's preface (**1:1-4**). It is written in the literary form of secular Greek historians, and has a quality of language which reveals the author to have been a man of learning. Thus, it seems clear that Luke was deliberately setting out to present the Christian message in a form which would capture the attention of the intelligent Gentile mind of the first century.

J. Sidlow Baxter: In Matthew He is the *King*. In Mark He is the *Servant*. In Luke, behold the *Man*. . . Luke's first concern is the real human birth and the growth through boyhood to the perfect manhood. . . It is his special interest in our Lord's manhood which explains also why Luke's rendering of our Lord's Galilean ministry (iv. 14 – ix. 50) is so much shorter than in Matthew or Mark; and why, in compensation, he gives such a long, leisurely diary of the winding journey to Jerusalem (ix. 51 – xix. 44). . .

In his short record of the Galilean ministry Luke gives about equal space to our Lord's deeds and words, so that neither is emphasized above the other, and both equally reflect back on the Wonder-Man Himself. . . .

Major points of emphasis distinctive to Luke's gospel:

- Human Dependence on Prayer
- Human need of the Holy Spirit
- Human catholicity – unconfined goodwill towards those outside the pale of Jewry
- Human poverty
- Human Sympathies

Characteristics of the author Luke:

- Travel companion of Paul
- Physician
- Dear to Paul
- Loyal to Paul
- Widely esteemed
- Gentile

Wil Pounds: More references are found in Luke to the Holy Spirit than in Matthew and Mark combined. The Holy Spirit is seen empowering John the Baptist, Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, Simeon, and Jesus. With the ascension of Jesus at the end of the Gospel, the emphasis on the Spirit is further developed in the book of Acts beginning with chapter two. Luke's Gospel must always be considered with its sequel, the book of Acts.

MacArthur: Luke, more than any of the other gospel writers, highlighted the universal scope of the gospel invitation. He portrayed Jesus as the Son of Man, rejected by Israel, and then offered to the world. Luke repeatedly related accounts of Gentiles, Samaritans, and other outcasts who found grace in Jesus' eyes. This emphasis is precisely what we would expect from a close companion of the "*apostle of Gentiles*" (**Ro 11:13**).

W. Graham Scroggie: In Luke there is no narrow nationalism, but a broad outlook upon the world. Men are seen as men, of whatever nation or clime, and Jesus is presented as the Redeemer of them all. This Gospel contains the word "sinners" more often than all the other records together: in Matthew, 5 times; in Mark, 5 times; in John, 4 times; but in Luke 16 times.

The writer is fond of the words *grace*, *salvation*, *evangelize*, and *Saviour*. Here the Gentiles are seen in the light of redemption. The gospel of Christ is for the whole world. The angels, at the beginning, proclaim good will to all men (**ii. 14**). Simeon foretells the infant Saviour as "*a light to lighten the Gentiles*" (**ii. 32**). "*All flesh*" are to see the salvation of God (**iii. 6**).

The other Evangelists record the mission of the Twelve, but Luke alone tells of the mission of the Seventy, as representing the nations of the world (**chap. x**, cf. **Gen. x**). No preference is given to the Jews over the Samaritans; on the contrary, the disciples are rebuked for wishing to call down fire on the latter (**ix. 54**), it is a Samaritan who has compassion on a needy man (**x. 33**), and the one leper of the ten, who returned to give thanks, was a Samaritan (**xvii. 16**).

Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost (**xix. 10**). Repentance and remission of sins is to be preached unto all nations (**xxiv. 47**).

John Stott: St. Luke's Gospel is the gospel of womanhood, and tells more than the others the gracious, courteous attitude of Jesus towards women, and the place He allowed them to occupy in His ministry. It is he who tells, with such delicate reserve, the story of the miraculous conception and birth of Jesus. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of the Baptist, were kinswomen, and the story must have been derived directly or indirectly from Mary herself. . . only Luke writes of the prophetess Anna (**2:36-8**), of the widow of Nain (**7:11-17**),

of the woman who was a sinner (7:36-50), of the ministering women (8:2-3), of Martha and Mary (10:38-42), of the woman whom Satan had bound for eighteen years (13:10-17), and of the daughters of Jerusalem who wept (23:27-31). . .

If Luke shows how the grace of God could reach down to the lowest, he also shows how its broad sweep could gather in all the nations. The ancients were perhaps not altogether fanciful when they saw in the shape of the cross a parable of the breadth and depth and height of the love of God (cf. Eph. 3:18-19). It is this inclusion of all nations which most clearly distinguishes Luke's presentation of the Gospel. His two-volume history of early Christianity begins in the Temple but ends near Caesar's palace. He describes the march of the gospel from Jerusalem, the capital of Jewry, to Rome, the capital of the world. He includes many special incidents in his Gospel to illustrate his theme and to exhibit the universal grace of the Lord. The Acts is a carefully constructed story of how God revealed and began to fulfil His purpose to include the Gentiles in His Church.

G. Campbell Morgan: Two elements merged in him, which are very rarely found in one person. He was a man of scientific mind. He claims that. This was a scientific treatise, the result of scientific examination of the personality of Jesus. But he is also an artist. There is an old legend of the Church that a painting of the Virgin Mother was found in Jerusalem from the brush of Luke. The early Church writers all spoke of him as an artist. Somebody has said that he was a poet, too, and gives as a proof, that he caught and preserved for us the great songs that burst upon the world with the coming of Jesus into it. Here, then, is a remarkable man, artistic in temperament and scientific in mentality. And yet once more, and this is of supreme importance, this man was the close friend and fellow-traveler of Paul for years. There is something very beautiful about that.

Robert Gundry: Luke thus portrays Jesus as a cosmopolitan Savior with broad sympathies, one who mingles with all sorts of people, socializes with both Pharisees and publicans (7:36 ff.; 11:37 ff.; 14:1 ff.; 19:1-10), and concerns Himself with victims of personal calamity (7:11-17; 8:40-56; 9:37-43). Where Matthew concentrates on Jesus and the kingdom, Luke concentrates on Jesus and people, with resultant character sketches which are quite vivid.

Everett Harrison: It is notable that Luke has a more pronounced biographical interest than other Gospel writers. Information is supplied about Jesus' ancestors, his kinsfolk and parents, the place and circumstances of his birth, his boyhood development, the freedom with which he mingled among men in his social relationships, his exposure to temptation (not only at the inception of the ministry, but throughout, according to Luke 22:28), his frequent resort to prayer, etc. This is the Gospel of the manhood of the Master.

Ray Stedman: The essential manhood and humanity of Christ are continually underscored throughout this Gospel. The key to the Gospel is found in Luke 19:10. In fact, this verse sets forth a handy outline of the entire book:

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

In that one sentence, you have the structure and divisions of this Gospel. **First section:** *“The Son*

of Man came.” In the beginning of this Gospel, from **1:1 to 4:13**, Luke tells us how Jesus entered the human race, including His genealogy

Second section: “*to seek.*” The Lord’s earthly ministry consisted largely of seeking people out and moving into the heart of humanity, penetrating deeply into human emotions, thoughts, and feelings. In the middle section of Luke, from **4:14 through 19:27**, we see Jesus seeking us out, putting His finger on the throbbing centers of our pain, shame, and motivations, and touching our humanity with His healing power. In this section, Jesus carries on His ministry among people. This section of the Lord’s pursuit of humanity climaxes with His journey toward Jerusalem, the place where He will be sacrificed, as we read in **Luke 9:51**:

“As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.”

The record of His journey to Jerusalem occupies **chapters 9 through 19** and recounts a number of important incidents along the way.

Third and final section: “. . . *and to save what was lost.*” Finally, the Lord moves into the final act of the drama of His life: to save humanity by means of the cross and the resurrection. In **Luke 19:28**, we read:

“After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.”

That verse marks the close of His seeking ministry and beginning of His saving ministry. It introduces the last section of the book, in which He enters the city, goes to the temple, ascends the Mount of Olives, is taken to Pilate’s judgment hall – and then to the cross, to the tomb, and to resurrection day.

I. Howard Marshall: For Luke this story is a piece of history, and he is much more of a self-conscious historian than the other Evangelists. He believed that Christian faith was based on historical events which could be regarded as the acts of God, and he was trying to establish a firm historical foundation for the faith of his readers. . .

If no writer has emphasized more than Luke the “wideness in God’s mercy”, at the same time in no other Gospel are the claims of Jesus expressed more stringently. Jesus summoned men to be disciples, and would-be disciples had to be prepared to count the cost, to deny themselves and to follow Jesus. The grace of God is not “cheap grace”; the sinner must be prepared for repentance and renunciation of his sin.

Steven Cole: Luke has a number of distinctive features. He devotes more space to the birth and infancy of Jesus than any other gospel. He alone mentions the incident from Jesus’ youth, when He was left behind at the Temple. On the other end of Jesus’ life, Luke alone mentions the ascension and, in his companion volume (Acts) traces the history of Jesus’ followers beyond that momentous event. Luke clearly has a universal emphasis, showing that the gospel is for every class, race, and nation. The angels tell the shepherds that the news of the Savior who has been born is “good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people” (**Lk 2:10**). The aged Simeon

prophesies that this Child is God's salvation which He has prepared in the presence of all peoples, "*a light of revelation to the Gentiles*" (Lk 2:32). As John the Baptist preaches, Luke alone (of the synoptics) cites Isaiah, that "*all flesh shall see the salvation of God*" (Lk 3:6). When our Lord begins His ministry at Nazareth, He creates animosity by pointing out that Elijah was sent to a Gentile widow in Sidon and that the Gentile Naaman the leper was cleansed (Lk 4:25-27). Luke closes with Jesus' commission that "*repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations*" (Lk 24:47). Not just Gentiles, but sinners of every stripe are the focus of Luke's gospel. He uses the word "sinners" 16 times, more than Matthew (5), Mark (5), and John (4) combined....Luke is the only synoptic gospel to call Jesus "*Savior*" (Lk 2:11). He alone uses the word salvation (6 times) and ten times he uses the word for preaching the good news, which is only used once in the other gospels. . . Luke has been called the Gospel of Prayer because of his emphasis, not only on our need to pray, but also on Jesus' prayer life. Nine times Luke tells of prayers that Jesus offered in the crises of His life, and seven of these are unique to Luke (Scroggie, p. 370). It has also been called the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, who is named more in Luke than in Matthew and Mark together, and even more than in John (Baxter, p. 246). There is a marked emphasis on Jesus' dependence on the Spirit. **Thus Luke shows us Jesus as the Savior who was fully human, but who triumphed as man through dependence on prayer and the Holy Spirit. (Luke 1:1-4)**

Walter Liefeld: Possible **Purposes** for the writing of Luke:

- Evangelism
- Confirmation of the factual basis for faith
- Personal assurance – "*know the certainty of the things he had been taught*"
- Narration of history – preserving the record of the origin and growth of the early church
- An apologetic – a brief for Paul's trial at Rome
- Solution of a theological problem – to explain the delay of the Parousia
- . . .
- Defense against heresy of Gnosticism
- Instruction – too general; lacks focus as the defining purpose
- Dealing with social problems – prominence of theme of poverty
- Multiple purposes – If none of the above qualifies as **the** purpose for the writing of Luke-Acts, is it then wrong to seek a single overarching purpose in Luke? Should we think instead of primary and secondary purposes? If we take this approach, almost everything mentioned above has value.

If in addition to winning and establishing individual converts, Luke is concerned with forwarding the Christian movement, such subsidiary aims as establishing the legitimacy of that movement as a true sect of Judaism, demonstrating the innocence of Jesus and Paul at their trials, clarifying the relationship of Jewish and Gentile believers to Israel, and rooting the Gospel record in Jewish and secular history all have their place. It was important for Luke to deal with specific problems, whether eschatological or social. If such problems threatened to hinder the forward movement of the church. Far from producing a simplistic or a fragmented work, the author (Luke) brings together all the data and addresses all the issues he feels it necessary to deal with in order to advance Christ's cause throughout the world.

David Malick: Suggested purpose: Perhaps the question which is being asked by Theophilus (a Gentile-Christian) and those with him is, "How is it that Christianity is primarily Gentile in nature if it came from Judaism?" Therefore, Luke writes Luke-Acts to argue that the Christian Gospel is not anti-semitic, but is rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures' promise of salvation to both the Jews and the Gentiles. "The Way" shares in the initiation of the spiritual promises to Israel. They are the stewards of the promises to Israel. The reason it is primarily Gentile in nature is because the Jews rejected the message of Jesus as Messiah, and pushed the church out. Nevertheless, the Jews as a people are not rejected by God or his servant Paul. The promises will yet be consummated for the nation through the resurrected Jesus--the hope of Israel.

H. A. Ironside:

1. Six miracles peculiar to Luke.

- (1) The draught of fishes, **Lk 5:4-11.**
- (2) The raising of the widow's son, **Lk 7:11- 18.**
- (3) The woman with the spirit of infirmity, **Lk 13:11-17.**
- (4) The man with the dropsy, **Lk 14:1-6.**
- (5) The ten lepers, **Lk 17:11-19.**
- (6) The healing of Malchus' ear. **Lk 22:50-51.**

2. Eleven parables, peculiar to Luke.

- (1) The two debtors, **Lk 7:41-43.**
- (2) The good Samaritan, **Lk 10:25-37.**
- (3) The importunate friend, **Lk 11:5-8.**
- (4) The rich fool, **Lk 12:16-19.**
- (5) The barren fig-tree, **Lk 13:6-9.**
- (6) The lost piece of silver, **Lk 15:8-10.**
- (7) The prodigal son, **Lk 15:11-32.**
- (8) The unjust steward, **Lk 16:1-13.**
- (9) The rich man and Lazarus, **Lk 18:19-31.**
- (10) The unjust judge, **Lk 18:1-8.**
- (11) The Pharisee and publican, **Lk 18:9-14.**

3. Some other passages mainly peculiar to Luke.

- (1) **Luke 1:1-2:52** and **Lk 9:51- 18:14** are mainly peculiar to Luke.
- (2) John the Baptist's answer to the people. **Lk 3:10-14.**
- (3) The conversation with Moses and Elias, **Lk 9:30- 31.**
- (4) The weeping over Jerusalem, **Lk 19:41-44.**
- (5) The bloody sweat, **Lk 22:44.**
- (6) The sending of Jesus to Herod, **Lk 23:7-12.**
- (7) The address to the daughters of Jerusalem, **23:27-31.**
- (8) "Father forgive them", **23:34.**
- (9) The penitent robber, **23:40-43.**
- (10) The disciples at Emmaus, **24:13-31.**
- (11) Particulars about the ascension. **24:50-53.**

Jensen's Survey of the NT:

PRAISE Chap. 1 ELIZABETH--MARY		MAINLY PECULIAR TO LUKE		ABOUT 60% PECULIAR TO LUKE														PRAISE 24:30-53					
		1	2	3	4:14	5	6:12	7	8	9:51	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			17	18	19:28	20
PREPARATION		IDENTIFICATION				INSTRUCTION														SACRIFICE			
		GALILEE				LATER JUDEAN AND PEREAN MINISTRIES TO JERUSALEM														AT JERUSALEM			
		MIRACLES ABOUND HERE				PARABLES ABOUND HERE														THE GREAT SACRIFICE		THE GRAND MIRACLE	
		"MIGHTY IN DEED" →				AND WORD" (24:19)														LAST MESSAGES		MISSION ACCOMPLISHED	
30 YEARS		1 1/2 YEARS				6 MONTHS														8 DAYS		50 DAYS	
KEY PHRASE: "SON OF MAN"												KEY VERSES: 19:10; 24:19											

Charles Swindoll:

LUKE

The Son of Man					
	Preface	Announced and Appearing	Ministering and Serving	Instructing and Submitting	Resurrected and Commissioning
		About 90 percent unique to Luke		About 60 percent unique to Luke	
		"Jesus the Nazarene . . . a prophet . . ."	" . . . mighty in deed . . ."	" . . . and word in the sight of God and all the people." (24:19)	
	CHAPTER 1:1-4	CHAPTERS 1:5-4:13	CHAPTERS 4:14-9:50	CHAPTERS 9:51-23:56	CHAPTER 24
Activity	Coming		Seeking		Saving
Location	Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Judea		Galilee	Judea and Perea	Jerusalem
Time	About 30 years		1 1/2 years	6 months	8 days 40 days
Theme	Jesus is the ideal Man, who comes to save all humankind — Jew and Gentile alike.				
Key Verse	19:10				
Christ in Luke	Jesus is the perfect God-Man, who comes to offer salvation to all people (19:10).				

While Luke's name never appears in this gospel, ancient Christian tradition unanimously ascribes the book to him. One ancient prologue written to introduce the gospel describes Luke as a Syrian from Antioch. With this piece of information, we can deduce that Luke was probably not Jewish. Paul also listed him with other Gentiles in his greetings to the Colossians (4:14). The ancient prologue goes on to state that Luke eventually settled in the Greek city of Thebes, where he died at age 84.

Luke's own introduction to his gospel indicates that Luke composed the letter with the purpose of providing a careful rendering of the events of Christ's life in chronological order. As a physician, Luke would have been trained as a careful observer, a quality that would have been invaluable in this project. The result was the first part of a two-volume work written to Theophilus. We know the subsequent volume as Acts.

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Structure of Luke's Gospel

Focus	Introduction of Son of Man 1:1 - 4:13	Ministry of Son of Man 4:14 - 9:50	Rejection of Son of Man 9:51 - 19:27	Crucifixion & Resurrection of Son of Man 19:28 - 24:53
Divisions	Advent	Activities	Antagonisms & Admonition	Application & Authentication
Topics	Seeking the Lost →			Saving the Lost
	Miracles Prominent →		Teaching Prominent	
Place	Israel	Galilee	Israel	Jerusalem
Time	c. 4 B.C. - A.D. 33			

The Gospel of Luke															
Focus	Appearance			Activity						Affliction					
Divisions	Childhood of the Son of Man		Companions of the Son of Man	Confrontations of the Son of Man		Conduct of the Son of Man	Comparisons by the Son of Man		Counsel from the Son of Man		Conflicts over the Son of Man		Crucifixion of the Son of Man		
	1	2	3	6	7	9	10	12	13	15	16	18	19	21	22
Topics	Miracles						Parables				Plots				
	Seeking & Teaching										Suffering & Saving				
Place	Jerusalem			Galilee			Samaria & Perea			Jerusalem					
Time	5 B.C. - A.D. 33														
Author	Luke the Doctor														

textualcriticism.scienceontheweb.net: OT Quotes – Luke

	Lukan Reference	Old Testament Quotation	Who Quoted By (speaker)	Person / Group Addressed, Discussed, Centered Upon
<i>Introductory Formula to Main Body of Gospel</i>				
A) B)	4:18 - 19 7:27b	Isaiah 61:1 - 2 Malachi 3:1	Jesus Jesus	Jesus John the Baptist
<i>People Blinded under Pre-ordained Divine Plan</i>				
I.	8:10b 10:27	Isaiah 6:9 Deut. 6:5/Lev 19:18	Jesus a lawyer	The People the Law
<i>People must learn to Worship in Spirit and Truth</i>				
II.	13:35b 18:20	Psalms 118:26 Exod. 20:12-16/Deut.5:16-20	Jesus Jesus	The People the Law
<i>People Worship Blindly</i>				
III.	19:38a 19:46 20:17 20:37b 20:42-3 22:37	Psalms 118:26 Isa 56:7/Jer 7:11 Psalms 118:22 Exod. 3:6, 15 Psalm 110:1 Isaiah 53:12	The People Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus Jesus	Jesus the Temple Himself God/Himself Himself Himself
<i>Lamentation for Jerusalem</i>				
IV.	23:30 23:46	Hosea 10:8 Psalm 31:5	Jesus Jesus	The People Himself

OUTLINE OF LUKE

MESSIANIC MISSION OF THE SON OF MAN

THE SON OF MAN HAS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST

(1:1-4) PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE -- THE RELIABLE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CONFIRMS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

- A. **AUTHOR** = Luke
- B. **(:1-2) SOURCES USED** = Primary sources = eyewitnesses
- C. **(:3a) METHOD** = Careful investigation / Orderly account
- D. **(:3b) RECIPIENT** = Theophilus
- E. **(:4) PURPOSE** = Certainty Regarding the Truth

I. (1:5 – 2:52) NATIVITY AND INFANCY NARRATIVES FOR JOHN THE BAPTIST AND JESUS

A. (1:5-25) BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST ANNOUNCED = THE FORERUNNER -- UNEXPECTED DIVINE INTERVENTION SETS IN MOTION THE COMING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO POINT SINNERS TO THE MESSIAH

- 1. (:5-17) Announcement of the Birth of John the Baptist
- 2. (:18-25) Reactions to the Announced Birth of John the Baptist
 - a. (:18-20) Reaction of Zechariah = Cynicism
 - b. (:21-23) Interaction with the People = Confusion
 - c. (:24-25) Reaction of Elizabeth = Contemplation -- Thanksgiving and Rejoicing

B: (26-38) BIRTH OF JESUS ANNOUNCED = THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH -- THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INCARNATION PROVIDES THE INITIAL DEFINITION FOR THE ROLE OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

- 1. (:26-33) Gabriel's Announcement of the Birth of Jesus to Mary
 - a. (:26-27) Gabriel's Mission to the Virgin Mary
 - b. (:28-29) Gabriel's Greeting of Grace and Favor Leads to Initial Concern
 - c. (:30) Gabriel's Reassurance
 - d. (:31-33) Gabriel's Christology – 7 Truths about Jesus Revealed:
 - 1) Conceived by the Holy Spirit
 - 2) Human Son
 - 3) Named Jesus
 - 4) Destined for Greatness
 - 5) Called Unique Son of God
 - 6) Given the Throne of David – Royalty
 - 7) Unending Reign
- 2. (:34-38) Mary's Response of Submissive Faith - Despite the Mystery of the Process
 - a. (:34-37) Logistical Question Regarding the Process of Conception and Birth
 - b. (:38) Submissive Commitment of Faith

C. (1:39-56) MARY'S MAGNIFICAT = HER BEATITUDES --

WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE BLESSINGS THAT FLOW OUT OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD

- (:39-40) Prologue – Mary Visits Elizabeth / John the Baptist Visits Jesus
- 1. (:41-45) Interaction between Mary and Elizabeth
 - a. (:41) Something Big is Happening

- b. (:42-45) Elizabeth Joyfully Pronounces Blessing
- 2. (:46-55) Mary's Magnificat
 - a. (:46-48) Recognition of Her Blessed State
 - b. (:49-55) Recitation of God's Blessings Flowing out of His Character
- (:56) Epilogue – Conclusion of the Visit

D. (1:57-80) THE VISITATION OF GOD --

THE DIVINE VISITATION EVOKES AWE, AMAZEMENT AND HEARTFELT REJOICING

- 1. (:57-66) Birth of John the Baptist – God Intervening in Human History
 - a. (:57-58) Reaction to the Birth of John the Baptist
 - b. (:59-63) Reaction to the Naming of John the Baptist – Family Feud
 - c. (:64-66) Reaction to the Restoration of Speech to Zacharias
- 2. (:67-79) Benedictus of Zacharias – Covenant Promises about to be Fulfilled by the Divine Visitation
 - a. (:68-71) Praise for Salvation via the Promised Davidic Messiah
 - b. (:72-75) Praise for God's Mercy and Faithfulness to Deliver His People to Serve
 - c. (:76-79) Praise for the Special Role of John the Baptist to Prepare the Way for the Light of Life and Prince of Peace
- (:80) Epilogue – Development of John the Baptist

E. (2:1-20) BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR = CHRIST THE LORD --

THE HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH MAKE HIS MISSION OF BRINGING GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE TO MAN EVEN MORE ASTOUNDING

- 1. (:1-7) Birth of Jesus Arranged to Take Place in Bethlehem
 - a. (:1-3) Providential Circumstances = Mandatory Census
 - b. (:4-5) Prophetic City for the Birth = Bethlehem
 - c. (:6-7) Pomp and Ceremony Absent at Birth of the Messiah
- 2. (:8-14) Birth of Jesus Announced to the Shepherds
 - a. (:8) Ordinary Activities of the Shepherds
 - b. (:9) Extra-Ordinary Divine Visitation
 - c. (:10-12) Announcement of the Birth of Jesus
 - d. (:13-14) Accompanying Angelic Choir Singing Hallelujah Chorus
- 3. (:15-20) Birth of Jesus Authenticated and Celebrated
 - a. (:15-16) Authentication
 - b. (:17-19) Revelation
 - c. (:20) Celebration

F. (2:21-40) PROPHETIC INSIGHT OF SIMEON AND ANNA --

PROPHETIC INSIGHT INTO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS REVEALS HIS GLOBAL MESSIANIC AND REDEMPTIVE MISSION

- (:21-24) Prologue– Jesus Fulfilled the Law of Moses
 - a. (:21) Circumcision and Naming of Jesus
 - b. (:22-24) Purification of Mary and Presentation before the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem
- 1. (:25-35) Prophetic Insight of Simeon Regarding This Infant Jesus
 - a. (:25-26) Unique Role of Simeon
 - b. (:27-32) Universal Redemptive Mission of the Messiah
 - c. (:33-35) Ultimate Impact of the Child
- 2. (:36-38) Prophetic Insight of Anna Regarding This Infant Jesus
 - a. (:36-37) Unique Role of Anna
 - b. (:38) Unrelenting Thanksgiving and Testimony to the Redemptive Role of the Long-Awaited Messiah
- (:39-40) Epilogue– Jesus Continued to Grow and Develop
 - a. (:39) Settling in Hometown of Nazareth

b. (:40) Positive Development of Jesus

G. (2:41-52) KINGDOM PRIORITIES --

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER MUST TAKE PRIORITY
EVEN OVER OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR EARTHLY PARENTS

(:41-42) Setting – Kingdom Priorities Become Noticed in the Normal Course of Obedient Living --
Jesus Visiting Jerusalem at Age 12 with His Earthly

1. (:43-45) Surprise – Earthly Parents Can Be Surprised By Kingdom Priorities --
Earthly Parents Searching for Jesus

2. (:46-47) Student / Teacher Dialogue in the Temple –
Jesus Found Engaged in Theological Dialogue in the Temple

3. (:48-50) Summary Explanation – Loyalty to Kingdom Priorities should be Expected

(:51-52) Epilogue – Submission to Earthly Parents and Continued Development

a. (:51a) Consistent Pattern of Submission

b. (:51b) Constant Reevaluation on the Part of Mary

c. (:52) Continual Growth and Development

II. (3:1 – 4:13) THE BEGINNING MINISTRIES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND OF JESUS

A. (3:1-20) THE BEGINNING MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

1. (3:1-14) Message of John the Baptist – Repentance and the Fruit of Repentance –

Preparing the Way for the Lord Requires Repentance that is Proven Genuine by the Fruit of Repentance

(:1-2a) Timeframe for the Ministry of John the Baptist Defined by Prominent Authorities

1) Political Hierarchy

2) Religious Hierarchy: Annas and Caiaphas

a. (:2b-6) Way of the Lord Prepared by the Ministry of John the Baptist

(:2b-3a) His Entrance onto the Stage of History

1) (:3b) His Core Message

2) (:4-5) His Core Function

3) (:6) His Core Goal

b. (:7-9) Warning to Religious Hypocrites

1) (:7) Labeling the Hypocrites = “Brood of Vipers”

2) (:8a) Lesson for the Hypocrites = Demonstrate Repentance

3) (:8b) Legacy of the Hypocrites = No Free Pass

4) (:9) Lethal Destruction Aimed at the Hypocrites = Fire of God’s Wrath

c. (:10-14) Word of Correction: Display of Righteousness Appropriate to Repentance by
Being Generous Instead of Greedy

1) (:10-11) Addressing the Multitudes = Common People

2) (:12-13) Addressing the Tax-Gatherers – Hated Jews

3) (14) Addressing the Soldiers – Hated Romans

2. (3:15-18) Prophetic Testimony of John the Baptist --

The Ministry of Christ (Dealing with Ultimate Destiny) Is Far Superior to That of John the Baptist

(:15) Prologue – Curiosity about John the Baptist vs. Jesus

a. (:16) Contrast in Baptisms between John and Jesus

1) Symbolic Baptism Administered by John with Water

2) Superiority of Christ vs Humility of John the Baptist

3) Supernatural Baptism Administered by Christ in Connection with Holy Spirit and Fire

b. (:17) Condemnation Administered by Christ at His Second Coming as He Separates the
Wheat from the Chaff

1) Described in General

2) Described with Respect to Ultimate Salvation

3) Described with Respect to Ultimate Condemnation

- (:18) Epilogue– Continuing Preaching Ministry of John the Baptist
3. (3:19-20) Imprisonment of John the Baptist --

Wickedness Hates the Light

- a. (:19) Wickedness Deserves Reproof – Herod Reproved by John the Baptist
1) Reproof for Singular Sin
2) Reproof for Multitude of Sins
b. (:20) Wickedness Resists Reproof – Herod Imprisons John

B. (3:21 – 4:13) THE BEGINNING MINISTRY OF JESUS

1. (3:21-22) Divine Testimony at the Baptism of Jesus --
At the Baptism of Jesus, God Endorses His Son as Both Beloved Deity and Suffering Servant
Empowered by the Holy Spirit to Accomplish His Redemptive Mission
(:21a) The Occasion = Jesus Being Baptized by John
a. (:21b-22a) Testimony / Endorsement of the Holy Spirit
b. (:22b) Testimony / Endorsement of God the Father
1) Affirmation of His Person = Beloved Son
2) Affirmation of His Works = Well-Pleased in the works of the Suffering Servant
2. (3:23-38) DNA Testimony --
The Genealogy of Jesus Christ Testifies to His Legitimate Claim to be the Promised Messiah
and to the Universality of His Saving Work
3. (4:1-13) Temptation of Jesus --
Jesus as the Second Adam Defeated the Temptations of Satan by Relying on the Word of God
in the Power of the Spirit
(:1-2) Prologue – The 5 Conditions of the Testing
1) Led by the Holy Spirit
2) Isolated in the Wilderness
3) Endured a Period of 40 Days
4) Tempted by Satan
5) Fasted
a. (:3-4) First Temptation – Failure to Trust God’s Provision –
Can God Care for Me? Goodness and Love of God Attacked
Sufficiency -- Lust of the Flesh
1) (:3) Satan’s Challenge
2) (:4) Christ’s Response
b. (:5-8) Second Temptation – Failure to Trust God’s Kingdom Program --
How Does God Want to Accomplish His Agenda? Wisdom of God Attacked
Supremacy – Pride of Life
1) (:5-7) Satan’s Challenge
2) (:8) Christ’s Response
c. (:9-12) Third Temptation – Failure to Trust God’s Providence –
How Does God Want to Deliver and Exalt Me? Sovereignty of God Attacked
Sustainability -- Lust of the Eyes
1) (:9-11) Satan’s Challenge
2) (:12) Christ’s Response
(:13) Epilogue -- Satan Departs until Later

III. (4:14 – 9:50) THE MINISTRY OF JESUS IN GALILEE

Malick: Jesus presented himself as the Suffering Servant who was bringing the deliverance of the nation, and clarified his ministry through teaching his disciples of his suffering Messiahship so that they might not reject him, but choose to follow his example as suffering-ministers

(14-15) TRANSITION

1. (:14) Jesus Returns to Galilee and His Reputation Spreads
2. (:15) Jesus Begins Effective Public Teaching Ministry

A. (4:16-30) HOMETOWN RECEPTION OF JESUS TURNS UGLY FAST

PROCLAMATION OF GRACIOUS MESSIANIC MISSION THAT EXTENDS TO THE GENTILES REJECTED BY HOSTILE HOMETOWN CROWD

1. (:16-21) The Announcement in His Home Town of His Messianic Redemptive Mission
 - a. (:16-17) Preparation for the Public Reading of Scripture
 - b. (:18-19) Proclamation of the Messianic Text from Isaiah 61
 - c. (:20-21) Prophetic Fulfillment of the Scripture
2. (:22-30) The Anticipation of a Negative Home Town Response – Jesus Driven Out of Nazareth
 - a. (:22) Superficial Praise
 - b. (:23-24) Stunning Principle
 - c. (:25-27) Surprising Proof –
 - 2 OT Examples of Prophetic Blessing Directed Towards Outsiders Instead of Insiders
 - 1) (:25-26) Example from Ministry of Elijah 1 Kings 17:8-16
 - 2) (:27) Example from Ministry of Elisha 2 Kings 5:1-14
 - d. (:28-30) Severe Persecution – Complete Reversal of Reaction from the People

B. (4:31-44) POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

WE NEED TO SUBMIT TO THE ABSOLUTE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST WHO REIGNS OVER THE KINGDOM OF GOD

- (:31-32) Prelude – Developing a Reputation for Power and Authority in Capernaum and Beyond
1. (:31a) Place of Teaching = Capernaum
 2. (:31b) Pattern of Teaching = Sabbath
 3. (:32) Power of Teaching = Message was With Authority
1. (:33-37) Power and Authority Over Demons
 - a. (:33a) Demon Possession
 - b. (:33b-34) Demon Testimony
 - c. (:35) Demon Exorcism
 - d. (:36-37) Reaction of the People
 2. (:38-41) Power and Authority Over Disease
 - a. (:38-39) Very Personal Healing – Mother-in-law of Simon Peter
 - b. (:40-41) General Scope of Healing
 - 1) (:40) Various Kinds of Sickness
 - 2) (:41) Miraculous Healing From Demons
- (:42-44) Postlude – Priority of His Ministry
- a. (:42a) Seeking Solitude – Needs Private Time with the Father
 - b. (:42b) Swarmed by the Multitudes – Not Constrained by People’s Desires
 - c. (:43-44) Set on His Course – Committed to His Widespread Preaching Mission

C. (5:1-11) MAKING FISHERS OF MEN – PATHWAY OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP (FORSAKING ALL AND FOLLOWING CHRIST)

OFFERS THE PROSPECT OF ABUNDANT MINISTRY FRUIT DESPITE OUR SINFULNESS BECAUSE OF THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS

1. (:1-3) Teaching Lesson – Feeding the Multitudes the Word of God – Setting the Stage for the Object Lesson
 - a. (:1a) Logistical Problem – Need a Better Platform for Teaching
 - b. (:1b-2) Recognizing the Resources at Hand

- c. (:3) Effective Solution
- 2. (:4-7) Fishing Lesson = Object Lesson – Jesus Can Catch a Lot of Fish
 - a. (:4) Bold Command – Jesus Knows Where the Fish Are
 - b. (:5) Natural Impossibility – Human Resources are Not the Issue or the Limitation
 - c. (:6-7) Supernatural Catch – Fellowship in the Gospel Requires Partnership to Reel in the Huge Catch that Jesus Will Command
- 3. (:8-11) Discipleship Lesson = Application of Object Lesson – The Pathway of Obedient Christian Discipleship Involves Fishing for Men
 - a. (:8) Jesus Can Deal With Our Doubts and Fears
 - b. (:9-10a) Jesus Will Constantly Amaze Us
 - c. (:10B) Jesus Keeps Us Focused on the Goal of Fishing for Men
 - d. (:11) Jesus Demands That We Forsake All and Follow Him

D. (5:12-26) ONLY JESUS CAN DO THIS – 2 LEVELS OF HEALING

THE MIRACLES OF PHYSICAL HEALING AUTHENTICATE THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS TO CLEANSE FROM SIN AND TO FORGIVE SINS

- 1. (:12-16) Healing the Leper – Jesus Can Make the Unclean Clean
 - a. (:12) Ministry Petition
 - b. (:13-14) Ministry Performance
 - c. (:15-16) Ministry Pressure
- 2. (:17-26) Healing the Paralyzed Man – Jesus Can Forgive Sins
 - a. (:17) The Circumstances Surrounding the Miraculous Healing
 - b. (:18-19) The Persistence and Creativity of Seeking Healing From Jesus
 - c. (:20) The Spiritual Reality of Forgiving Sins By Grace Through Faith
 - d. (:21-26) The Physical Object Lesson of Healing the Paralytic

E. (5:27-39) WHAT'S RADICALLY DIFFERENT ABOUT JESUS?

CRITICS OF CHRISTIANITY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE RADICAL MISSION AND THE NEW MOVEMENT COMMANDED BY JESUS

- (:27-28) Transition – Radical Mission = Call of a Tax Collector to Follow Jesus
- (:29) Setting – Reception at the House of Levi
- 1. (:30-35) Two Complaining Questions – The Conduct of Jesus and His Disciples Makes Sense When You Understand Their Radical Mission
 - a. (:30-32) Question #1 – Why Associate with Sinners?
 - b. (:33-35) Question #2 – Why Not Fast?
- 2. (:36-39) Two Insightful Parables – The Movement Ushered In By Jesus: Breaks with Tradition and Surpasses the Old
 - a. (:36) Parable #1 – The New Movement Breaks with Tradition
 - b. (:37-39) Parable #2 – The New Movement Surpasses the Old

F. (6:1-11) TWO SABBATH CONTROVERSIES

COMPASSION FOR HUMAN NEED TRUMPS LEGALISTIC CONFORMITY BECAUSE:

- JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH
- JESUS PUTS A PRIORITY ON DOING GOOD
- 1. (:1-5) Sabbath Controversy #1 – Dealing With Hunger
 - a. (:1) Fundamental Human Need – Hunger
 - b. (:2-4) Fundamental Difference in Perspective – Legalistic Conformity vs. Showing Compassion
 - c. (:5) Fundamental Principle – Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath
- 2. (:6-11) Sabbath Controversy #2 – Dealing With Physical Handicap
 - a. (:6) Fundamental Human Need – Physical Handicap
 - b. (:7-8) Fundamental Difference in Perspective –

Legalistic Conformity vs. Showing Compassion

- c. (:9) Fundamental Principle – Jesus Puts a Priority on Doing Good
- d. (:10-11) Fundamental Difference in Action – Healing vs. Malice

G. (6:12-16) THE DREAM TEAM – SELECTION OF THE APOSTLES – A FEW GOOD MEN

PAY ATTENTION TO LEADERSHIP SELECTION

- 1. (:12-13) Choosing of the 12 – A Significant Ministry Transition
 - a. (:12) Prayer Preparation
 - b. (:13) Selection Process
- 2. (:14-16) Composition of the 12 -- 6 Groupings of 2 Apostles Each

H. (6:17-26) BEATITUDES – BLESSINGS VS WOES

THOSE WHO EMBRACE THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

RECEIVE BLESSING RATHER THAN CONDEMNATION

(:17-19) Setting

- 1. (:20-23) Blessings = Happiness Now and Forever for Embracing the Value System of the Kingdom of God
 - a. (:20-21) Kingdom Character Traits – Lead to Blessing
 - b. (:22-23) Kingdom Persecution Indicates Alignment with Jesus and the OT Prophets -- Leads to Great Reward
- 2. (:24-26) Woes = Condemnation for Embracing the Value System of the World
 - a. (:24-25) Worldly Character Traits – Lead to Condemnation
 - b. (:26) Widespread Popularity Indicates Alignment with the World's Value System and the False Prophets of the OT – Leads to Condemnation

I. (6:27-38) COMMANDMENTS -- RADICAL LOVE AND MERCY

LOVING OUR ENEMIES:

- DISTINGUISHES DISCIPLES FROM THE WORLD

- REVEALS OUR CONNECTION TO OUR MERCIFUL FATHER AND

- IMPROVES OUR RELATIONSHIP FOR THE SAKE OF EVANGELISM

- 1. (:27-31) Command to Love Even Our Enemies
 - a. (:27-28) Practice Love and Goodness to Your Enemies
 - b. (:29) Practice Unnatural Restraint and Undeserved Kindness
 - c. (:30) Practice Unlimited Generosity
 - d. (:31) Practice the Golden Rule to Everyone
- 2. (:32-34) Contrast Between Radical Christ-Like Love and Love Practiced by the World
 - 3 Examples to Prove His Point:
 - a. (:32) Regarding Loving
 - b. (:33) Regarding Doing Good
 - c. (:34) Regarding Lending Expecting Nothing in Return
- 3. (:35-36) Connection to the Father Explains Why We Are to Love In This Manner and to This Extent
 - a. (:35a) Repetition of the Command
 - b. (:35b) Reward Promised
 - c. (:35c) Reason for Obedience is Your Connection to the Father – by Nature and by Action
 - d. (:36) Repetition of the Command Now Linked to Family Character
- 4. (:37-38) Command to Pursue Gracious Pardon Over Judgmental Condemnation –
With Corresponding Benefits That Improve Our Relationship for the Sake of Evangelism
 - a. (:37-38a) Clear Command with Corresponding Benefits –
Pursue Gracious Pardon over Judgmental Condemnation
 - b. (:38b) Fundamental Principle – You Will Get What You Give

J. (6:39-45) WARNING AGAINST FOLLOWING THE WRONG TYPE OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS

BE CAREFUL WHOM YOU FOLLOW – 4 TYPES OF LEADERS NOT TO FOLLOW:

1. (:39) The Blind – You Need Discernment = Light vs. Darkness
2. (:40) The Novice – You Need Experience and Wisdom = Expertise
3. (:41-42) The Hypocrite – You Need Integrity = Walk the Talk
 - a. (:41-42a) Tendency to Concentrate on the Sins of Others
 - b. (:42b) Priority of Dealing with Your Own Sins
4. (:43-45) The Unrighteous – You Need Righteousness = Proved by Fruit
 - a. (:43-44) The Condition of the Tree Will Show Itself in Fruit – Good vs Bad
 - b. (:45) The Condition of the Heart Will Show Itself in Speech – Good vs Evil

K. (6:46-49) TWO CONTRASTING FOUNDATIONS

SPIRITUAL SECURITY COMES FROM OBEYING THE WORD OF THE LORD

1. (:46) Teaching Lesson = Embracing the Lordship of Christ Requires Obedience, Not Just Lip Service
2. (:47-49) Object Lesson = Houses Built on 2 Different Foundations
 - a. (:47-48) House Built on Solid Foundation = Well Built / Destined for Permanence
 - b. (:49) House Built on No Foundation = Poorly Built / Destined for Destruction

L. (7:1-10) AMAZING FAITH – HOW SWEET THE PICTURE

THE GREAT FAITH OF THE HUMBLE GENTILE CENTURION FOCUSED ON THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS TO JUST SPEAK THE SAVING WORD

- (:1) Transition – Scene Switches Back to Capernaum = Ministry
1. (:2-5) Testimony to the Worthiness of the Centurion and His Dying Slave
 - a. (:2-3) The Worthiness of the Dying Slave Motivates the Petition for Healing
 - b. (:4-5) The Worthiness of the Centurion Commended to Jesus as the Basis for Granting the Petition
 2. (:6-8) Testimony to the Authority of Jesus
 - a. (:6-7) Recognition of the Power and Authority of Jesus
 - b. (:8) Appreciation of the Response to Authority
 3. (:9-10) Testimony to the Great Faith of This Gentile Centurion
 - a. (:9) Jesus Proclaims the Special Greatness of This Gentile's Faith
 - b. (:10) Jesus Performs the Healing

M. (7:11-17) DEALING WITH HEARTACHE

NO HEARTACHE IS TOO HOPELESS FOR THE COMPASSIONATE GRACE OF JESUS -- WHO ALONE HAS THE POWER OVER EVEN DEATH

- (:11) Prologue – Divinely Ordained Setting
1. (:12) Sad Funeral Procession for the Widow's Only Son
 - a. Hopelessness of the Dead Man
 - b. Anguish of the Mother
 - c. Grief of the Crowd
 2. (:13-15) Compassionate Restoration of Life by Jesus
 - a. (:13) Jesus Intervenes – His Motivation
 - b. (:14) Jesus Initiates – His Interaction
 - c. (:15) Jesus Imparts – His Restoration
 3. (:16) Incomplete Recognition of Who Jesus Is
 - a. Enough Impact to Inspire Fear
 - b. Enough Impact to Relate This Event to the Power of God
- (:17) Epilogue – Spreading Reputation of Jesus

N. (7:18-35) THE MIRACLES OF JESUS SAY EVERYTHING THAT NEED TO BE SAID

THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY JESUS:

- CONFIRM HIS IDENTITY AS PROMISED MESSIAH

- CALM THE DOUBTS OF COMMENDED DISCIPLES (LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST)

- CALL OUT THE DUPLICITY OF HIS UNREASONABLE CRITICS

(:18) Prologue

1. (:19-23) Confirmation Regarding the Identity of Jesus as the Messiah – His Miracles Confirm His Messiahship

a. (:19-20) Confirmation Requested by John the Baptist – Take Your Doubts to Jesus

b. (:21-23) Confirmation Provided by the Ministry of the Messiah

2. (:24-28) Commendation Regarding the Greatness of John the Baptist – His Doubts Don't Compromise His Greatness

a. (:24-26) Commending John by Use of Rhetorical Questions

b. (:27-28) Commending John by Explicit Testimony

3. (:29-35) Contrast Regarding the Response to the Ministry of John the Baptist and of Jesus – Critics Hide behind Unreasonable Smokescreens

a. (:29-30) John's Baptism Proves to be a Watershed Between:

1) (:29) Those Accepting God's Kingdom Program = Common People

2) (:30) Those Rejecting God's Kingdom Program = Jewish Religious Leaders

b. (:31-34) Critics Will Be Critics – Impossible to Please Them

1) (:31-32) Never Satisfied

2) (:33-34) Always Finding Fault – With Both John the Baptist and Jesus – Despite Their Contrasting Styles

c. (:35) Wisdom Will Be Vindicated – Unreasonable Critics Will Be Unmasked

O. (7:36 – 8:3) EXTRAORDINARY FORGIVENESS . . . EXTRAVAGANT LOVE

FORGIVEN SINNERS DISPLAY EXTRAVAGANT LOVE THAT THE SELF RIGHTEOUS REJECT

1. (7:36-39) The Plot = What Happened at the Dinner?

a. (:36) The Setting – Dinner at Simon's House = Self-Righteous Pharisee

b. (:37) The Surprise Intruder – Disgraced Prostitute Bringing an Alabaster Vial of Perfume

c. (:38) The Story Line Played Out = Extravagant Display of Love and Gratitude

d. (:39) The Scornful Reaction on the Part of the Host Pharisee

2. (7:40-50) The Principle = The Point Jesus Wants to Drive Home

a. (:40-43) Object Lesson – The Greater the Forgiveness . . . the Greater the Love

b. (:44-46) Application – The Prostitute Showed Jesus More Consideration Than the Host

c. (:47-48) Connection Between Forgiveness and Love (Gratitude)

d. (:49-50) Connection Between Faith and Forgiveness of Sins and Peace

(8:1-3) Epilogue – Support for the Itinerant Preaching Ministry of Jesus

a. (8:1a) Itinerant Preaching Ministry of Jesus

b. (8:1b-3) Inclusive Ministry Support from a Wide Range of Disciples

P. (8:4-21) RIGHT RESPONSE TO THE WORD OF GOD IS KEY

1. (8:4-15) Parable of the Soils –

Response to the Gospel Depends on Your Heart Condition –

a. (:4) Teaching Logistics

b. (:5-8) Details of the Parable – 4 Types of Soil and the Results

(:5a) Prologue

1) (:5b) Seed on the Road

2) (:6) Seed on Rocky Ground

3) (:7) Seed among Thorns

4) (:8a) Seed on Good Soil

(:8b) Postscript

c. (:9-10) Aside – Parables 101 – Introduction to Parables

1) (:9) Perplexity about Parables: Why Use Parables? / What Do They Mean?

2) (:10) Purpose of Parables

- d. (:11-15) Interpretation of the Parable – 4 Types of Soil and the Results
 - (:11) Consistent Thread = Sowing the Seed
 - 1) (:12) Seed on the Road – Hardened Hearts vs. Spiritual Life
 - 2) (:13) Seed on Rocky Ground – Shallow Hearts vs Spiritual Perseverance
 - 3) (:14) Seed among Thorns – Distracted (Preoccupied) Hearts vs Spiritual Devotion
 - 4) (:15) Seed on Good Soil – Fruitful Hearts
- 2. (8:16-21) Application of the Parable of the Soils –
Be Careful How You Listen and Respond to the Word of God
 - a. (:16-18) Parable of the Lamp – Be Careful How You Listen to the Word of God =
Key to Gaining Additional Spiritual Insight
 - 1) (:16-17) God Ultimately Desires Illumination Rather Than Concealment
 - 2) (:18) Degree of Attentiveness Determines Degree of Spiritual Insight
 - b. (:19-21) Incident with His Family – Be Careful How You Respond to the Word of God =
Key to Inclusion in the Family of God
 - 1) (:19) Family Situation
 - 2) (:20-21) Spiritual Lesson

Q. (8:22-56) ABSOLUTE POWER AND AUTHORITY

WHATEVER THE CRISIS, FAITH IN THE PERSON AND POWER AND AUTHORITY
OF JESUS IS THE ANSWER

- 1. (:22-25) Power Over Nature
 - a. (:22-23) Crisis Situation – Danger of Drowning
 - b. (:24) Confrontation – Disciples vs. Master
 - c. (:25) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Trust the One Who Has All Power over Nature
- 2. (:26-39) Power Over Demons
 - a. (:26-29) Crisis Situation – Distress of the Demon Possessed Man
 - b. (:30-33) Confrontation – Jesus Grants the Entreaty of the Demons
 - c. (:34-39) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Testify to the One Who Has Power over the
Strongest Demons
- 3. (:40-48) Power Over Sickness
 - a. (:40-44) 2 Crisis Situations –
 - 1) (:40-42a) First Crisis = Jairus' Daughter
 - 2) (:42b-44) Second Crisis = Woman With Hemorrhage
 - b. (:45-47) Confrontation – Between Jesus and the Woman with the Hemorrhage
 - c. (:48) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Trust in the One Who Has Power over Sickness
to Cleanse You From All Defilement
- 4. (:49-56) Power Over Death
 - a. (:49) Critical Situation – Jairus' Daughter Reported as Dead
 - b. (:50) Confrontation – Between Jesus and Jairus – Faith Replaces Fear with Hope
 - c. (:51-56) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Trust in the One Who Has Power over Death

R. (9:1-17) WHO IS ADEQUATE FOR THESE THINGS?

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT KING EQUIPS INADEQUATE DISCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

- 1. (:1-6) Apostles Sent Out on a Missions Trip – Preaching and Healing
 - a. (:1-2) Commissioning for the Missions Trip
 - b. (:3-5) Logistical Instructions for the Missions Trip
 - c. (:6) Execution of the Missions Trip
- 2. (:7-9) Aside: Perplexity of Herod Regarding Identity of Jesus
 - a. (:7-8) Confusion
 - b. (:9) Curiosity
- 3. (:10-11) Aftermath of the Missions Trip
 - a. (:10a) Missions Report

- b. (:10b) Missions Break
- c. (:11) Missions Continuation
- 4. (:12-17) Feeding of the 5,000
 - a. (:12-14a) Commissioning for the Feeding
 - b. (:14b-16) Logistical Instructions
 - c. (:17) Execution of the Feeding Miracle – Jesus Supplies and Satisfies All Our Needs

S. (9:18-22) THE ONLY QUESTION THAT MATTERS

JESUS CHALLENGES EVERYONE TO KNOW HIS TRUE IDENTITY AND TO RESPOND TO HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION

- 1. (:18-19) Confusion of the Multitudes Regarding the Identity of Jesus = Human Opinion
 - a. (:18) Key Question – What is the Word on the Street?
 - b. (:19) Speculative Answers
- 2. (:20) Confession of Peter Regarding the Identity of Jesus = Divine Revelation
- 3. (:21-22) Caution and Clarification Regarding Messianic Mission

T. (9:23-27) THE TOTAL COMMITMENT INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP

THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP DEMANDS A COMPLETE REORIENTATION OF ONE'S LIFE

- 1. (:23-24) Essence of Genuine Christian Discipleship
 - a. (:23) Following Jesus
 - b. (:24) Forsaking Self Interest
- 2. (:25-26) Emptiness of Friendship with the World
 - a. (:25) Empty Gain = Eternal Loss
 - b. (:26) Eternal Shame / Missing Out on Glory
- 3. (:27) Expectation of the Nearness of Kingdom Days

U. (9:28-36) TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER AT THE TRANSFIGURATION

THE TRANSFIGURATION PROVIDES VISUAL AND AUDIBLE TESTIMONY TO BOTH THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AND THE NECESSITY OF HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION

- 1. (:28-31) The Impact of the Transfiguration Event on Jesus = Confirmation Regarding His Redemptive Mission
 - a. (:28) Venue for the Transfiguration Event
 - b. (:29) Visible Physical Transformation
 - c. (:30-31) Visitation by Moses and Elijah
 - 2. (:32-33) The Impact of the Transfiguration Event on Peter, James and John = Confusion
 - a. (:32) Saw the Transfiguration Event Correctly
 - b. (:33) Suggested An Outcome That Was Off Target
 - 3. (:34-36) The Impact of the Transfiguration Event Delivered by God the Father = Clarity – by Way of Divine Testimony
 - a. (:34) Divine Presence
 - b. (:35) Divine Testimony
 - c. (:36a) Divine Focus
- (:36b) Epilogue

V. (9:37-50) CORRECTIVE PHASE IN THE TRAINING OF THE 12

JESUS ADDRESSES WRONG PERSPECTIVES ON THE PART OF HIS APOSTLES WITH A SERIES OF 4 CORRECTIONS

- 1. (:37-43a) Correcting a Spirit of Ministry Inadequacy – (Lack of Faith When Confronted with Difficult Ministry Challenges) Focus on the Greatness of God

- a. (:37-40) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Lack of Faith When Confronted with Difficult Ministry Challenge
- b. (:41-42) Correction = Jesus Rebukes the Demon and Heals the Boy
- c. (:43a) Testimony to the Greatness of God
- 2. (:43b-45) Correcting a Spirit of False Expectations –
(Embracing the Superficial Popularity Offered by the Fickle Crowds)
Focus on the Rejection by Men Associated with Jesus’ Redemptive Mission
 - a. (:43b) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Embracing Superficial Popularity
 - b. (:44) Correction = Sobering Reality of Rejection Associated with Redemptive Mission
 - c. (:45) Problem = Lack of Discernment
- 3. (:46-48) Correcting a Spirit of Selfish Ambition –
(Striving to be the Greatest)
Focus on Respecting the Least Significant Individuals
 - a. (:46) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Spirit of Selfish Ambition
 - b. (:47-48) Correction = Respect the Least Significant Individuals
- 4. (:49-50) Correcting a Spirit of Sectarianism –
(Limiting the Ministry of Those Who Differ)
Focus on Tolerance
 - a. (:49) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Spirit of Sectarianism
 - b. (:50) Correction = Tolerance

IV. (9:51 – 19:27) THE MINISTRY OF JESUS ON THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM

Malick: As Jesus moved toward Jerusalem, he was continually rejected by the religious leaders as Messiah, he exposed the evil of people by emphasizing God’s requirement of loyal love, and he prepared his disciples for service by instructing them in God’s requirements of faithful love, warning them of his upcoming suffering, and proclaiming the upcoming judgment upon the nation

A. (9:51 – 11:13) KINGDOM PRIORITIES

- 1. (9:51-62) Priority of Salvation – High Level of Commitment Required --
Maintain a Singular Focus (Without Distractions and Competing Priorities) on Seeking Conversions and Following Jesus
 - a. (:51-56) Priority of Seeking Conversions Rather Than Pronouncing Condemnation –
The Compassion (Mercy) Involved in Following Jesus
 - 1) (:51-53) Rejection by Prejudiced Samaritan Village
 - 2) (:54-56) Revenge Is Antithetical to the Mission of Seeking Conversions
 - b. (:57-62) Priority of Following Jesus Trumps All Possible Excuses –
The Commitment Involved in Following Jesus
 - 1) (:57-58) Excuse #1 = Unwilling to Embrace the Hardship of the Mission
 - 2) (:59-60) Excuse #2 = Family Commitments Require Me to Delay
 - 3) (:61-62) Excuse #3 = Other Distractions Compromise a Singular Focus
- 2. (10:1-24) Priority of Evangelism – High Level of Accountability and Condemnation --
Ministry Success Governed by Sovereign Grace Brings the Kingdom of God Near to the Lost Along with the Condemnation Associated with Rejection
 - a. (:1-9) Commissioning of the 70 for Evangelistic Blitz --
Bring the Kingdom of God Near to Those Who are Lost
 - b. (:10-16) Condemnation for Rejecting Jesus
 - 1) (:10-12) Accountability Once the Kingdom of God Has Come Near
 - 2) (:13-14) Applied to Chorazin and Bethsaida
 - 3) (:15) Applied to Capernaum
 - 4) (:16) Applied Universally Based on Rejection of Jesus
 - c. (:17-20) Celebration of Ministry Success – Reasons for Rejoicing

- 1) (:17) Subjugation of Demons – In the Name of Jesus
- 2) (:18-19) Subjugation of Satan = Over All the Power of the Enemy
- 3) (:20) Salvation Trumps Ministry Success as Cause for Rejoicing
- d. (:21-24) Control of Spiritual Revelation / Illumination – Governed by Divine Choice –
Reasons for Jesus to Greatly Rejoice:
 - 1) (:21) Paradox of Spiritual Revelation/Illumination -- Governed by Divine Choice
 - 2) (:22) Process of Spiritual Revelation/Illumination – Governed by Divine Choice
 - 3) (:23-24) Privilege of Spiritual Revelation/Illumination – Governed by Divine Choice
3. (10:25-37) Priority of Loving Our Neighbor --
How Good Do I Have to Be? -- Parable of the Good Samaritan –
God’s Standard of Righteousness Convicts Us All of Our Inability to Merit Salvation by Good Works –
2 Key Questions That Expose the Futility of Self Righteousness:
 - a. (:25-28) Question #1 = What Shall I Do to Inherit Eternal Life?
 - b. (:29-37) Question #2 = Who is My Neighbor?
4. (10:38-42) Priority of Communion (Devotion) with God --
Communion with God Must Take Priority over Spiritual Service
(:38) Prologue – Visit in Martha’s Home
 - a. (:39-40) Contrasting Conduct of Mary and Martha
 - 1) (:39) Conduct of Mary – Devoted to the Person of the Lord and His Word
 - 2) (:40) Conduct of Martha – Distracted by Service Activities
 - b. (:41-42) Contrasting Evaluation of Martha and Mary
 - 1) (:41) Evaluation of Martha’s Conduct – Distracted by Lower Priority Concerns
 - 2) (:42) Evaluation of Mary’s Conduct – Devoted to the Highest Priority
5. (11:1-13) Priority of Prayer --
As We Persist in Praying as Jesus Taught Us We Should Have the Expectation of Receiving
Answers from Our Heavenly Father -- 3 Areas of Instruction Regarding Prayer:
 - (:1) Prologue – Teach Us to Pray
 - a. (:2-4) Pattern of Prayer Defined by Topic
 - b. (:5-8) Persistence in Prayer in Interceding for Others
 - 1) (:5-6) Request Should Be Legitimate
 - 2) (:7) Rejection Must Not Discourage You
 - 3) (:8) Principle: Persistence Matters
 - c. (:9-13) Prospects of Answered Prayer from Your Good Heavenly Father
 - 1) (:9-10) Persistent Asking Leads to Receiving
 - 2) (:11-12) Earthly Fathers Don’t Disappoint and Give Something Harmful
 - 3) (:13) Principle: Heavenly Father Likes to Give Good Gifts to His Children

B. (11:14-28) KINGDOM DOMINION -- TWO WARRING KINGDOMS

DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN REQUIRES THE SUPERIOR POWER OF JESUS CHRIST THAT TRANSFORMS THOSE WHO HEAR AND OBEY HIM

1. (:14-16) Dominion over the Realm of Satan Demonstrates Supernatural Power
 - a. (:14a) Reality of the Miracle
 - b. (:14b-16) Reaction of the People
2. (:17-20) Dominion over the Realm of Satan Cannot Come From Satan
 - a. (:17-18a) Conviction - General Principle = Powerful Kingdoms Are Not Divided –
Argument of Absurdity
 - b. (:18b-19) Charge of a Double Standard –
Argument of Consistency
 - c. (:20) Claim of Dominion by the Arrival of the Kingdom of God –
Argument of Prophetic Fulfilment
3. (:21-23) Dominion over the Realm of Satan Requires a Superior Supernatural Power
 - a. (:21-22) Illustration of Protecting a Homestead

- b. (:23) Invitation to Align with the Superior Power – No Possibility of Neutrality
- 4. (:24-26) Dominion over the Realm of Satan Must Be Divinely Transformative – Attempts at Morality or Self-Reformation Fail Miserably
 - a. (:24) Demonic Spirits Look for a Home = Opportunities to Possess and Afflict
 - b. (:25) Demonic Spirits Land Where They Find a Void of Supernatural Power
 - c. (:26) Demonic Spirits Love to Return in Greater Force to Wreak Greater Havoc
- (:27-28) Epilogue – Hear the Word of God and Obey It

C. (11:29-36) KINGDOM DISCERNMENT -- RECEPTIVITY TO REVELATION

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (SIGHT - the type of understanding that leads to Obedience)

DEPENDS NOT ON GREATER REVELATION (LIGHT) BUT ON THE RIGHT HEART CONDITION

- 1. (:29-32) Greater Revelation Brings Greater Condemnation (Not Genuine Spiritual Discernment) If Your Heart Condition Is Wrong
 - a. (:29-30) Despite the Attacks of the Ungodly, God's Revelation Cannot be Faulted
 - b. God's Supreme Revelation in the Resurrected Christ is the Watershed for Blessing or Condemnation -- a sign like that of Jonah
 - c. (:31-32) 2 Examples that illustrate the point Jesus is trying to make:
 - 1) (:31) The Example of the Faith of the Queen of Sheba
 - 2) (:32) The Example of the Repentance of the Ninevites
- 2. (:33) The Very Nature of Revelation Proves That God's Intention Is Not to Conceal But to Illumine All Who Truly Seek Illumination
- 3. (:34-36) Examine Yourself to Make Sure Your Heart Condition Can Receive God's Revelation with Spiritual Discernment
 - a. (:34) Check the Condition of Your Heart
 - b. (:35-36) Check How Much Light You Have Within

D. (11:37 – 12:12) KINGDOM AUTHENTICITY

- 1. (11:37 – 12:3) Exposing the Religious Hypocrisy of the Pharisees and Scribes – Religious Hypocrisy Focuses on External Formalism at the Expense of Internal Righteousness
 - (:37) Prologue – Opportunity to Confront Hypocrisy – Lunch at the Home of a Pharisee
 - a. (:38--41) Tense Exchange – External Religious Observances Cannot Compensate for Internal Spiritual Deficiencies
 - 1) (:38) Supposed Offense – Regarding External Religious Observances
 - 2) (:39) Sharp Rebuke – Regarding Internal Depravity
 - 3) (:40) Superficial External Focus Misses God's Intention Regarding Internal Righteousness
 - 4) (:41) Spiritual Lesson Regarding Cleanliness
 - b. (:42-52) Severe Condemnation – 6 Woes Pronounced Against the Self Righteous, Hypocritical Pharisees and Lawyers
 - 1) (:42-44) 3 Woes Pronounced Against the Pharisees
 - 2) (:45-52) 3 Woes Pronounced Against the Lawyers
 - c. (:53-54) Opposition to Jesus Grows
 - d. (12:1-3) Live a Life of Integrity Rather Than Hypocrisy
 - (:1a) Setting
 - 1) (:1b) Warning Against Hypocrisy
 - 2) (:2-3) Exposure of Hypocrisy on Judgment Day
- 2. (12:4-12) Confidence and Integrity in Confessing Christ – Avoid Hypocrisy in Boldly Confessing Christ in the Face of Persecution in Light of Future Judgment
 - a. (:4-5) Fear the Ultimate Judge Rather Than Men Who Can Only Harm You Physically
 - 1) (:4) Men Have Limited Potential to Harm You in This Life
 - 2) (:5) God Has Ultimate Ability to Cast into Hell Forever
 - b. (:6-7) Do Not Fear Men Because God Cares For You

- 1) (:6) God Cares for the Least Significant
- 2) (:7a) God Knows All About You
- 3) (:7b) God Values You
- c. (:8-12) Do Not Fear Men But Testify Boldly in Times of Persecution
 - 1) (:8-9) Contrast Between Confessing and Denying Christ
 - 2) (:10) Contrast Between Blaspheming Against Christ vs. Blaspheming Against the Holy Spirit
 - 3) (:11-12) Contrast Between Anxiety vs. Confidence When Facing Persecution

E. (12:13 – 13:9) KINGDOM INVESTMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 1. (:12:13-34) Kingdom Investment --
Life Should Be Oriented Around Investing in God's Kingdom to Lay Up Treasure in Heaven Rather Than Accumulating Wealth Here on Earth
 - a. (:13-15) Reject the Value System of Accumulating Wealth
 - 1) (:13-14) Money Grab
 - 2) (:15a) Guard Against Greed
 - 3) (:15b) General Principle: Life Cannot Be Defined By Your Possessions
 - b. (:16-21) Riches Can't Satisfy or Save You
 - 1) (:16-17) Nothing But Headaches
 - 2) (:18-19) Never Enough
 - 3) (:20-21) Not a Good Long Term Strategy
 - c. (:22-31) Reorient Your Life to Seek God's Kingdom
 - 1) (:22-23) Trust God for Life's Necessary Provisions
 - 2) (:24-28) Take a Lesson from Nature -- 2 Illustrations of God's Provision From Nature
 - 3) (:29-31) Transform Your Ambitions
 - d. (:32-34) Refinance Your Treasure in Heaven
 - 1) (:32) Refinance Based on a Grace Outlook Rather Than a Works Outlook
 - 2) (:33) Refinance to Support Charity in This Life and Invest in Unfailing Heavenly Treasure
 - 3) (:34) Refinance to Match Your Heart Devotion
- 2. (12:35-59) Kingdom Accountability and Readiness –
Be Ready for Accountability at the Return of Jesus Christ
 - a. (:35-48) Accountability (Rewards or Retribution) Based on Readiness for the Lord's Return
 - 1) (:35-40) 2 Illustrations Exhorting Readiness for the Lord's Return
 - a) (:35-38) Servants Alert for the Return of Their Master from a Wedding Feast
 - b) (:39-40) Homeowner Alert for the Attack of a Thief
 - 2) (:41-48) Accountability Described
 - b. (:49-53) Accountability Based on the Division that Christ Creates
 - 1) (:49-50) Mission Statement -- Two Images of Christ's Divisive Mission on the Cross
 - a) (:49) Casting Fire on the Earth – Offense of the Cross as a Dividing Point
 - b) (:50) Undergoing Painful Baptism -- Creating a Divide by Way of the Cross
 - 2) (:51-53) Impact Statement -- Causing Division Within Families – Bringing Strife
 - c. (:54-59) Accountability Based on Discerning the Signs of the Times and Preparing
 - 1) (:54-56) Discerning the Signs of the Times
 - 2) (:57-59) Preparing Accordingly
- 3. (13:1-9) Last Chance to Repent --
Avoiding Disaster only Accentuates the Urgency of Repentance Since It Is only the Forbearance of God that Stands between Us and Eternal Damnation
 - a. (:1-5) Two Disaster Illustrations Stressing the Urgent Need for Repentance
 - 1) (:1-3) Slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate
 - 2) (:4-5) Jews in Jerusalem Killed by Falling Tower in Siloam
 - b. (:6-9) Parable of the Fig Tree: Don't Presume Against God's Forbearance

- 1) (:6) Expectation of Fruit
- 2) (:7) Exasperation and Logical Pronouncement of Destruction
- 3) (:8-9) Extension of Merciful Patience and Forbearance

F. (13:10 – 14:24) KINGDOM PARADOXES

1. (13:10-17) Dramatic Deliverance Showing Mercy in Defiance of Legalism –
Jesus Breaks All the Rules of Legalism and Hypocrisy to Set People Free from Bondage and Brokenness
 - a. (:10-13) Dramatic Healing on the Sabbath – Setting Free from Bondage and Brokenness
 - 1) (:10) Standard Practice = Teaching in Synagogue on Sabbath
 - 2) (:11) Severe Disability Attributed to an Evil Spirit
 - 3) (:12-13) Spectacular Healing at the Loving Initiative of the Great Physician
 - b. (:14-17) Different Reactions to the Healing on the Sabbath –
Willingness to Break All the Rules of Legalism and Hypocrisy
 - 1) (:14) Synagogue Official – Indignant
 - 2) (:15-16) Jesus
 - 3) (:17a) Opponents – Humiliated
 - 4) (:17b) Multitude – Rejoicing
2. (13:18-30) Scope of the Kingdom Is Both Broad and Narrow --
 - a. (:18-21) Kingdom of God Characterized by Explosive Growth – 2 Metaphors
 - 1) (:18-19) Outwardly and Visibly - Like a Mustard Seed
 - 2) (:20-21) Inwardly and Invisibly - Like Leaven
 - b. (:22-30) Kingdom of God Limited to a Narrow Core of Mainly Gentile Genuine Believers
 - 1) (:22) Context – Heading to Jerusalem
 - 2) (:23a) Key Question = How Many Will Be Saved? Many or Just a Few?
 - 3) (:23b-24) Key Principle = The Door to the Kingdom is Narrow
 - 4) (:25-27) Don't Presume You Have a Free Pass
 - 5) (:28-30) Transition From Jewish to Gentle Orientation
3. (13:31-35) Ministry of Love and Compassion in Climate of Hate and Opposition –
The Love, Compassion and Resolve of Jesus Kept His Ministry on Track Despite Potential Derailment
 - a. (:31-33) The Resolve of Jesus Kept His Ministry on Track –
The Reported Threat from Herod
 - 1) (:31) Reported Threat = Potential Derailment
 - 2) (:32-33) Response of Jesus – Resolve to Maintain His Ministry Course that Will Take Him to Death in Jerusalem = Ministry of Jesus Staying on Track
 - b. (:34-35) The Love and Compassion of Jesus Kept His Ministry on Track –
Lament over Jerusalem's Demise
 - 1) (:34) Rejection of Jesus' Love and Compassion by Jerusalem = Potential Derailment
 - 2) (:35) Consequences of Rejecting Love and Compassion of Jesus = Ministry of Jesus Staying on Track
4. (14:1-6) Sabbath Controversy – Show Mercy or Not?
Hypocritical Hearts Cannot Refute the Legitimacy of Showing Compassion and Mercy towards Those Who Are Suffering
 - a. (:1-2) Controversial Confrontation with Hypocritical Hearts
 - 1) (:1) Context of Scrutiny
 - 2) (:2) Compassion towards Suffering
 - b. (:3-4a) Controversial Question Pointing to the Legitimacy of Showing Compassion and Mercy towards Those Who Are Suffering
 - 1) (:3) Question: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?
 - 2) (:4a) Response: Silence
 - c. (:4b-6) Controversial Healing That Silences Any Possible Refutation of Showing Compassion and Mercy
 - 1) (:4b) Dramatic Action

- 2) (:5) Irrefutable Justification
- 3) (:6) Response: Silence
- 5. (14:7-24) Spiritual Leaders should not Seek Prominence, Payback or Privilege – Surprising Dinner Etiquette for the Eschatological Messianic Feast – 3 Spiritual Instructions:
 - a. (:7-11) Humble Yourself Rather than Exalting Yourself – Don't Seek Prominence – Don't think too highly of yourself
 - 1) (:7) Scrambling for Positions of Prominence
 - 2) (:8-10) Seating Protocol
 - 3) (:11) Spiritual Lesson = Exaltation Rather Than Humiliation
 - b. (:12-14) Show Hospitality to the Needy Rather than to Your Friends – Don't Seek Payback – Don't try to earn God's favor
 - 1) (:12-13) Selection Criteria for Hospitality Invitations
 - 2) (:14) Spiritual Lesson = Eternal Reward for Blessing the Needy
 - c. (:15-24) Accept with Thanksgiving and Enthusiasm Your Invitation to the Banquet Don't Seek Privilege – Don't be self-assured about your spiritual standing
 - 1) (:15) Self-Assured Can Be Self Deceived
 - 2) (:16-18a) Spurning God's Gracious Invitation
 - 3) (:18b-20) Specific Excuses Reflecting Poor Priority Decisions
 - 4) (:21-23) Seeking a Full House
 - 5) (:24) Spiritual Lesson – Kingdom Focus Switching to the Non-Privileged

G. (14:24 – 16:18) KINGDOM VALUES

- 1. (14:25-35) Whole-Hearted Discipleship Commitment – The Whole-Hearted Demands of Genuine Christian Discipleship Demolish Superficial Easy-Believism
 - (:25) Setting
 - a. (:26-33) The Cost of Discipleship = Total Commitment
 - 1) (:26) Supreme Loyalty
 - 2) (:27-33) Self-Denial
 - b. (:34-35a) The Value of Salt = Maintain Its Integrity
 - 1) (:34) Lack of Integrity Cannot Be Restored
 - 2) (:35a) Lack of Integrity Renders Salt Useless
 - (:35b) Epilogue – Listen and Apply
- 2. (15:1-32) Joy over Conversions – The Kingdom of God Values Not the Self Righteous but Lost Sinners Who Repent
 - (:1-2) Occasion = Association of Jesus with Crowds of Sinners
 - 1) (:1) Curious Needy Sinners – The Context
 - 2) (:2) Critical Self-Righteous Scholars – The Complaint
 - a. (:3-7) Parable of the Priority of the Lost Sheep
 - 1) (:4) Story: Priority of Diligently Searching for the Lost Sheep
 - 2) (:5-6) Response: Joy on Earth upon Finding the Lost Sheep
 - 3) (:7) Application: Joy in Heaven Over the Sinner Who Repents
 - b. (:8-10) Parable of the Priority of the Lost Coin
 - 1) (:8) Story: Priority of Diligently Searching for the Lost Coin
 - 2) (:9) Response: Joy on Earth upon Finding the Lost Coin
 - 3) (:10) Application: Joy in Heaven Over the Sinner Who Repents
 - c. (:11-32) Parable of the Priority of the Lost Son
 - 1) (:11-19) Story: Lost Son Broken to the Point of Repentance
 - 2) (:20-30) Response: Joy on Earth Upon Finding the Lost Sheep
 - 3) (:31-32) Application: Priority of Rejoicing Over the Sinner Who Repents
- 3. (16:1-13) Stewardship Responsibilities – Parable of the Irresponsible but Shrewd Steward -- Steward Your Material Possessions shrewdly and faithfully so that they don't Rule over You but Serve God's Kingdom Purposes

- a. (:1-8) 2 Key Insights Regarding the Christian and Material Possessions
 - 1) (:1-2) Steward Your Material Possessions Faithfully In Light of Eternal Accountability
 - 2) (:3-8) Steward Your Material Possessions Shrewdly to Make Friends for Eternity
 - b. (:9-12) 2 Key Applications Regarding the Christian and Material Possessions
 - 1) (:9) Steward Your Material Possessions Shrewdly to Make Friends for Eternity
 - 2) (:10-12) Steward Your Material Possessions Faithfully In Light of Eternal Accountability
 - c. (:13) Key Conclusion = Don't Allow Your Material Possessions to Rule over You, but Serve God Instead
4. (16:14-18) Transparency before God
 Legalists Justify Loophole Living but Stand Condemned before God Who Sees the Heart
- a. (:14-17) Legalists Justify Themselves and Miss the Point of God's Revelation
 - 1) (:14) Legalists Reject the Application of Truth to Their Hearts
 - 2) (:15a) Legalists Justify Themselves Based on External Behavior
 - 3) (:15b) Legalists Are Exposed Before God Who Hates Their Hypocrisy
 - 4) (:16) Legalists Miss the Heart of the Gospel Message -- the Fulfillment of the OT
 - (:17) Aside: Progressive Revelation is Not a Minimization of the Validity of the Law
 - b. (:18) Loophole Living of Legalists Condemned -- One Case Study: Divorce and Remarriage
 - 1) The Case of the One Divorcing His Wife and Remarrying = Adultery
 - 2) The Case of the One Remarrying the Divorced Woman = Adultery

H. (16:19-31) KINGDOM DIVIDE -- THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

THE ETERNAL DIVIDE BETWEEN SERVING GOD AND SERVING WEALTH BRINGS COMFORTING RELIEF OR UNRELENTING TORMENT

- 1. (:19-21) Disparity in Life – Contrast between the Rich Man and the Poor Man -- Between Serving Wealth vs Serving God
 - a. (:19) Condition of the Rich Man = Privilege and Luxury
 - b. (:20-21) Condition of the Poor Man - Lazarus = Deprivation and Suffering
- 2. (:22-23) Disparity in Death – Contrast between the Poor Man and the Rich Man -- Resulting from Serving God vs Serving Wealth
 - a. (:22a) Destiny of the Poor Man = Comfort in Abraham's Bosom
 - b. (:22b-23) Destiny of the Rich Man = Torment in Hades
- 3. (:24-26) Destiny is Fixed Based on Serving God vs Serving Wealth
 - a. (:24) Desperate Cry for Personal Relief From Torment
 - b. (:25) Destiny is Justified
 - c. (:26) Divide is Final
- 4. (:27-31) Debate over the Root Problem of this Eternal Divide
 - a. (:27-28) Is the Issue More Information?
 - b. (:29) No – Look to the Sufficiency of the OT Scriptures
 - c. (:30) Is the Issue the Need for a Spectacular Sign?
 - d. (:31) No – The Source of the Root Problem = Wicked Heart of Unbelief

I. (17:1-19) KINGDOM STABILITY -- AVOIDING SIN, WEAKNESS, PRIDE AND INGRATITUDE

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (STAYING ON COURSE) AND GLORIFYING GOD

- 1. (:1-4) Guard Against Sin Harming Yourself or Others – Don't Allow Sin to Knock You off Course
 - a. (:1-2) Do No Harm – Don't Cause Others to Sin – Be Alert for Spiritual Snares
 - b. (:3a) Guard Yourselves against Sin
 - c. (:3b-4) Balance Necessary Rebuke of Sin with Unlimited Forgiveness
- 2. (:5-6) Exercise Faith for Dramatic Results –

Don't Allow Weakness to Knock You off Course (or become an excuse)

- a. Rather Than Pleading for Faith, Exercise Faith by Obeying
- b. The Amount of Faith is not as Important as the Object of our Faith (right kind of faith)
- c. Faith Should Produce Dramatic Results

3. (:7-10) Humbly Obey as Servants Thankful for God's Grace –

Don't Allow Pride to Knock You Off Course

- a. (:7-8) What Behavior is Appropriate for a Servant?
- b. (:9) What Reward is Appropriate for a Servant?
- c. (:10) What Attitude is Appropriate for a Servant?

4. (:11-19) Glorify God by Giving Thanks for the Healing You Have Experienced by Grace thru Faith -

Don't Allow Ingratitude to Knock You off Course

- a. (:11-13) Jesus is the Source of Undeserved Mercy
- b. (:14a) Jesus Commands Our Simple Obedience
- c. (:14b) Jesus Accomplishes Our Complete Healing
- d. (:15-18) Jesus Deserves Our Abundant Thanksgiving & Directs Our Worship to Glorify God
- e. (:19) Jesus Responds to Genuine Faith

J. (17:20-37) KINGDOM CERTAINTIES

THE KINGDOM IS HERE (SO SUBMIT TO THE KING) AND IT'S COMING (SO BE READY)

1. (:20-21) Submission to the King Now Takes Precedence over the Timing of the Consummated Kingdom in the Future

- a. (:20a) Deflecting Question
- b. (:20b-21a) Discerning Clarification - Don't Prioritize the Physical Over the Spiritual
- c. (:21b) Definitive Answer

2. (:22-25) Sudden Return of the King Longed for but Delayed until after Suffering and Rejection

- a. (:22) Anticipation – Longing for the Return of Christ and His Kingdom
- b. (:23) Deception – False Claims and Hopes
- c. (:24) Obvious Glorious Fulfilment – You Won't Be Able to Miss It
- d. (:25) Prerequisite – One Prior Event

3. (:26-30) Surprise Destruction Will Be Unleashed against Those Preoccupied with Normal Living and Unsuspecting of Final Accountability

- a. (:26-27) Like the Days of Noah
- b. (:28-29) Like the Days of Lot
- c. (:30) Like the Second Coming

4. (:31-37) Separation unto Final Salvation and Destruction Will Occur at the Second Coming

- a. (:31-33) Pathway to Salvation - Lose Your Life to Preserve It
- b. (:34-36) Examples of Separation
- c. (:37) Certainty of Destruction

K. (18:1-27) KINGDOM ACCESS – HOW TO APPROACH GOD

1. (18:1-8) Parable of the Wicked Judge –

Perseverance in Prayer Directly Tied to Perseverance in Faith

(:1) Prologue -- Point of the Parable – Perseverance in Prayer is Key

a. (:2-5) Story of the Parable – Persistence Pays Off

- 1) (:2) Unrighteous Judge
- 2) (:3) Oppressed Widow
- 3) (:4-5) Persistent Entreaties Pay Off

b. (:6-8a) Application of the Parable – God Will Do What Is Right

- 1) (:6) Argument from the Lesser to the Greater
- 2) (:7-8a) Argument from Family Relationship

(:8b) Epilogue – Perseverance in Faith is Key

2. (18:9-14) Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican --

Approach God with Humility and Confession of the Need for Mercy

Rather than Smugly Trusting in Your Own Good Works

- a. (:9) Purpose of the Parable = Expose Self Righteousness
 - b. (:10-13) People of the Parable
 - 1) (:10) Two Men Identified
 - 2) (:11-13) Two Men Characterized
 - a) (:11-12) The Pharisee = Self-Righteous – How Not to Approach God
 - b) (:13) The Tax-Gatherer = Humble Sinner – How to Approach God
 - c. (:14) Point of the Parable = Humble Yourself to Obtain Mercy
 - 1) Result = Justified
 - 2) Principle – Exalting Self vs. Humbling Self
3. (18:15-17) Approach God in Childlike Dependence
- a. (:15) Protectionist Attitude of the Disciples
 - 1) Did Not Want Jesus Bothered
 - 2) Denied Access to Jesus
 - b. (:16) Protectionist Attitude of Jesus
 - 1) Not Bothered by Children
 - 2) Only Ones Like Little Children Have Access to the Kingdom
 - c. (:17) Principle = Approach God in Childlike Dependence
4. (18:18-27) The Rich Young Ruler – Salvation Cannot be Earned –
The Impossibility of Salvation by Human Means Requires God’s Sovereign Grace through Repentance and Faith in the Lordship of Christ
- a. (:18-21) Wrong Thinking
 - 1) (:18) The Wrong Question Regarding How to Inherit Eternal Life
 - 2) (:19) The Wrong Assessment of Jesus Christ
 - 3) (:20-21) The Wrong Answer to the Requirements of the Law
 - b. (:22-23) Worldliness Exposed
 - 1) (:22) Pressure Point
 - 2) (:23) Fatal Flaw
 - c. (:24-27) Way to God only Possible via Sovereign Grace
 - 1) (:24-25) Impossibility of the Wealthy Achieving Salvation
 - 2) (:26-27) Only Possibility is Sovereign Grace of God

L. (18:28-34) KINGDOM RETURN ON INVESTMENT

THE COSTLY SACRIFICES FOR GOD’S KINGDOM WILL PROVE TO BE WORTH IT BECAUSE OF CHRIST’S SACRIFICE

1. (:28-30) Costly Sacrifices by the Dedicated Followers of Christ
 - a. (:28) Testimony of Total Commitment – Implied Question: Is it Worth It?
 - b. (:29-30) Triumph of Tremendous Reward – Definitive Promise: You Bet It Is
2. (:31-34) Costly Sacrifice by Christ Himself = Supreme Sacrifice
 - a. (:31) Prophetic Fulfillment Regarding Suffering and Death in Jerusalem
 - b. (:32-33a) Progression of Suffering Culminating in Crucifixion
 - c. (:33b) Promise of the Resurrection
 - d. (:34) Perplexity on the Part of the Apostles

M. (18:35 – 19:10) KINGDOM TRANSFORMATION EXAMPLES

1. (18:35-43) Transformation of the Blind Man --
Seize Every Opportunity to Seek God’s Mercy for Transformation through Faith in the Messiah
 - a. (:35-39) The Blind Can Come to Jesus for Mercy
 - 1) (:35) Helpless Individual
 - 2) (:36-37) Hope Stirred by Arrival of Jesus
 - 3) (:38-39) Insistent Cry for Mercy

- b. (:40-43) The Blind Can Receive Sight through Faith in Jesus Christ
 - 1) (:40-41) The Request for Regaining Sight
 - 2) (:42) The Response of Jesus to Faith – Commanded the Miracle
 - 3) (:43a) The Response of the Healed Man
 - 4) (:43b) The Response of the People = Praising God
- 2. (19:1-10) Transformation of Zacchaeus --

The Son of Man has Come to Seek and to Save that which was Lost

 - a. (:1-4) Lost Sinners Should Seek to Connect with Jesus
 - 1) (:1) Itinerary of Jesus = Passing Through Jericho
 - 2) (:2) Introduction to Zacchaeus = a Lost Sinner
 - 3) (:3-4) Intent of Zacchaeus = Trying to See Who Jesus Was
 - b. (:5-6) Jesus Makes the Connection with Lost Sinners
 - 1) (:5) Jesus Invites Himself into Zacchaeus' Life
 - 2) (:6) Zacchaeus Eagerly Receives Jesus
 - c. (:7-9) Lost Sinners are Transformed When Saved by Jesus
 - 1) (:7) Association with Sinners Criticized
 - 2) (:8) Evidence of Transformation
 - 3) (:9) Affirmation of Salvation of Zacchaeus
 - d. (:10) Messianic Mission Statement

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

N. (19:11-27) FUTURE ACCOUNTABILITY DEMANDS FAITHFULNESS NOW – PARABLE OF THE POUNDS

FAITHFULNESS IN SPIRITUAL STEWARDSHIP WHILE THE KING IS AWAY WILL BE REWARDED WHEN THE KING RETURNS

- (:11) Prologue – Correcting Kingdom Misconceptions
- 1. (:12-14) Kingdom Responsibility
 - a. (:12) Parameters of the Kingdom Established
 - b. (:13) Stewardship of the Kingdom Commanded
 - c. (:14) Resistance to the King Intensified
- 2. (:15-23) Kingdom Accountability
 - a. (:15) Final Reporting
 - b. (:16-25) Faithfulness Rewarded / Unfaithfulness Rejected
- 3. (:26-27) Kingdom Lessons
 - a. (:26) Faithfulness Will Be Rewarded / Unfaithfulness Rejected
 - b. (:27) Final Condemnation for Rejecting the King

V. (19:28 – 21:38) JESUS IN JERUSALEM FOR PASSION WEEK

A. (19:28-48) DESTINATION OF JESUS = TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

- 1. (19:28-40) Messianic Approach to Jerusalem in Humility and Peace –

The King of Peace Approached Jerusalem in Fulfillment of OT Prophecy with Messianic Significance

 - a. (:28-34) Requisitioning the Colt to Ride On
 - 1) (:28-29) Messianic Significance of the Setting
 - 2) (:30-31) Messianic Significance of the Lord's Instructions
 - 3) (:32-34) Messianic Significance of Obedience to the Lord's Instructions
 - b. (:35-38) Receiving Praise and Adulation
 - 1) (:35-36) Messianic Significance of Physical Displays of Praise and Adulation
 - 2) (:37-38) Messianic Significance of Verbal Expressions of Praise and Adulation
 - c. (:39-40) Rebuking the Pharisees = Boomerang Rebuke
 - 1) (:39) Messianic Significance of the Reaction of the Pharisees –

Pharisees Want Jesus to Rebuke His Disciples

- 2) (:40) Messianic Significance of the Reply of Jesus –
Instead, Jesus Rebukes the Pharisees
- 2. (19:41-48) Arriving in Jerusalem and in the Temple
Failure to Discern the Day of Messianic Visitation Leads to Serious Consequences
 - a. (:41-42) Lamenting over Jerusalem – Genuine Compassion
 - 1) (:41) Grief
 - 2) (:42) Regret
 - b. (:43-44) Leveling of Jerusalem – Necessary Judgment
 - 1) (:43-44a) Devastating Destruction
 - 2) (:44b) Fatal Flaw – Leading to Serious Consequences
 - c. (:45-46) Liberating the Temple – Importance of Speaking to God
 - 1) (:45) Purge of Temple Merchants
 - 2) (:46) Indictment for Subverting the Mission of the Temple
 - d. (:47-48) Listening in the Temple – Importance of Listening to God
 - 1) (:47) Danger While Teaching Daily in the Temple
 - 2) (:48) Devotion of the Listening Crowd Offered Temporary Protection

B. (20:1-40) WISDOM OF JESUS IN SILENCING HIS ANTAGONISTS

- 1. (20:1-8) Wisdom of Jesus in Silencing the Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders --
Undeniable Authority of Jesus Christ –
The Source of the Baptism of John Answers the Question of the Authority of Jesus Christ
 - a. (:1-2) The Question of Unbelieving, Hostile Hearts –
What Authority Does Jesus Have?
 - 1) (:1) Hostile Confrontation
 - 2) (:2) Condemning Question = Who Gave You Authority?
 - b. (:3-6) The Method of Indicting the Critics by Their Own Words
 - 1) (:3-4) Answering the Question With a Very Obvious Question
 - 2) (:5-6) Catching Them In a Dilemma
 - 3) (:7) Indicting Them By Triggering an Obvious Lie
 - c. (:8) The Answer is Self-Evident = A Matter of Faith
- 2. (20:9-18) Parable of the Wicked Tenant Farmers – 4 Unthinkable Role Reversals --
The Jewish Spiritual Leaders Have Surrendered Stewardship of God’s Kingdom Because of:
 - Their Attempt to Usurp Ownership of the Kingdom instead of Functioning as Good Stewards
 - Their Rejection and Mistreatment of God’s Envoys (Despite God’s Patient Love and Forbearance)
 - a. (:9-15a) Unthinkable Role Reversal = God’s Elect Nation
Mistreats God’s Envoys instead of Respecting Them
 - 1) (:9b) Privilege of Kingdom Stewardship Over a Long Time Period
 - 2) (:10-15a) Persecution of God’s Envoys Culminating in the Killing of God’s Beloved
 - b. (15b - 16) Unthinkable Role Reversal = Gentiles Gaining Kingdom Status instead of the Jews
 - 1) (:15b) Role Reversal Deserved
 - 2) (:16a) Role Reversal Executed
 - 3) (:16b) Role Reversal Unthinkable
 - c. (:17) Unthinkable Role Reversal = Jesus Becoming Preeminent as the Foundation of the
Church instead of Rejected by the Nation of Israel –
Image of Chief Corner Stone vs. Rejected Stone
 - 1) Prophetic Anticipation
 - 2) Rejection of the Messiah
 - 3) Preeminence of the Messiah
 - d. (:18) Unthinkable Role Reversal = Chief Corner Stone Now Becomes Stone of Destruction –
Image of Falling on Stone or Stone Falling on Someone
 - 1) Broken to Pieces
 - 2) Pulverized

3. (20:19-26) Wisdom of Jesus in Silencing the Herodians –
 Trap Question Regarding Ultimate Loyalty –
 Our Legitimate Obligations to Civil Authorities Can't Trump Our Supreme Loyalty to God
 - a (:19-20) Scheming to Seize Jesus
 - 1) (:19) Attempt to Capture Jesus
 - 2) (:20) Attempt to Discredit Jesus
 - b. (:21-25) Trap Question – Regarding Paying Taxes – Regarding Ultimate Loyalty
 - 1) (:21-22) Asking the Question – Supreme Lordship of God or Caesar?
 - 2) (:23-25) Answering the Question – Legitimacy of Both Church and State
 - c. (:26) Silencing the Schemers
 - 1) Frustrated
 - 2) Fascinated
 - 3) Finished
4. (20:27-40) Wisdom of Jesus in Silencing the Sadducees --
 Doctrinal Error Has Practical Consequences:
 - Failure to Apply God's Revealed Truth
 - Failure to Experience God's Resurrection Power
 - a. (:27-33) Convoluted Hypothetical Trap Question – Regarding Marriage and the Resurrection
 - 1) (:27) Examination by the Heretical Sadducees
 - 2) (:28) Expository Scriptural Instruction – Quoting from Moses
 - 3) (:29-33) Extrapolated Extreme Case Study – Trying to Prove the Absurdity of the Doctrine of the Resurrection
 - b. (:34-38) Concise Historical True Answer – The Reality and Significance of the Resurrection
 - 1) (:34-36) The Significance of the Resurrection as it Relates to Marriage in the Future Age
 - 2) (:37-38) The Reality of the Resurrection as it Relates to Present Accountability

(:39-40) Epilogue– Silencing the Scribes with Inscrutable Wisdom

 - 1) (:39) Empty Praise
 - 2) (:40) End of Questioning

C. (20:41 – 21:4) INDICTMENT BY JESUS OF HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

AVOID HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS BY RECOGNIZING:

- THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THEIR THEOLOGY (ESPECIALLY ERRORS IN CHRISTOLOGY)
- THE PHONINESS OF THEIR MINISTRY
- THEIR EXPLOITATION OF POOR WIDOWS

1. (:41-44) Jesus Exposes the Hypocritical Theology of the Scribes –
 Refusal to Submit to the Deity of the Son of David, the Messiah –
 Contradictions in Theology (Especially Errors in Christology)
 - a. (:41) The Contradiction
 - b. (:42-43) The Confession
 - c. (:44) The Clincher
2. (:45-47) Jesus Exposes the Hypocritical Practices of the Scribes –
 Refusal to Follow the Model of Servant Leadership –
 Phoniness of Ministry
 - (:45) Prologue
 - a. (:46a) Summary Warning
 - b. (:46b-47a) 6 Characteristics of Hypocritical Religious Leaders (Phony Ministry)
 Contrast with the Ministry of Jesus Christ
 - 1) Elevated Stature
 - 2) Popularity and Respect
 - 3) Leadership Preeminence
 - 4) Power and Influence
 - 5) Greedy Exploitation

- 6) Pretentious Religious Practices
 - c. (:47b) Summary Judgment – Elevated Condemnation vs. Elevated Stature
- 3. (21:1-4) Jesus Exposes the Exploitation of Poor Widows
 - a. (:1-2) Corrupt Religious System Funded by Both Rich and Poor
 - b. (:3-4) Corrupt Religious System Burdens the Poor More Than the Rich

D. (21:5-38) WARNING OF JESUS TO PREPARE FOR HARD TIMES AHEAD

PREPARE FOR HARD TIMES LEADING UP TO

- THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE
- THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

BE PERCEPTIVE AND READY

1. (:5-24) Prepare for the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple
 - a. (:5-6) Shocking Prophecy of Temple Destruction – Transformation from Valuable Edifice to Worthless Rubble
 - b. (:7-11) Stable Perspective as Events Draw Near and Unfold
 - c. (:12-19) Systemic Persecution Will Lead to Opportunity for Testimony
 - d. (:20-24) Severe Plight Described
2. (:25-36) Prepare for the Second Coming of Christ
 - a. (:25-26) Cosmic Signs
 - b. (:27-28) Coming in Glory
3. (:29-36) Parable of the Fig Tree – Be Perceptive and Ready
 - a. (:29-33) Be Perceptive
 - b. (:34-36) Be Ready

VI (22:1 – 23:49) BETRAYAL, TRIALS AND THE CRUCIFIXION

A. (22:1-62) BETRAYAL, LEADERSHIP AND THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

1. (22:1-6) Judas is the Ultimate Betrayer
 - a. (:1-2) Passover Plotting – Goal = Killing Jesus
 - 1) (:1) Opportunity – Passover Approaching
 - 2) (:2) Obstacle – Popularity of Jesus
 - b. (:3-4) Betrayal Initiated
 - 1) (:3) Satan Recruits Judas to Betray Jesus
 - 2) (:4) Judas Starts the Betrayal Process
 - c. (:5-6) Betrayal Contracted
 - 1) (:5) Contract Proposed
 - 2) (:6) Contract Put Into Operation
2. (22:7-23) Transitioning from Passover to the Lord’s Supper
The Institution of the Lord’s Supper Builds on the Imagery of Passover and Anticipates Final Kingdom Consummation
 - a. (:7-13) Passover Preparation
 - 1) (:7) Perfect Timing
 - 2) (:8-12) Perfect Venue
 - 3) (:13) Perfect Arrangements
 - b. (:14-18) Passover Participation
 - 1) (:14-16) Game Plan
 - 2) (:17-18) Execution
 - c. (:19-20) Lord’s Supper Instituted
 - 1) (:19) Distributing the Bread – Significance
 - 2) (:20) Distributing the Cup – Significance
 - d. (:21-23) Warning of Betrayal
 - 1) (:21) Calling Out the Traitor

- 2) (:22) Culpability Coupled with Divine Decree
- 3) (:23) Confusion
- 3. (22:24-38) Servant Leadership and Suffering
 - a. (22:24-34) Servant Leadership Advocated –
Instead of Striving for Leadership Preeminence Follow the Example of Christ to Lead by Serving Others
 - 1) (:24) Dispute over Leadership Preeminence
 - 2) (:25-27) Demonstration of the Model of Servant Leadership by Christ
 - a) (:25-26) Contrast in 2 Models of Leadership – Gentile vs. Christian
 - b) (:27) Example of Christ
 - 3) (:28-30) Dominion and Privilege Promised for the Faithful in the Coming Kingdom
 - a) (:28) Faithfulness Recognized by Christ
 - b) (:29-30) Favor of Dominion and Privilege Granted in Coming Kingdom
 - 4) (:31-34) Denial and Restoration Prophecied by Christ –
Even the Best Spiritual Leaders Have Serious Warts
 - a) (:31) Danger for Spiritual Leaders
 - b) (:32) Directives Regarding Failure and Recovery
 - c) (:33-34) Denial of Christ Exposes Deceptive Self-Confidence
 - b. (22:35-38) Be Prepared for Suffering and Rejection
 - 1) (:35-36) Preparation Mandated:
Following Christ Looks Different After His Rejection
 - a) (:35) Before Picture – Followers of Christ Could Expect Welcome Reception and Support
 - b) (:36) After Picture – Followers of Christ Should Expect Rejection and Attacks
 - 2) (:37) Preparation Modeled:
The Rejection of Christ was Both Prophecied and Fulfilled
 - a) Necessity of Fulfillment of Scripture
 - b) Heart of the Passage = Rejection of Jesus Christ
 - c) Reality of Fulfillment of Scripture
 - 3) (:38) Preparation Misunderstood:
Followers of Christ Fail to Grasp the Nature of Spiritual Warfare
 - a) Missing the Point
 - b) Moving On
- 4. (22:39-46) Prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane –
Learn the Lessons from Jesus on Prayer so that We too May Triumph over Temptation –
Ten Lessons on Prayer from Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane:
 - a. (:39) Pattern of Prayer
 - b. (:40) Purpose for Prayer
 - c. (:41a) Privacy in Prayer
 - d. (:41b) Posture in Prayer
 - e. (:42a) Petition in Prayer
 - f. (:42b) Predetermination in Prayer
 - g. (:43) Partner in Prayer
 - h. (:44a) Pain, Pathos and Passion in Prayer
 - i. (:44b) Perspiration in Prayer
 - j. (:45-46) Perseverance in Prayer
 - 1) (:45) Emotional Exhaustion
 - 2) (:46) Exhortation to Keep Praying
- 5. (22:47-53) Betrayal by Judas and Arrest of Jesus –
Power of Darkness – Only Jesus has the Power to Hand Himself over to the Authorities
 - a. (:47-48) Reaction to Judas' Betrayal Leading to the Arrest of Jesus
 - 1) (:47) Treacherous Kiss from Intimate Apostle

- 2) (:48) Touching the Conscience of the Traitor
- b. (:49-51) Resistance by Disciples Arrested by Jesus
 - 1) (:49) Quick Question – Should We Fight?
 - 2) (:50) Bold Blunder – Off with His Head!
 - 3) (:51a) Authoritative Answer – Stop Fighting!
 - 4) (51b) Miraculous Mending – Tender Touch
- c. (:52-53) Ridicule of the Cowardice and Duplicity of the Arresting Officials
 - 1) (:52) Embarrassing Overkill
 - 2) (:53) Extraordinary Opportunity
- 6. (22:54-62) Peter's 3 Denials –
Failure to Boldly Identify with Christ Does Not Have to Define Us if We Respond to God's Mercy and Repent
 - a. (:54-55) Close Without Confessing Christ –
Social Distancing – Peter Follows – But Not Too Closely
 - 1) (:54) Plot Developed via 2 Tracks
 - a) Trial of Jesus
 - b) Tale of Peter
 - 2) (:55) Peter = the Initial Focus
 - b. (:56-60a) Denying by Lying – Another Type of Betrayal
 - 1) (:56-57) First Denial
 - 2) (:58) Second Denial
 - 3) (:59-60a) Third Denial
 - c. (60b-62) Crowing Leads to Weeping
 - 1) (:60b) The Cock Crows – The Cock Doesn't Lie
 - 2) (:61) The Lord Looks – The Look Doesn't Condemn
 - 3) (:62) Peter Weeps – The Tears Lead to Repentance

B. (22:63 – 23:25) TRIALS

- 1. (22:63-71) The Trials Begin –
Stubborn Rejection of the Claims of Christ Lead to Brutal Mistreatment and Sham Trials
 - a. (:63-65) Travesty of Brutality and Mocking Inflicted by the Guards
 - 1) (:63) Verbal and Physical Abuse
 - 2) (:64) Mocking His Prophetic Ministry
 - 3) (:65) Blaspheming
 - b. (:66-71) Trial Before the Sanhedrin
 - (:66) Staging of the Trial
 - 1) (:67-70) Inquisition
 - 2) (:71) Case Closed
- 2. (23:1-25) Progression of the Trials Before Roman Authorities –
Truth and Justice only Found in the Falsely Accused Messiah
 - a. (:1-7) Pilate Tries Jesus But is Please to Refer the Case to Herod
 - 1) (:1-2) Politically-Oriented False Accusations
 - 2) (:3-4) Pilate's Findings of Innocence
 - 3) (:5-7) Passing the Buck to Herod
 - b. (:8-12) Herod Tries Jesus but Comes Away Frustrated and Kicks it Back to Pilate
 - 1) (:8) Curiosity
 - 2) (:9) Frustration
 - 3) (:10) Anger on the Part of the Religious Leaders Against Jesus
 - 4) (:11) Mistreatment
 - 5) (:12) Strange Bedfellows
 - c. (:13-25) Pilate Tries Jesus Again and Caves to the Pressure from the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Frenzy of the Mob

- 1) (:13-16) Summary Judgment
- 2) (:17-25) Special Release Option

C. (23:26-49) THE CRUCIFIXION --

THE CRUCIFIXION CONSUMMATES THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE MESSIAH

1. (:26-32) Sad Scene = *Via Dolorosa*
 - a. (:26) Death Walk of Jesus
 - b. (:27-28) Mourning for the Suffering of Jesus in the Current Day of the Lord
 - c. (:29-31) Mourning for the Suffering of Israel in the Future Day of the Lord
 - d. (:32) Death Walk of the Two Thieves
2. (:33) Summary Statement of the Crucifixion
3. (:34-43) Selected Interactions – Highlighting Jesus’ Desire to Extend Forgiveness against the Backdrop of Mocking and Indignities
 - a. (:34a) Forgiveness Extended – Interaction of Jesus with His Heavenly Father
 - b. (:34b-39) Final Mocking and Indignities – Interaction of Mockers with Jesus
 - 1) (:34b) By Divesting Him of His Only Garments
 - 2) (:35a) By the Silence of the Onlookers
 - 3) (:35b) By the Religious Rulers
 - 4) (:36-37) By the Soldiers
 - 5) (:38) By the Plaque on the Cross
 - 6) (:39) By One of the Criminals
 - c. (:40-43) Forgiveness and Blessing Promised – Interaction of Jesus with the Confessing Criminal
4. (:44-49) Cataclysmic Climax
 - a. (:44-45A) Dramatic Darkness
 - b. 45b) Dispensational Transition
 - c. (:46) Death Cry
 - d. (:47-49) Dramatic Eyewitness Responses
 - 1) (:47) Praise of the Centurion – Proclaiming Innocence of Jesus
 - 2) (:48) Anguish of the Multitudes – Saddened by What They Had Witnessed
 - 3) (:49) Remote Observance of His Close Followers – Perplexed and Uncertain

VII. (23:50 – 24:53) BURIAL, RESURRECTION, GREAT COMMISSION AND ASCENSION

A. (23:50-56) THE BURIAL OF JESUS

THE BURIAL OF JESUS PROVIDES THE ESSENTIAL LINK BETWEEN THE REALITY OF HIS DEATH AND THE VALIDITY OF HIS RESURRECTION

1. (:50-51) Identity of Joseph – Righteous Disciple Who Had Been Concealing His Loyalty to Jesus
 - a. His Name
 - b. His Status = Member of the Sanhedrin
 - c. His Reputation
 - d. His Ethnicity
 - e. His Devotion
2. (:52-53) Internment of Jesus – Reality of the Death of Jesus
 - a. (:52) Request for the Body
 - b. (:53) Recap of the Burial
3. (:54-56) Preparations for Embalming the Body – Respect and Love for Jesus
 - a. (:54) Day Defined – Complicating the Logistics
 - 1) Preparation day for the Passover

- 2) Day Preceding the Sabbath
- b. (:55) Details of the Burial Scoped Out
- c. (:56a) Development of Spices and Perfumes
- d. (:56b) Delay Due to the Sabbath

B. (24:1-12) THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

DON'T BE SURPRISED BY THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

1. (:1-3) The Surprise of the Discovery of the Empty Tomb –
Where is the Body of Jesus?
 - a. (:1) Expectation of Ministering to the Dead Body of Jesus
 - b. (:2) Effort to Remove the Stone Not Needed
 - c. (:3) Empty Tomb Raises More Questions Than It Answers
2. (:4-7) The Fulfillment of the Prophecy of the Resurrection –
He Is Not Here, But He Has Risen
 - a. (:4) Encounter with Dazzling Angels
 - b. (:5) Encouragement to Reverse Their Negative Expectation
 - c. (:6a) Exclamation of the Reality of the Resurrection
 - d. (:6b-7) Enlightenment Regarding Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy
3. (:8-12) The Response to the Report of the Resurrection –
How Will You Respond?
 - a. (:8-10) Veracity of Reporting
 - 1) (:8) Remembered
 - 2) (:9a) Returned
 - 3) (:9b-10) Reported
 - b. (:11-12) Variety of Responses
 - 1) (:11) Skepticism and Unbelief
 - 2) (:12) Excitement, Investigation and Amazement

C. (24:13-35) OPENING EYES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

ONLY JESUS CAN OPEN OUR EYES TO BELIEVE THE FULL SCOPE OF HIS MESSIANIC MISSION WHICH DELIVERS US FROM CONFUSION AND DESPAIR

- 1 (:13-16) Spiritual Blindness Requires Divine Enlightenment
 - a. (:13) Trip to Emmaus –
In the Vicinity of the Key Events of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection
 - b. (:14) Talk About Recent Events Concerning Jesus in Jerusalem –
Inquiring About the Key Events
 - c. (:15) Travel Companion –
In the Presence of the Key Figure – the Risen Messiah Himself
 - d. (:16) Thwarted From Recognizing Jesus –
In Total Spiritual Darkness
2. (:17-24) Only Jesus Can Resolve Our Spiritual Confusion and Despair
 - (:17) Jesus Invites Our Spiritual Questions
 - a. (:18-21) Confusion Concerning Jesus' Messianic Redemptive Mission
 - 1) (:18-20) Clarity Needed Regarding the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ
 - 2) (:21) Clarity Needed Regarding the Messianic Redemptive Mission of Jesus Christ
 - b. (:22-24) Confusion Concerning the Empty Tomb and the Resurrection
 - 1) (:22-23) Testimony of the Women Raised Questions
 - 2) (:24) Testimony of our Companions Raised Questions
3. (:25-27) We Must Listen in Faith to the Exposition of Jesus in the Scriptures
 - a. (:25) Reprimand Over Failure to Believe the Messianic Message of the OT Prophets
 - b. (:26) Reinforcement of the Essential Link Between Christ's Suffering and Glory
 - c. (:27) Revelation of Christ in the OT

4. (:28-35) Divine Enlightenment – The Opening of Our Eyes to See Jesus – Confirms the Resurrection

- a. (:28-29) The Blessing of Being with Jesus
 - 1) (:28) Opportunity Almost Lost
 - 2) (:29a) Opportunity Pursued
 - 3) (:29b) Opportunity Realized
- b. (:30-31) The Blessing of Truly Seeing Jesus
 - 1) (:30) Truly Seeing Jesus is a Gift from God Associated with Genuine Fellowship
 - 2) (:31) Truly Seeing Jesus Physically Confirmed the Reality of the Resurrection
- c. (:32) The Blessing of Divine Spiritual Illumination and Exposition of Scripture
- d. (:33-34) Testimony of the Disciples to the Resurrection
- e. (:35) Confirming Testimony of the Emmaus Road Disciples

D. (24:36-49) VERIFICATION AND GREAT COMMISSION

- 1. (:36-47) Verification of the Resurrection of Jesus
 - a. (:36-43) Physical Evidence
 - 1) (:36-37) Verification Via Personal Appearance
 - 2) (:38-40) Verification Via Viewing His Wounds and Touching His Body
 - 3) (:41-43) Verification Via Eating a Meal
 - b. (:44-47) Exegetical Evidence from OT Messianic Prophecy
 - 1) (:44) Significance of Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy
 - 2) (:45) Supernatural Divine Illumination
 - 3) (:46) Scope of the OT Prophecies Included Both His Crucifixion and Resurrection
 - 4) (:47) Spreading the Gospel Message to All the Nations
- 2. (:48-49) Great Commission Mandate
 - a. (:48) Testify to What You Have Witnessed
 - b. (:49a) Anticipate the Gracious Promise of the Indwelling Holy Spirit
 - c. (:49b) Wait for the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

E. (:50-51) FINAL BLESSING AND ASCENSION

- 1. (:50) Final Blessing
- 2. (:51) Departure via Ascension

(:52-53) EPILOGUE – RESPONSE OF THE DISCIPLES

- 1. (:52) Great Joy While Waiting in Jerusalem
- 2. (:53) Grateful Worship in the Temple in Jerusalem

TEXT: Luke 1:1-4

TITLE: PROLOGUE TO THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

BIG IDEA:

THE RELIABLE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CONFIRMS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION:

How do you know whether something is true or not? In our postmodern world that has become almost an irrelevant question. Everything is seen as relativistic and defined by the individual. But Christianity presents itself as Absolute Truth that must be believed and embraced universally. There can be no exceptions regarding the critical necessity of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation from sin and eternal life in fellowship with God.

Walter Liefeld: The introduction to Luke is a long, carefully constructed sentence in the tradition of the finest historical works in Greek literature. It stands in contrast to the genealogical table of Matthew, the concise opening sentence of Mark, and the theological prologue of John. It was customary among the great Greek and Hellenistic historians, including the first-century Jewish writer Josephus, to explain and justify their work in a preface. Their object was to assure the reader of their capability, thorough research, and reliability. While such a weighty introduction does not in itself guarantee the honesty of the writer, neither should its conventional form be dismissed as a merely formal pretension.

THE RELIABLE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CONFIRMS THE ABSOLUTE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY

I. AUTHOR = LUKE -- of the Gospel of Luke – Who wrote the book

A. Traveling Companion of Apostle Paul

Col. 4:14 – traveling companion of Paul after the Macedonian vision; **Acts 16:8, 10; 20:5**

B. Gentile – possibly from Antioch -- only Gentile to write any Scripture (Acts) – distinguished from those who were “*from the circumcision*”;

C. Beloved Physician – Dr. Luke – **Col. 4:14**

lot to say about healing ministry of Christ; scholarly; well-educated

D. Man of Dynamic Faith

Matt Chandler: We also know that Luke, although he started out a skeptic, has a dynamic, fearless faith. And we know this because in **2 Timothy 4**, the apostle Paul is lamenting the fact that as persecution began against the church, specifically him, as he began to be beaten and imprisoned, everyone left him. They left him and went and hid in Ephesus, they went and headed down in Cyprus. They left, everyone except Luke. Luke didn't go. And so, as persecution started blowing up against Paul and against the Church, everyone scattered that was with Paul except Luke.

How do we know Luke wrote the book:

John Piper: The main reason is that the earliest list of New Testament books (Muratorian Canon) from the second century ascribes it to Luke, and there is no evidence that it was ever ascribed to anyone else. So in the light of no plain evidence to the contrary, we generally give credence to early tradition. There is no reason to doubt that Luke, the beloved physician, wrote the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.

II. (:1-2) SOURCES USED in the Writing of the Gospel of Luke – What was the subject matter

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us,”

A. Multiple Accounts

Synoptic gospel = “*see together*” – Mat., Mark, Luke

Speaks to the importance of the subject

Unique focus of Luke:

More of a Gentile focus – presents Jesus as the Son of Man, rejected by the nation of Israel and then offered to the world; longest book in NT not in terms of chapters but in terms of words

Matthew:	Jesus is the King of the Jews
Mark:	Jesus is the perfect Servant
John:	Jesus is the Unique Son of God

B. Significance of Person and Works of Jesus

Why so much interest in this man Jesus Christ?

- The Eternal Word
- The Incarnate Son of God – reveals God to man
- Central figure of history – the one Mediator between God and Man
- Savior
- Lord and Master and coming again as Reigning King
- Pattern for Righteousness for the Christian – 1 John 2:6; 1 Pet. 2:21

Miracle works of healing pointed to His identity as the promised Messiah

Significance of word “*fulfilled*” – promises made in OT and now promises fulfilled in Christ; promises made to Elizabeth and Mary

C. Primary Sources

Significance of relying on eyewitnesses; primary sources – not secondary

“*servants of the word*” –

J. C. Ryle: They were men who counted it their highest privilege to carry about, as messengers, the tidings of God's love to a sinful world, and to tell the story of the cross.

Geldenhuys: Luke, therefore, lays special emphasis on the fact that those writings are by no means the collecting of legends or mere human gossip, but the written rendering of what had really happened and had been communicated by authoritative witnesses.

III. (:3a) **METHOD** of Writing the Gospel of Luke – How was it written

- **Careful Investigation**
- **Orderly Account**

“it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order,”

A. **Careful Investigation**

Investigative journalism
Accurate historian

No fake news here

B. **Divinely Directed Investigation**

Morgan: “*anōthen*” – translated here “*from the first*” – also means in the Greek “*from above*.” My own view is that when Luke says he traced the course of all things accurately “*anōthen*,” he meant from above; and that he was claiming that his scientific work was under the guidance of heaven itself, the he not only brought to bear upon his work his own scientific ability to sift and trace; but he sought guidance from heaven. That is how he prepared his material. (**John 3:31; 19:11**)

Alternative view:

Liefeld: *anōthen* can mean, according to the context, either “*above*” or “*again*.” Here in its relation to historical research, it has a temporal sense.

C. **Orderly Account – systematic and orderly presentation**

- Largely Chronological, orderly account – not strictly chronological
 - o Geographic order
 - Chaps. 1-9 in and around Galilee; home town of Nazareth and ministry headquarters of Capernaum
 - Chaps. 9-19 Jesus on the move; travelling to Jerusalem
 - Chaps. 19-24 take place in Jerusalem
 - o Theological order

IV. (:3b) **RECIPIENT** of Writing the Gospel of Luke = **Theophilus** – To whom was it written *“most excellent Theophilus*

“lover of God”

Acts 1:1-2 – Luke wrote a 2 volume book addressed to this individual

MacArthur: a title used to address governors (**Ac 23:26; 24:3; 26:25**).

V. (:4) **PURPOSE** of Writing the Gospel of Luke – **Certainty Regarding the Truth** – Why was it written

“so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

Lenski: All kinds of doubts still disturbed Theophilus, and Luke writes in order to dispel them.

How do we know the biblical account is true?

- Self-authenticating nature of Bible – not just circular reasoning
- Supported by fulfillment of specific prophecies
- Historical – based on eyewitness testimony

Question other people about the certainty of their beliefs – everyone has a belief system.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you answer people who deny that there can be any absolute truth in this relativistic culture in which we live?
- 2) How can Luke’s account be inspired by God if it was drawn from historical research from a wide number of sources?
- 3) Why do we need an additional gospel account if there were already so many written records of the life and ministry of Jesus?
- 4) How do you know that God wants Christians to have certainty and assurance about what they believe?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Faith Rooted in History

Postmodernism is the prevailing philosophy of our day. A main tenet of this philosophy is that there is no such thing as absolute truth. Rather, truth is personal and subjective. It is not discovered, but created. In religious and spiritual matters, especially, to say that you have *the truth* is viewed as arrogance because this implies that you’re right and others are wrong. . .

I agree that the Christian faith is not just a matter of the head, but also of the heart. But it is *not just* a matter of the heart. The emotional aspect of the Christian faith must be firmly grounded on the historical and doctrinal truth of the faith as revealed to us in Scripture. Otherwise, we have no firm foundation when our feelings change and we have no objective basis for evaluating our feelings. It is essential to affirm that the Christian faith is rooted in objective history and absolute, unchanging truth. . .

Theophilus may have been troubled by questions like,

- “Is the Christian faith I believed in really the truth and the only truth?”
- If it is true, why was Jesus rejected by His people and crucified?
- Why are Christians being persecuted?
- Why have most of the Jews rejected the message, while the Gentiles are receiving it?”

(Adapted from **Darrell Bock**, *Luke* [Baker Exegetical Commentary], 1:65). . .

Big Idea: Since Luke's Gospel is an accurate, orderly, historically true account of the life and ministry of the Savior, we can believe it with confidence.

Christianity is not a religious philosophy based on the speculations and ideas of some great religious thinkers. Christianity is primarily about the God who created the universe miraculously invading human history in the person of Jesus Christ who uniquely revealed God to us. Thus the great doctrines of the Bible are not matters of personal opinion or philosophical speculation. They are matters of revelation from God and therefore, they must be submitted to. This is especially true concerning the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. God has revealed Himself in history in the person of Jesus Christ. Luke wants us to know and believe this with absolute certainty. . .

John Piper: The Aim of Dr. Luke

So I conclude that Luke thinks it is very important to try to persuade people of the truth of Christianity and that faith, for Luke, is a personal acceptance and readiness to act upon what one is persuaded to be true. This does not rule out the Holy Spirit; without his work no one would ever own up to the truth of the gospel. For example, Luke says of Lydia, in **Acts 16:14**, that as she listened to Paul's compelling sermon by the river "*the Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul.*" If God does not open the heart of Theophilus and our hearts, all Luke's writing is in vain. But the Holy Spirit does not replace persuasive words, he empowers them and removes the prejudices that keep people from giving heed. So it is important to try, like Luke, to persuade people of the truth of Christianity. . .

Specifically, Luke tries to bolster Theophilus' confidence in his narrative by referring to three important facts. First (but not in the order of the text), he says in **verse 3** that his narrative is **based on thorough and careful research**. "*I have followed all things accurately from the beginning (or for a long time past).*" He has followed all things; that is, he does not include anything that he has not traced back to a reliable source. He has followed all things accurately; his work has not been careless but painstaking, as befits the seriousness of the subject. He has followed all things accurately for a long time. He has not been hasty in his work. He has been patient. That is the first thing that gives integrity to his narrative.

But no matter how careful one is with his research, his narrative can only be as good as his sources. So Luke stresses the **number and the quality of his sources** of information. There are many written sources. "*Inasmuch as many have set their hand to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us . . .*" In all likelihood one of the written sources that Luke has access to was the Gospel of Mark. I will try to point out why this is so as we move through the gospel. **Verse 1** guards us against two errors in studying the gospels. One is the error that our belief in the inspiration of the Bible implies that each writer got all of his narrative directly from God by dictation. Luke shows clearly that he wrote his gospel on the basis of sources and research. So inspiration means that God chose Luke and guided him in his writing so that it would all be true and powerful. The other error that verse 1 guards us against is the claim that until the writing of our four gospels, Jesus' teaching and deeds were only passed down orally. If, as Luke says, many had earlier written down accounts of Jesus' sayings and deeds, then there is no reason to think people had not done this from the start. So the first thing Luke stresses is the number of his sources: there are many.

Then he stresses their **quality in verse 2**: these narratives accord with what the eyewitnesses have reported, "*Just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word.*" Notice that Luke includes himself among those who received reports directly from the eyewitnesses and ministers of the word: "*Just as they were delivered to us . . . by the eyewitnesses.*" So not only are there many sources which he can use to corroborate each other, but even better, he has had direct access to the eyewitnesses themselves so as to confirm his own narrative by their testimony.

Matt Chandler: Skeptics Welcome

Luke is not the blind faith guy. He's not the blind faith guy, but rather he seems to be naturally the skeptic that wants to read everything and then not only read it, he wants to hunt down who wrote it, ask him how it happened again and then compare it to what he wrote to see if the guy's a liar. I love him. Not only do I get that from this, but there's also in the book of Acts, Paul's teaching to a group of men called the Bereans and they don't believe Paul. So every time Paul says anything, they take what he says and then they go rip it apart and try to study it and look in the Old Testament and try to deny it. And then the more they try to study the teachings of Paul to deny it, the more they started becoming believers, and Luke loved them for it. Luke loved them because they were doubters. They were skeptics, and Luke was like, "You're my type of people. Let's get something to drink. Let's talk." So Luke starts out a skeptic, but it's very evident that he had read some very early church writings. . .

The second you say ultimate reality is unknowable and that ultimate truth is unknowable, you've just claimed what you say can't be claimed. This is intellectually inconsistent. I'm not speaking religiously. I'm speaking intellectually, philosophically . . .

The relativist and me, we're claiming the same thing at different points of emphasis. Here's what's happening. I, Matt Chandler, fundamental in doctrine, orthodox in doctrine, conservative in theology, pastor Matt Chandler, and the relativist, we're claiming the same thing: an understanding of ultimate reality, only he's calling me arrogant and himself enlightened. That's what's happening. I'm arrogant and I'm intolerant because I say I know ultimate reality. And because I don't really know ultimate reality, he knows ultimate reality, I'm arrogant for claiming I know ultimate reality because he really knows ultimate reality. That's what's happening. And for all the talk of Christians trying to convert the world, the missionary force around this idea is massive compared to what we send out. This is the very air Americans breathe. Now, I wrote this last little sentence here. "In the end, relativism zealously fights to make sure no one believes in any absolutes while using their own absolutes to establish this idea."

J. Ligon Duncan: Gospel Beginnings

The first thing I want to draw your attention to is this: Luke makes it clear in this passage that the story of God's redemption in Jesus Christ begins with a focus on what God is accomplishing among us. . .

Second, you'll see that it is a record of what God has prophesied that He would do in the Old Testament coming to pass in the very time of Luke and his friends and their contemporaries. . .

In other words, Luke believes that it is absolutely imperative that we understand the truth on which Christianity is founded; that we understand the basis of the gospel message in the light and ministry, the person and work of Jesus Christ, because Christianity is an historical religion. It claims that God has intersected and intruded into [if we can use that language] human history,

and therefore there is truth, there are facts, there are events, there are concrete things that have happened that form the basis of what God is doing in His plan of salvation. . .

John MacArthur: It is important to note that Luke was not critical of those who had **undertaken** (a term often used in connection with literary endeavors) **to compile** an account (a phrase often used to refer to historical writing) of Jesus' life and ministry. He did not pen his gospel as a corrective to those accounts, but because God prompted him to write a comprehensive narrative of the life of Christ and the spread of His salvation gospel. Luke's reason for referring to his sources was twofold. First, it establishes his history as a legitimate, reliable account. He was a careful historian who used credible methods of research and writing, and based his content on the firsthand accounts of eyewitnesses. Second, Luke's use of those sources places his gospel squarely in the orthodox tradition. His volume was not a bizarre, different, heretical gospel. Luke's account was consistent with the teaching of the apostles (cf. **Acts 2:42**) and with those of eyewitnesses and especially the other Spirit-inspired gospel writers (cf. **John 20:30–31; 21:24–25**).

TEXT: Luke 1:5-25

TITLE: BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST ANNOUNCED = THE FORERUNNER

BIG IDEA:

UNEXPECTED DIVINE INTERVENTION SETS IN MOTION THE COMING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO POINT SINNERS TO THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

The role of a forerunner is to point people to the more important individual who will follow. Such was the mission ordained for John the Baptist. His arrival had been promised centuries ago in the Old Testament. But God had been quiet for over 400 years and even the most righteous Jews were caught by surprise when the angelic messenger appeared to get the ball rolling. God is sovereignly working out His plan for history and moves according to His timetable. It might seem like not much is happening in response to our prayers; then all of a sudden God moves in a hurry and the pace of events intensifies. He is faithful to fulfill all of the detailed prophecies of both the First and Second Comings of the Messiah.

Our role is to point sinners to the Messiah as well. We have a testimony to offer of what Christ has already accomplished in our lives in bringing us joy and gladness and we are charged to call people to repentance and faith. Are we alert and expecting God to intervene in the end times and set in motion all of the events described in the Book of Revelation. Or will we be caught by surprise and asleep at the switch? What is exceptional and miraculous to us (e.g. activity of angels and conception of a child in old age) is just normal divine activity to our God who is able to do the impossible.

UNEXPECTED DIVINE INTERVENTION SETS IN MOTION THE COMING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST TO POINT SINNERS TO THE MESSIAH

I. (:5-17) ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

Luke's account of the nativity is the fullest of the gospels

A. (:5-7) Sad Problem = Righteous Couple is Barren

1. Timestamp

"In the days of Herod, king of Judea,"

Herod the Great ruled from 37 to 34 BC – pressure of difficult times

Warren Wiersbe: It was indeed a **dark day** for the nation of Israel. The people had heard no prophetic Word from God for 400 years, not since Malachi had promised the coming of Elijah (**Mal. 4:5–6+**). The spiritual leaders were shackled by tradition and, in some instances, corruption; and their king, Herod the Great, was a tyrant. He had nine (some say ten) wives, one of whom he had executed for no apparent reason. But no matter how dark the day, God always has His devoted and obedient people."

Gal. 4:4 *"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,"*

2. Zechariah and his Priestly Role

“there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah;”

“Yahweh has remembered”

3. Elizabeth and her Priestly Connections

“and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.”

4. Righteous Character

“And they were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.”

Faithful even in their old age – quite a track record of obeying God

5. Sad Burden = Childless and Beyond Child-Bearing Years

“And they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.”

Lesson: Don't be surprised when troubles come – even if you are faithfully obeying the Lord.

Nobody is exempt from trials.

How do you respond to life's disappointments?

Can make us bitter or make us better

Abraham and Sarah with promise of baby Isaac – Messianic typology

Bruce Hurt: Zacharias and Elizabeth, mentioned in **Luke 1**, are a model for anyone who is facing physical or spiritual barrenness. The aged couple had an impeccable reputation, having faithfully and obediently served the Lord for many years (**Lk 1:6**). They had prayed for children, but none came. Yet instead of becoming bitter, they kept serving and obeying the Lord. In His time, God honored Zacharias and Elizabeth with a son named John, the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah (**Lk 1:13-17**).

B. (:8-17) Startling Pronouncement

1. (:8-10) Appointment of Zechariah to Serve in the Temple

“Now it came about, while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division, 9 according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.”

Donald Miller: There were as many as 20,000 priests altogether and so there were not far short of 1,000 in each section. Within the sections all the duties were allocated by lot. Every morning and evening sacrifice was made for the whole nation. A burnt offering of a male lamb, one year old, without spot or blemish was offered, together with a meat offering of flour and oil and a drink offering of wine. **Before the morning sacrifice and after the evening sacrifice incense was burned on the altar of incense so that, as it were, the sacrifices might go up to God wrapped in an envelope of sweet-smelling incense.** It was quite possible that many a priest would never have the privilege of burning incense all his life; but if the lot did fall on any priest, that day was the greatest day in all his life, the day he longed for and dreamed of. On this day the lot fell on Zacharias and he would be thrilled to the core of his being.

Because there were so many priests serving the temple, this was a once-in-a-life privilege for Zechariah – orchestrated by God to occur at just the right time in history; Temple priesthood divided into 24 divisions; each division served twice a year for one week Most priests never got the opportunity to burn the incense; limited to once in your life – Incense was kept burning perpetually just in front of the veil that divided the holy place from the most holy place; the lone priest would offer the incense every morning and evening – rest of the priests and worshippers stood outside the holy place in prayer

2. (:11-12) Appearance of an Angel of the Lord

“And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. 12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear gripped him.”

Why is the first reaction of humans to the appearance of an angel always Fear?

3. (:13-17) Announcement of Birth of John = to Prepare the way for Christ

“But the angel said to him, ‘Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine or liquor; and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother's womb. 16 And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.’”

Your prayer has been heard – Was Zechariah still praying for a child? Probably not; **Lord does not forget our past prayers – God’s delays are not necessarily denials**

What was the significance of the 400 years of God’s prophetic silence before this word from God? **Malachi 4:5-6**

Constable: Elijah had led the people back to Yahweh after Ahab and Jezebel had pushed Israel’s apostasy farther than it had ever gone by instituting Baal worship as Israel’s official religion. John would possess the same spirit and power that Elijah had.

II. (:18-25) REACTIONS TO THE ANNOUNCED BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. (:18-20) Reaction of Zechariah = Cynicism

“And Zacharias said to the angel, ‘How shall I know this for certain? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.’ 19 And the angel answered and said to him, ‘I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God; and I have been sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. 20 And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which shall be fulfilled in their proper time.’”

Def. of *cynicism* = feeling of distrust or that something isn't going to work out well

Look at the emphasis on “*How can I be sure*” – cf. **vs. 4**

Here you have someone involved in the most sacred of religious ministry in the most holy setting

... and still he responds in unbelief and skepticism – despite receiving God’s word directly from an angel

Role of Gabriel – What type of obedience was Gabriel used to seeing among his angelic companions??

J. Ligon Duncan: Now it is no accident that Luke is telling you that it's Gabriel now who's talking to Zechariah, because Gabriel is now about to announcement the fulfillment of the message that he himself gave to Daniel (**chap. 9**) hundreds of years ago.

God has a role for old folks

Think of our role of proclaiming God’s Word today – we can speak with certainty and conviction; we have received the Word from God and have been sent to preach it to others – with authority and expecting results

Wiersbe: You would think that the presence of an angel and the announcement of God’s Word would encourage Zacharias’ faith, but they did not. Instead of looking to God by faith, the priest looked at himself and his wife and decided that the birth of a son was impossible. He wanted some assurance beyond the plain word of Gabriel, God’s messenger, perhaps a sign from God. This, of course, was unbelief, and unbelief is something God does not accept. Zacharias was really questioning God’s ability to fulfill His own Word! Had he forgotten what God did for Abraham and Sarah? (**Gen. 18:9–15; Rom. 4:18–25**) Did he think that his physical limitations would hinder Almighty God? But before we criticize Zacharias too much, we should examine ourselves and see how strong our own faith is. Faith is blessed, but unbelief is judged; and Zacharias was struck dumb (and possibly deaf, **Luke 1:62**) until the Word was fulfilled. “*I believed, and therefore have I spoken*” (**2 Cor. 4:13**). Zacharias did not believe; therefore he could not speak. When he left the holy place, he was unable to give the priestly benediction to the people (**Num. 6:22–27**) or even tell them what he had seen. Indeed, God had given him a very personal “sign” that he would have to live with for the next nine months.

B. (:21-23) Interaction with the People = Confusion

“And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple. 22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute. 23 And it came about, when the days of his priestly service were ended, that he went back home.”

Like playing charades – trying to act something out

Zechariah wants to testify to the good news ... but cannot ...

We have unrestricted mouths to proclaim the good news, why would we choose not to speak?

We are the ones who lose out when we don’t trust God and speak out

Zechariah lost out on the opportunity to verbally shout out the good news of the coming forerunner that would pave the way for the long-awaited Messiah

C. (:24-25) Reaction of Elizabeth = Contemplation -- Thanksgiving and Rejoicing

“And after these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant; and she kept herself in

seclusion for five months, saying, 25 'This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men. "'

Did Elizabeth take any credit for the Lord now showing her favor?

All of grace

David Guzik: Elizabeth did not go away to hide her pregnancy; she was gone for the first five months, the time when she would be least noticed as pregnant. She went away to spend time with the Lord, and to meditate on the destiny of the child within her.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you respond to life's disappointments and then to God's surprising activity?
- 2) What type of preparation helps to prepare one for the advent of the Messiah?
- 3) How would this passage be a good retirement message?
- 4) How are we judgmental and wrongly attach stigma to people because of something in their life?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The Problem of Doubt

Doubt comes in varying degrees. There is the doubt of the proud skeptic, who delights in his own intellect. He pits himself against God as if he is a match for the Almighty. He delights in upsetting the faith of weak believers. He sets forth his arguments against God's existence or the Christian faith as if he is the first brilliant thinker in history to come up with such insights. Such doubters often find jobs teaching at American universities! The Bible dismisses such scoffers with the word, "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'*" (**Ps. 14:1**).

Another level of doubt is that of the person who wants to believe, but he's struggling with difficult questions and he has not yet come to see the glory and excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient Savior of sinners. While this person's questions are often sincere, invariably they are mixed up with sin, especially the sin of wanting to run his own life apart from the lordship of Christ.

In dealing with this type of person, I often use **John 7:17**, where Jesus said, "*If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself.*" I'll point out that while there are some tough questions, the core issue is one of the heart, of being willing to obey God. I encourage such people to read the gospel accounts with an open heart and ask the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" If He is God in human flesh, who offered Himself as the sacrifice for sinners, then we must trust Him and submit ourselves to Him.

Once our hearts are subject to Him, He will give us satisfactory answers to most of the tough questions.

Another type of doubt is that of the believer who has gotten his eyes off the Lord in the midst of a difficult situation. The disciples were there when they were being swamped by the storm at sea and they shouted, “*Save us, Lord; we are perishing!*” He first rebuked the disciples, “*Why are you timid, you men of little faith?*” Then He rebuked the wind and the sea (**Matt. 8:25-26**). The distraught father was there when the disciples could not cast the demon out of his son. He entreated Jesus, “*But if You can do anything, take pity on us and help us!*” Jesus responded, “*If You can! All things are possible to him who believes.*” The father cried out, “*I do believe; help my unbelief!*” (**Mark 9:22-24**). . .

So even if we’ve walked with God for years, when we are faced with a seemingly impossible situation, we need to look to our hearts, which are prone to limit the Almighty by human possibilities. God has given us abundant evidence in Scripture that He is the God of the impossible. Nothing is too difficult for Him. The source of our doubts is not a lack of evidence. It is rather our, sinful hearts. . .

Luke wants us to see that God is faithful to His promises, especially in the matter of sending the Lord Jesus Christ to be the promised Savior. We can trust such a God and such a Savior. He has a proven track record of keeping His word.

J. Ligon Duncan: Scared Stiff by an Angel, Struck Dumb by Unbelief

- I. The angel's announcement is that God is preparing to fulfill His promises.
- II. Zechariah's response manifests the fear of God.
- III. Prayers are not rejected just because God's answers are delayed.
- IV. True greatness is greatness in the Lord's estimation
- V. Repentance is an indication of the work of God's Spirit in us to show us our sin and need for God's grace.

John Piper: How Not to Talk to an Angel

There is clearly a pattern in Luke's presentation: announcement of John—announcement of Jesus; birth of John—birth of Jesus, with a link between the two pairs as Mary and Elizabeth, pregnant with these two unexpected children, meet each other.

Evidently what Luke wants to do with this pattern is get the reader to compare and contrast Jesus and John the Baptist. For example, both children are announced in advance by the angel Gabriel (**1:11, 28**); both births are unnatural or miraculous; in both cases the angel tells what the name should be (**1:13, 31**), and so on. But even more important than the similarities are the contrasts. John was born to an aged and sterile woman, Jesus was born to a virgin; John was given a name which means “*God is gracious*”; Jesus was given a name which means “*savior*”; John was to prepare for the Lord, Jesus was the Lord who would reign forever.

In this way Luke helps Theophilus and us to see two important truths. One is that God is uniquely at work in the birth of these two men. This is *the* all important thing for Theophilus to see about the history of Jesus: it originates with and is guided by the sovereign God. It was not easy for a Roman official to believe that a poor Jewish teacher, executed as a criminal, is in fact the Son of God. That such a man could be an eternal king and savior of the world was very hard for Theophilus to accept. So Luke starts at the beginning to show that this man and his

forerunner were no ordinary people: the sovereign God ordained and ordered their births and their destinies. . .

There is another thing that I think Luke wants us to see from the contrast between the announcements of Jesus' birth and John's birth. Luke wants Theophilus to see the power of God and the preeminence of Jesus, but he also wants him (and us) to see the right way and the wrong way to respond to God's promise of power. This contrast is unavoidable when we look at how Zechariah on the one hand and Mary on the other hand respond to Gabriel's promise that God is going to give them a child and make the child great. Luke clearly wants Theophilus to follow Mary's example, not Zechariah's. . .

That's the first lesson we learn from the contrast between Mary's response and Zechariah's response: it is possible and dangerous to insist on too much evidence before you believe. The second thing we learn is that it is OK to want and to ask for explanations when we are perplexed. . . There is one other lesson to learn from Zechariah's unbelief. It was preceded by a life of godliness and followed by a life of godliness. . . We should not despair that we are cast off from God if we fall into distrusting God for a time. What counts is coming out again and blessing the Lord in the obedience of faith.

J. C. Ryle: Nowhere in the Bible do we find such frequent mention of (ANGELS), as in the period of our Lord's earthly ministry. At no time do we read of so many appearances of angels, as about the time of our Lord's incarnation and entrance into the world. The meaning of this circumstance is sufficiently clear. It was meant to teach the church that Messiah was no angel, but the Lord of angels, as well as of men. Angels announced His coming. Angels proclaimed His birth. Angels rejoiced at his appearing. And by so doing they made it plain that He who came to die for sinners, was not one of themselves, but one far above them, the King of kings and Lord of lords (**Rev 19:16**). **One thing, at all events, about angels, we must never forget.** They take a deep interest in the work of Christ, and the salvation which Christ has provided. They sung high praise when the Son of God came down to make peace by His own blood between God and man (**Lk 2:14**). They rejoice when sinners repent, and sons are born again to our Father in heaven (**Luke 15:10**). They delight to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation (**Heb 1:14**). **Let us strive to be like them, while we are upon earth,—to be of their mind, and to share their joys. This is the way to be in tune for heaven. It is written of those who enter in there, that they shall be “as the angels.” (Mark 12:25.)**

Matt Chandler: A Righteous Response to Absurd Promises

What do we do with these promises when it seems like and it feels like they're impossible? What do we do with the promises of God, that all things are working for my good when there's no good to be seen in it and in the moment, the weight of it has stolen our ability to breathe? What do we do with that promise in that moment?

Zechariah's response to the promises of God was, "I don't believe it. Here's why I don't believe it. I don't believe it because of this, this, this and this. And you answer these question for me and then maybe I'll believe." It's a heart full of pride, full of doubt that God is capable or able and believes that his circumstances trump the power and authority of God.

God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.
Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sovereign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

TEXT: Luke 1:26-38

TITLE: BIRTH OF JESUS ANNOUNCED – THE SON OF THE MOST HIGH

BIG IDEA:

THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INCARNATION PROVIDES THE INITIAL DEFINITION FOR THE ROLE OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

The birth of the Messiah was the subject of a number of prominent OT prophecies. Now the moment in history has arrived – “*the fullness of times*” – for God to send forth His Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. This announcement by the super angel Gabriel follows close on the heels of his parallel announcement of the birth of the forerunner -- John the Baptist. But what a difference in person and in roles.

Here we see the privileged function of Mary – highly favored by God; but we also feel the tension and pressure she will face as she carries the God-child under such unusual and unique circumstances. Here we are also introduced to some key fundamental truths about the person and work of Jesus Christ.

G. Campbell Morgan: This is the Biblical interpretation of the Person of Jesus. A naturalistic philosophy necessarily cannot accept this as true.

THE ANGELIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE INCARNATION PROVIDES THE INITIAL DEFINITION FOR THE ROLE OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH

I. (:26-38) GABRIEL’S ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS TO MARY

A. (:26-27) Gabriel’s Mission to the Virgin Mary

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee, called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.”

What are the prophetic significance of the details in these 2 verses?

- Location of Nazareth in Galilee – about 70 miles north-east of Jerusalem
- Condition of Mary being a virgin
- Ancestral connections of Joseph to David

Significance of her status as engaged –

B. (:28-29) Gabriel’s Greeting of Grace and Favor Leads to Initial Concern

1. (:28) Announcement of Grace and Favor and Privilege

“And coming in, he said to her, ‘Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.’”

A recipient of divine grace, not one who could dispense grace; not a call to pray to Mary

2. (:29) Apprehension and Initial Concern

“But she was greatly troubled at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of salutation this might be.”

What was so troubling to Mary?

Not a lack of faith – not questioning whether God would actually accomplish this ... but asking How?

C. (:30) Gabriel's Reassurance

“And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.’”

D. (:31-33) Gabriel's Christology – 7 Truths About Jesus Revealed:

1. Conceived by the Holy Spirit

“And behold, you will conceive in your womb,”

Concept is fleshed out below in **vs. 35**

2. Human Son

“and bear a son,”

3. Named Jesus

“and you shall name Him Jesus.”

Jehovah saves

Matt. 1:21 *“He will save His people from their sins”*

4. Destined for Greatness

“He will be great,”

Steven Cole: Jesus later said that John the Baptist was the greatest person ever born naturally on this earth (**Matt. 11:11**). That means that John was greater than Mary. But John himself acknowledged of Jesus, He is *“mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals”* (**Luke 3:16**). John also testified, *“After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me”* (**John 1:30**). Remember, John was born six months before Jesus, yet he acknowledged that Jesus existed before him. No wonder John exclaimed, *“This is the Son of God”* (*John 1:34*). *“He must increase, but I must decrease”* (**John 3:30**). Any elevation of Mary that puts her on the same plane as Jesus is utter blasphemy! Jesus alone is the uniquely great Savior and Son of God.

5. Called Unique Son of God

“and will be called the Son of the Most High;”

Equality of nature

Bruce Hurt: **Most High** (*hupsistos* superlative of *hupsos* = height from *hupsi* = high, aloft) in a spatial sense means the highest (highest places). Figuratively of the highest possible status. In view of God's superior rank and power it is an appropriate descriptive Name of God. He is the Most High which also emphasizes His as dwelling in the highest heavens far exalted above all other things.

What do we learn about Jesus here? How distinct from John the Baptist?

Son of the Most High vs. Prophet of the Most High vs.76

6. Given the Throne of David -- Royalty

“and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;”

Supreme power

7. Unending Reign

*“and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever;
and His kingdom will have no end.”*

MacArthur: This emphasizes both the Jewish character of the millennial kingdom and the eternal permanence of Christ’s rule over all.

(2 Sam. 7; Dan. 2; 7:14)

II. (:34-38) MARY’S RESPONSE OF SUBMISSIVE FAITH DESPITE THE MYSTERY OF THE PROCESS

A. (:34-37) Logistical Question Regarding the Process of Conception and Birth

“And Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I am a virgin?’ 35 And the angel answered and said to her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God. 36 And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God.’”

Thabiti Anyabwile: Did you ever feel like your life is too small for God to notice, too insignificant for God to be aware of you? Perhaps that’s how Mary felt.

Bruce Hurt: Overshadow (*episkiazō* from *epi* = upon + *skia* = shadow) "literally, as darkening by partially blocking out a source of light" (**Friberg**) and so to throw a shadow upon as in **Acts 5:15**. To cover as with a cloud as in the cloud of Shekinah glory (**Exodus 40:34**). Even as the Shekinah glory cloud was a visible manifestation of the glory and holy, powerful presence of God, this same divine power which was with Moses and others in the Old Testament was now going to do a unique work in the life of Mary!

Only a God who can accomplish the impossible could keep this promise of a virgin birth. Beauty of the incarnation – God becoming flesh – He needed to be God to supply the righteousness required; he needed to be man to accomplish the atoning sacrifice – the substitutionary death in our place to take the punishment for our sins; only one mediator between man and God = the God-man Christ Jesus

What would give Mary assurance that this promise of a virgin birth would come about as Gabriel had announced to her? Birth of John to Elizabeth

Comforting: *No Word of God will ever fail.*

John Piper: It is an unfathomable mystery that all the fullness of deity should dwell bodily in

Jesus (**Colossians 2:9**). It is fitting (indeed necessary, I think) that the entrance gate to this mystery of incarnation should be the virgin birth. And it should cause us to smile with pleasure that the shy member of the Trinity should be assigned the delicate and wonderful and mysterious work of causing the virgin to conceive—to conceive the One whose greatness he will magnify forever. It's all so beautifully appropriate.

B. (:38) Submissive Commitment of Faith

“I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May your word to me be fulfilled.’ Then the angel left her.”

We each have been gifted to perform a specific role in God’s kingdom agenda.
Do we have the same attitude of submissive commitment?

She knew she would be accused of adultery – not many good explanations for her pregnancy

What can we learn from Mary’s attitude of submission?

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is so essential about the virgin birth of Jesus?
- 2) How do you deal with feelings of insignificance?
- 3) Does this passage increase your confidence that God is in the business of doing the impossible?
- 4) How prepared are you to embrace God’s plan for your life when that plan might seem so outrageous and outside of your comfort zone?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Piper: Christ Conceived by the Holy Spirit

What's significant in this verse is God's choice to announce to Mary ahead of time what he is about to do. Again and again in Scripture this is the pattern: a word and then a deed. Why? I think it's because God wants his deeds to be understood, and he wants to be sure that *he* gets credit for them. Events by themselves without words of explanation are ambiguous. The word of God interprets the work of God and takes away the ambiguity.

There are two lessons for us here in passing.

- 1) Beware of reading extraordinary meaning into unusual circumstances when there is no clear word of Scripture to guide your interpretation. When God intends his work to teach, he adds his word.
- 2) The other lesson is that we should never settle for a merely silent witness to Christ. *How* we live is crucial, but if God thought his *own* work needed verbal explanation, how much more ours. . .

Five things Gabriel says about Mary's child.

1. His Name Will Be Jesus

His name will be Jesus. In Hebrew: Joshua, which means Savior or Deliverer. Gabriel loves to highlight grace. Before he tells Mary of Christ's greatness and dignity and power, he tells her how he is going to use this greatness and dignity and power. He is going to use it as a Savior. So don't be afraid, Mary, your child will be your Savior. He will be *Jesus*.

2. He Will Be Great

"*He will be great*" (v. 32). Jesus is great. He is very great. A Christian who feels ashamed of Jesus Christ is like a candle feeling ashamed of the sun. Our Lord Jesus has been "appointed the heir of all things. Through him God created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe with the word of his power." Is there anything great in the world that excites you, that you go out of your way to see or hear? Christ made it! And he is ten million times greater in every respect, except sin.

If you took all the greatest thinkers of every country and every century of the world and put them in a room with Jesus, they would shut their mouths and listen to the greatness of his wisdom. All the greatest generals would listen to his strategy. All the greatest musicians would listen to his music theory and his performance on every instrument. There is nothing that Jesus cannot do a thousand times better than the person you admire most in any area of human endeavor under the sun. Words fail to fill the greatness of Jesus. So Gabriel leaves it simple and yet so profound: "*He will be great!*"

3. He Will Be Called Son of the Most High

Gabriel says, "*He will be called Son of the Most High.*" It's true that disciples of Jesus are also called "*sons of the Most High*" (6:35) and so some say that the sonship of Jesus is not anything more than what you or I have. I doubt that for two reasons. One is that Gabriel is giving a description of what distinguishes Jesus: he is great, he is king, he is eternal. It would be pointless and out of place to say: he is merely a son of God by faith like you and me. The other reason is that in **Luke 8:28** a demon cries to Jesus, "*What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High? I beseech you, do not torment me.*" The demons recognize that Jesus' sonship is not like ours. As the Son of God he has the right and power to torment the forces of Satan. So Gabriel means: Jesus is uniquely God's Son, the divine Word and image of God, begotten from all eternity.

4. He Will Sit on David's Throne

Gabriel says, "*The Lord God will give him the throne of his Father, David.*" Since Mary's son will be the Savior of his people, will be superior in greatness, and will be called the Son of the Most High, it is fitting and inevitable that he will be king. He will fulfill all the prophecies that a son of David will rule over Israel. But not only over Israel. **Isaiah 11:10** says, "*In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwelling shall be glorious*" (cf. **Luke 2:32**). Mary's son will some day rule the world (**Luke 2:32**).

5. His Kingdom Will Never End

Gabriel says, "*He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.*" Do you see what this promise means? It means that Jesus is alive and ruling over his people at 11:50 AM, Sunday, March 11, 1984. Do you believe that? Jesus, Savior, Son of God,

King of the world, is governing just as realistically today as Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher or Helmut Kohl. If Gabriel has spoken the truth, *THE ISSUE* in 1984, no matter where you live on this planet, is: Will you bow before the kingship of Jesus and obey the rule of his kingdom?

Steven Cole: Should Christians Hail Mary?

Should Christians hail Mary? (To hail means to greet with enthusiastic approval or to summon by calling.) Is she “our life, our sweetness, our hope?” Should we pray to her (or to any saint) or ask her to intercede with Jesus on our behalf? If not, how should we view Mary? Does she deserve a higher status than that of other believers?

Mary didn't seem to be afraid of the angel's presence, as Zechariah had been (1:12), but she was troubled by his words. I think she was overwhelmed at the implication of what the angel was saying, that God had singled out her—of all people—for a special task. While God noticed Mary, she was humbly unaware of anything special about herself. . .

Observations regarding Mary:

1. MARY IS NOT A DISPENSER OF GRACE, BUT A RECIPIENT OF IT.
2. MARY WAS THOUGHTFUL AND REVERENT TOWARD THE THINGS OF GOD.
3. MARY BELIEVED THAT GOD WOULD DO AS HE SAID.
4. MARY OBEDIENTLY SUBMITTED TO GOD IN SPITE OF THE POTENTIAL HARDSHIP FOR HER FUTURE.

Our text and the whole Bible make it clear that Mary is not to be elevated above any other believer. Yet at the same time, we should not react to Catholicism's veneration of Mary by neglecting to learn from her. As a godly woman who trusted and obeyed God, she has much to teach us. But we can learn even more by looking at Mary's Son.

J. Ligon Duncan: Nothing is Impossible with God

But even as we exalt God and Christ, as we see the redeeming purposes of the Lord and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ unfolded in this passage, we also learn some things about how to live to Christ and die to self and the world in this passage. Five words, I think, sum up some of these lessons that we learn: *Humility; Privilege; Mystery; Sovereignty; and, Submission.* . .

1. Humility

The humble circumstances of Mary and the humble condition of our Savior's birth set forth something of God's condescension and Jesus' humility. . .

Kent Hughes says, “Mary was a nobody from a nothing town in the middle of nowhere.”

2. Privilege

Martin Luther in his little Christmas book said, “No woman has ever lived on earth to whom God has shown such grace.”

Do you realize that, my friend? That as you trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel, you are given a status and a privilege, the greater than which cannot be conceived: to be called a child of God, a brother or sister of Jesus Christ, a joint heir with Him. Such that, later in Luke (**Luke 8:21**) when Mary and His brothers were looking for Jesus, do you remember how Jesus responded to the crowd? [*‘Ah...Jesus! Your mother and your brothers are*

looking for you!] You remember what Jesus says? **Luke 8:21** — “*Who are My mother and My brothers?*” And then what does He say? “*Those who hear My word and do it, they are My mother and brothers.*” Do you realize that by grace through faith every believer has the privilege of being the brother or sister of Jesus and the son of His heavenly Father?

My friends, do not discount your gospel privileges! It is totally appropriate for us to honor this godly young woman whose charge it was to nurture the One who would be our Savior, the Messiah promised of God. But, my friends, we must not do it at the discount of the heavenly promise that is given to all those who by faith in Christ have become children of God. Those words come from Jesus himself, and we must meditate upon the privilege that we've been given.

3. Mystery

If you can't conceive how a virgin can conceive, then what about this? Christians believe that Mary gave birth to the sinless Son of God. Now which is harder to believe, that God came in the flesh in Jesus and He was without sin? Or that He came in the flesh miraculously?

Christians worship a God who brought the world into being by speaking. It does not surprise them that He does mighty miracles that display His power. This is not a surprise and it's not a problem. It's a proof of His infinity and His omnipotence. . . Do not despise mysteries. In a religion in which we worship an infinite, omnipotent God, there are going to be mysteries.

4. Sovereignty

Faith rests on the sovereignty of God. Our favorite Anglican bishop, **J.C. Ryle**, says, “Faith never rests so calmly and peacefully as when it lays its head on the pillow of God's omnipotence.”

First of all, at the very outset of Jesus' life and ministry, notice how God intervenes in His all-powerfulness with this miracle in order to show us that our salvation must be all of God and all of grace. It begins with the miracle of the virgin birth. It begins with the miracle of God in the flesh. What does this tell you? It tells you that salvation is all of God and all of grace, but it also tells you something about how we are to live the Christian life, trusting God and His sovereignty.

5. Submission

There is a bravery and a faith and a humility displayed by Mary in this word that shows that she understood that the burden that she was going to carry, dangerous as it was going to be, was in fact going to be freedom for her. Her bondage, her service, her servitude, was going to mean freedom. And there is a submission that understands this that is the very heart of the Christian life.

John MacArthur: Regarding Jewish engagement - In Jewish practice, girls were usually engaged at the age of twelve or thirteen and married at the end of a one-year betrothal period. The betrothal, arranged by the parents, was a more binding legal arrangement than a modern engagement. Only death or divorce could sever the contract, and the couple could be referred to as husband and wife. If her betrothed husband died, the girl would be considered a widow. The couple did not live together or have sexual relations during the betrothal period. During that year the girl was to prove her faithfulness and purity, and the boy was to prepare a home for his bride-to-be. When the year was up there was a seven-day wedding feast (cf. **Matt. 25:1–13; John 2:1–11**), after which the couple began their life together as husband and wife. Only then was the marriage consummated.

Wayne Grudem - The doctrinal importance of the virgin birth is seen in at least three areas.

1. It shows that **salvation ultimately must come from the Lord**. Just as God had promised that the “*seed*” of the woman (**Gen. 3:15**) would ultimately destroy the serpent, so God brought it about by his own power, not through mere human effort. The virgin birth of Christ is an unmistakable reminder that salvation can never come through human effort, but must be the work of God himself. . .

2. The virgin birth made possible the **uniting of full deity and full humanity in one person**. This was the means God used to send his Son (**John 3:16; Gal. 4:4**) into the world as a man. If we think for a moment of other possible ways in which Christ might have come to the earth, none of them would so clearly unite humanity and deity in one person. It probably would have been possible for God to create Jesus as a complete human being in heaven and send him to descend from heaven to earth without the benefit of any human parent. But then it would have been very hard for us to see how Jesus could be fully human as we are, nor would he be a part of the human race that physically descended from Adam. On the other hand, it probably would have been possible for God to have Jesus come into the world with two human parents, both a father and a mother, and with his full divine nature miraculously united to his human nature at some point early in his life. But then it would have been hard for us to understand how Jesus was fully God, since his origin was like ours in every way. When we think of these two other possibilities, it helps us to understand how God, in his wisdom, ordained a combination of human and divine influence in the birth of Christ, so that his full humanity would be evident to us from the fact of his ordinary human birth from a human mother, and his full deity would be evident from the fact of his conception in Mary’s womb by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit.

3. The virgin birth also makes possible **Christ’s true humanity without inherited sin**. As we noted in **chapter 24**, all human beings have inherited legal guilt and a corrupt moral nature from their first father, Adam (this is sometimes called “inherited sin” or “original sin”). But the fact that Jesus did not have a human father means that the line of descent from Adam is partially interrupted. Jesus did not descend from Adam in exactly the same way in which every other human being has descended from Adam. And this helps us to understand why the legal guilt and moral corruption that belongs to all other human beings did not belong to Christ.

Henry Morris - The miraculous conception was unusual in that it took place directly in the womb rather than in the tubes, but it was uniquely miraculous in that no man was involved. "*That holy thing*" was placed directly in Mary's womb by God "*the Holy Ghost*" (**Luke 1:35**) and thus was uniquely "*the seed of the woman*" (**Genesis 3:15**). Just as the body of "*the first Adam*" was directly formed by God (**Genesis 2:7**), with no genetic connection to either father or mother, so the body of "**the second Adam**" (**1 Corinthians 15:45**) was directly formed by God (**Hebrews 10:5**) with no genetic connection to either parent. Since the very ground was brought under God's curse because of sin (**Genesis 3:17**), all the elements of the ground ("*the dust of the earth*") out of which the bodies of Adam and Eve and all their descendants had been formed were contaminated with the "*bondage of corruption*" (or decay--**Romans 8:21,22**). This was just as true of Mary's body as of Joseph's, so there could have been no natural genetic connection of Jesus' body to Mary's, any more than to Joseph's. The "*holy thing*" placed in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit could have been nothing less than a special creation, just as was the body of Adam. Otherwise, like all men born of women, Jesus would have inherited both physical defects and the sin-nature of Adam and Eve.

TEXT: Luke 1:39-56

TITLE: MARY'S MAGNIFICAT = HER BEATITUDES

BIG IDEA:

WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE BLESSINGS THAT FLOW OUT OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

God's actions flow out of His attributes. What He does is directly tied to Who He is. We need a passion to know God in a deeper, more intimate way. We need to focus more on the attributes of God and how they are connected to what He does for us. The events recorded here are pivotal in human history. We are talking about the upcoming births of both John the Baptist and the promised Messiah. Yet God chose to work thru two otherwise insignificant women. Their faith and worship and rejoicing set a godly example for our own spiritual walk.

Geldenhuys: It is striking that Luke alone, the educated and artistically disposed Greek, has committed to writing the songs of Elisabeth, Mary, Zacharias and Simeon and the hymn of the angels.

WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE BLESSINGS THAT FLOW OUT OF THE CHARACTER OF GOD

(:39-40) PRELUDE – MARY VISITS ELIZABETH / JOHN THE BAPTIST VISITS JESUS

“Now at this time Mary arose and went with haste to the hill country, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.”

Why did Mary go to visit Elizabeth?

- Somebody she could share openly with; similar experiences; shared faith and joy
- Shows importance of fellowship and community
- Their unusual pregnancies were connected

J. Ligon Duncan: this passage is *the visitation*, the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, but perhaps even more deeply the visitation of the Savior to Elizabeth and to her son, John the Baptist, and it's a remarkable story. . . Now we don't know how old Mary was, but she was probably a very, very, very young teenager—thirteen, fourteen years old perhaps. And she's visiting her cousin Elizabeth, who is old enough to be her great-grandmother. And they're both pregnant at the same time. [Now that's just a little weird!] And she's traveled almost a hundred miles, all the way from Nazareth in Galilee, all the way down into the hill country of Judah, and they are going to commune together a little bit. They're going to experience some fellowship: not just the fellowship of cousins, not just the fellowship of kin, not just the fellowship of two women who are expecting children; but communion, fellowship in God's providence for their lives because they have been called to fulfill the promise of God in **Genesis 3:15** that a Messiah is going to be sent into the world — the seed of the woman, who is going to crush the serpent's head. They are going to be respectively the mother of the forerunner of the Messiah and the mother of the Messiah, and they needed to have words and they needed to have fellowship, and they needed to commune in that glorious (and no doubt overwhelming) reality.

I. (:41-45) INTERACTION BETWEEN MARY AND ELIZABETH

A. (:41) Something Big is Happening

1. Womb Bounce

“And it came about that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb;”

J Vernon McGee - What we are dealing with here is miraculous, and there is no use trying to offer a natural explanation. You either believe what happened in these verses or you do not. I am so weary of people today, especially preachers, who try to appear intellectual by attempting to explain away the miracles in the Bible. You either accept the miracles of the Bible or you do not, and what took place in these verses was a miracle. This woman is filled with the Holy Spirit, and the babe leaps in her womb.

Piper: That's all the confirmation Mary needs. She sees clearly a most remarkable thing about God: He is about to change the course of all human history; the most important three decades in all of time are about to begin. And where is God? Occupying himself with two obscure, humble women—one old and barren, one young and virginal. And Mary is so moved by this vision of God, the lover of the lowly, that she breaks out in song—a song that has come to be known as the Magnificat.

J. Ligon Duncan: Maximus of Turin, one of the early church fathers, says: “Not yet born, John already prophesies.” He's already pointing to the Savior! In his mother's womb he's already pointing to the Savior! The church fathers used to say that John is the only child who ever turned his mother's womb into a pulpit. That's exactly what John does. With joy he responds to the presence of the Messiah. And isn't that how we're supposed to respond at the presence of the Messiah, our Savior, our Lord Jesus, the Christ? Isn't that how we're supposed to respond? And in the womb, John shows us the way.

2. Holy Spirit Activity

“and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

B. (:42-45) Elizabeth Joyfully Pronounces Blessing

1. (:42a) High Privilege for Mary

“And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, ‘Blessed among women are you,’”

2. (:42b) Blessing Upon Baby Jesus in the Womb

“and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”

J. Ligon Duncan: Do you see the **humility** of Elizabeth? An angel has come to her husband to tell her that she will be the bearer of the forerunner of the Messiah. An angel has come to her husband and told her that in her son... the prophecies of Malachi and Elijah, and Isaiah and Jeremiah...the prophecies of these great Old Testament prophets will be fulfilled in the person of her son. And Mary walks in the door, and Elizabeth has nothing to say about herself.

3. (:43-44) High Privilege for Elizabeth and Her Baby

“And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.”

4. (:45) Commendation of Faith of Mary

“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”

II. (:46-55) MARY’S MAGNIFICAT

[cf. parallel statements in the Beatitudes]

Name Magnificat comes from the first word of the song in the Latin translation

many OT biblical references in the song – Mary knew the Scriptures

Leon Morris: there are quite a number of resemblances to the song of Hannah (**1 Sa. 2:1-10**). But we should notice a difference in tone. Hannah’s song is a shout of triumph in the face of her enemies, Mary’s a humble contemplation of the mercies of God.

A. (:46-48) Recognition of Her Blessed State

1. (:46-47) State of Rejoicing in God

“And Mary said: ‘My soul exalts the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.’”

Mary was not sinless; recognized her need for a Savior

2. (:48a) State of Elevation from Humble Standing

“For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondservant;”

3. (:48b) State of Perpetual Honor

“For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.”

B. (:49-54) Recitation of God’s Blessings Flowing Out of His Character

1. (:49) Holiness – Connected with Performance of Great Things

“For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name.”

Thabiti Anyabwile: The point is God, not Mary. There’s not the slightest hint of Mary worship, or Mariolatry, in this passage. Our Catholic friends err significantly when they exalt Mary to comediant with Christ. Mary herself exalted *God* for his greatness.

2. (:50) Mercy – Connected with Fear of the Lord

“And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.”

Lenski: Fear denotes the awe which fills the heart and reflects itself in the bearing of those who recognize aright God’s majesty and greatness. His power, holiness, and righteousness deer them from treating him and his commandments lightly by disobedience whereas his love, grace, and mercy move them to honor and to obey him with childlike reverence. The fear is childlike, not slavish.

3. (:51) Power – Connected with Dispersing the Proud

“He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.”

4. (:52) Sovereignty – Connected with Bringing Down and Raising Up Leaders

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble.”

5. (:53) Goodness – Connected with Provision for the Needy and Frustration of the Self Sufficient

“He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed.”

Geldenhuys: She sings of the mighty reversal of things which in principle has already been accomplished by the entrance of God upon the course of history and in the life of mankind, through the coming Messiah, her promised Son. In God’s choice of two persons of humble life like herself and Elisabeth she sees the powerful revolutionary principle according to which God is going to renew everything through the Messiah. This principle entails a complete reversal of all human opinions of greatness and insignificance. The proud, those who exalt themselves and take not account of God, He puts down – beaten by His mighty arm. The powers that be, oppressors who tryannise over the poor and lowly, are deprived of their power and high standing, while those who are truly humble are exalted to great things. The hungry, those who realise their own need and yearn for spiritual food, are blessed. But the rich, those who are self-satisfied and proud, are shamed in the imagination of their hearts.

6. (:54) Faithfulness – Connected with Covenant Promises

“He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his offspring forever.”

Thabiti Anyabwile: We should praise God for keeping his promises even before we see the promises fulfilled. That’s what these women of faith do.

(:56) POSTLUDE – CONCLUSION OF THE VISIT

“And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.”

Leon Morris: Mary left before John was born. There would then be much excitement and many visitors. Mary, in her condition, might not wish to be there for that.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What steps are you taking to grow in your knowledge of God and a more in depth appreciation of His attributes?
- 2) What are the evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

3) Why did Elizabeth respond so differently than her husband? What does this text teach about the role of women in Christian worship?

4) How does God work in ways which are counter to normal cultural expectations?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Piper: Meditation on the Magnificat

the parallel expressions and ideas? For example:

Hannah (1 Samuel 2)	Mary (Luke 1)
v. 1 My heart exults in the Lord; I rejoice in thy salvation.	v. 46f. My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
v. 2 There is none holy like the Lord.	v. 49 Holy is his name.
v. 4 The bows of the mighty are broken but the feeble gird on strength.	v. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree.
v. 5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry have ceased to hunger.	v. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Mary makes the general statement that God's name is *holy*. That is, God's nature, his essence is holiness. He is completely free from sin, and his ways are not our ways. He is separate from and exalted above the creature. All his attributes are perfect, and they all cohere in a perfect harmony called holiness. But what Mary stresses is the way this holiness expresses itself. And her words are a warning to Theophilus and to us not to make the common mistake that because God is great, he is partial to great men, or because God is exalted, he favors what is exalted among men. Just the opposite is the case. God's holiness has expressed itself and will express itself by exalting the lowly and abasing the haughty.

What fills Mary's heart with joy is that God loves to undertake for the underdog who calls on his mercy. She mentions this three times: **verse 50**, "*He has mercy on those who fear him*"; **verse 52**, "*He has exalted those of low degree*"; **verse 53**, "*He has filled the hungry with good things.*" That's one side of God's holiness. The other side is that God opposes and abases the haughty. Mary mentions this three times also: **verse 51**, "*He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*"; **verse 52**, "*He has put down the mighty from their thrones*"; **verse 53**, "*The rich he has sent away empty.*"

It is clear from Mary's words (and from the whole Bible) that God is not partial to the rich, the powerful, or the proud. How could God be partial to the things which in our world are, more often than not, substitutes for God rather than pointers to God? Vast numbers of people have perished because they were enamored by pride, power, and wealth. And probably Theophilus, as a ranking Roman official, has all three. So Mary's Magnificat is not just recorded out of pure antiquarian interest. There is a word of warning and of salvation here. Theophilus, look at what God is really like. He is not the least impressed by any of your pride, power, or opulence. He has mercy on those who fear him, who humble themselves and turn from the ego boosting accumulation of wealth to the lowliness of self-denial for the sake of others. This is the way God is, Theophilus. This is how his holiness expresses itself. Does this not commend itself as true, that the great and holy God should magnify his greatness by blessing the lowly who admire his greatness and by abasing the haughty who resent his greatness?

Steven Cole: Glorifying the God of Mercy and Judgment

Mary further teaches that God's name is **holy (1:49)**. His name refers to His person, the sum of His attributes. To be holy means to be set apart. In this context, it refers not only to God's absolute moral righteousness, but also to His being set apart as the only sovereign authority over people (**Darrell Bock, Luke [Baker], 1:152**). Thus He is to be held in highest esteem and to be feared.

Thankfully, Mary does not leave us with just these attributes of God, or we would not dare to approach Him! She goes on to emphasize God's great **mercy (1:50, 54)**. God's mercy and His grace are close in meaning, both emphasizing His undeserved favor. But mercy has the connotation of God's compassion due to our miserable condition. When Mary speaks of God's mercy on those who fear Him, we should not conclude that somehow their reverence earned them God's favor. His mercy is always unmerited in the sense that it flows totally from His great love and not at all because of anything worthy in the creature. But when God bestows His mercy, those who have received it respond with grateful reverence to Him.

In addition to His mercy, Mary adds that God is the **giver of good things (1:53)**. As **James 1:17** reminds us, "*Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.*" Jesus taught that even earthly fathers, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children. How much more will not the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to His children who ask Him (**Luke 11:13**)? In line with this, Mary shows that God is **faithful to His covenant promises (1:54, 55)**. Even though 2,000 years had elapsed since God's promises to Abraham, God had not forgotten. What God has promised, He will fulfill in His time.

- God's mercy is a **sovereign mercy**.
- God's mercy is a **covenant mercy**
- God's mercy is a **benevolent mercy**.

J. Ligon Duncan: **Mary on the Christian Life**

It seems to me that Mary, in her song of praise here, gives us an address, a lecture, on how to live the Christian life. I fully understand the uniqueness of her circumstances. I understand that it's not every day that a woman is called to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. I understand her unique role in redemptive history and in God's purposes for salvation, but it seems to me that there are things that Mary teaches us by example that are vital and are of importance for the living of the Christian life no matter when and where you happen to live on this planet. . .

First of all, I want you to notice **the role of the Bible** in Mary's praise. This is a Scripture-filled song. Second, I want you to note Mary's **humility**. Mary's humility is evident in this song. Third, I want you to note Mary's **gratitude**. You really can't move from syllable to syllable in this song without seeing her gratefulness, and I want to think with you this morning actually about how surprising that is. Many of us may think, "Well, there's nothing surprising about that. Of course she's grateful. She's just been told she's going to be the Messiah's mother. Of course you're grateful!" But think a little bit about the situation that Mary finds herself in. Fourth, I want you to see how Mary does not see this as something just about her. For her, it's **about all of God's people** in all ages, so she sees herself as part of a larger story. That's the next thing I want us to see. Fifth, I want us to see how this song points us to **God's promises**. So — to God's people, and now to God's promises. And then, finally, I want you to see how this song points us to the **gospel** itself. So — **Scripture; humility; gratitude; God's people; God's promises; God's gospel**.

Donald Miller - It has been said that religion is the opiate of the people; but, as **Stanley Jones** said, "the Magnificat is the most revolutionary document in the world." It speaks of three of the revolutions of God.

- (i) He scatters the proud in the plans of their hearts. That is a moral revolution.
- (ii) **He casts down the mighty—he exalts the humble**. That is a social revolution.
- (iii) **He has filled those who are hungry ... those who are rich he has sent empty away**. That is an economic revolution.

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Worship of Two Women

There is no mention as to whether or not Mary was pregnant when she first arrived at the home of Elizabeth and Zachariah. Neither, Elizabeth, Mary, nor Luke refer to the fetus in Mary's womb, while we are specifically told that John leaped in his mother's womb when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting (**Luke 1:41**). It is my opinion is that Mary became pregnant during the time she was staying with Elizabeth and Zachariah. She would have been separated from Joseph, while at the same time being chaperoned by Elizabeth and Zachariah. This would serve as further testimony to the divine origin of the Christ-child. . .

We can see that the verbs in these verses (**:51-55**) are past perfect. The question which this raises is what is meant by the use of the past tense. My opinion is that deliverances which are described have already been demonstrated in Israel's history, to some degree, but that they will finally and fully be realized in the future, as a result of Messiah's coming. Much, perhaps most, of these things will be fulfilled in the second coming of Messiah, rather than in His first coming. In His first coming, Messiah came to reveal God to men, and to accomplish eternal redemption for all who would believe. In His second coming, Messiah will come to "set things straight," to bring justice to the earth and judgment to the wicked. The book of Revelation speaks much of these themes, and prophesies their fulfillment.

Mary and Elizabeth's praise of God went much further than just gratitude for the gift of a child. Mary's praise began with her own experience, but quickly linked this with God's character and actions in the past (His ways) and then with His covenant and promises regarding the future.

TEXT: Luke 1:57-80

TITLE: THE VISITATION OF GOD

BIG IDEA:

THE DIVINE VISITATION EVOKES AWE, AMAZEMENT AND HEARTFELT REJOICING

INTRODUCTION:

The momentous intervention of God into human affairs (especially after such a long period of prophetic silence) should cause awe, amazement, and rejoicing. The events surrounding the birth of John the Baptist and the coming of the Messiah (who will bring ultimate life and lasting peace) are anything but ordinary and typical. But what we easily forget is that God's intervention in our own lives to draw us to Himself in saving faith is no less an awe-inspiring wonder of His mercy and grace. God's visitation in our experience could also be described in the graphic language of the rising of the Sun star as we are rescued out of the domain of darkness to serve Him in holiness and righteousness.

THE DIVINE VISITATION EVOKES AWE, AMAZEMENT AND HEARTFELT REJOICING

I. (:57-66) BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST – GOD INTERVENING IN HUMAN HISTORY

A. (:57-58) Reaction to the Birth of John the Baptist

1. (:57) Birth of John the Baptist

“Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she brought forth a son.”

2. (:58) Reaction of Neighbors and Relatives = Rejoicing

“And her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.”

Created quite a stir among their friends and neighbors

B. (:59-63) Reaction to the Naming of John the Baptist – Family Feud

1. (:59-63a) Naming of John the Baptist

“And it came about that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father. 60 And his mother answered and said, ‘No indeed; but he shall be called John.’ 61 And they said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.’ 62 And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called. 63 And he asked for a tablet, and wrote as follows, ‘His name is John.’”

G. Campbell Morgan: In the Hebrew economy, the boy was named on the day of circumcision. These kinsfolk taking for granted, as was so often the case, that he would be called by his father's name.

Liefeld: The present tense in the statement “*his name is John*” has the ring of deliberate emphasis.

SermonWriter.com: They motion to Zechariah, as if he is deaf as well as mute. We have no evidence that he is deaf aside from this verse. People often assume that a mute person cannot hear, which is often but not always the case. That seems to be what is happening here.

2. (:63b) Reaction to the Naming of John the Baptist = Astonishment

“And they were all astonished.”

C. (:64-66) Reaction to the Restoration of Speech to Zacharias

1. (:64) Restoration of Speech to Zacharias

“And at once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.”

Zacharias forgiven and given a second chance; no longer doubting the promises of God; benefited from the Lord’s discipline in his life

2. (:65-66) Reaction to the Restoration of Speech of Zacharias = Awe and Amazement

“And fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea. 66 And all who heard them kept them in mind, saying, ‘What then will this child turn out to be?’ For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.”

Ralph Wilson: The phrase "were talking about" (NIV) or "were noised abroad" (KJV) is the Greek verb *dialaleo*, "discuss, exchange opinions or viewpoints." The verb is in the imperfect sense, suggesting that the discussion continued on for some time and didn't die down right away.

II. (:67-79) BENEDICTUS OF ZACHARIAS – COVENANT PROMISES ABOUT TO BE FULFILLED BY THE DIVINE VISITATION

“And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:”

Ralph Wilson: The idea of being filled by the Spirit in order to speak by the Holy Spirit is found in the Old Testament (**Deuteronomy 34:9; Micah 3:8; cf. Numbers 11:25; 2 Samuel 23:2; Joel 2:28;** etc.) as well as the New (**Luke 1:15, 41, 67 and Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17; 13:9**).

A. (:68-71) Praise for Salvation Via the Promised Davidic Messiah

1. (:68-69a) Redemption / Salvation

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us”

“horn of salvation” – Often refers to strength and power and military victory

2. (:69b) Davidic King

“In the house of David His servant—“

3. (:70) Promised by OT Prophets

“As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—“

4. (:71) Rescue From Enemies

“Salvation from our enemies, And from the hand of all who hate us;”

B. (:72-75) Praise for God’s Mercy and Faithfulness to Deliver His People to Serve Him

1. (:72a) Mercy

“To show mercy toward our fathers,”

G. Campbell Morgan: All through, the song is celebrating the name. John means the grace of God, and that is what Zacharias was celebrating in this wonderful song-prophecy. . . His name was Zacharias, which means, God will remember. His wife’s name was Elisabeth, which means, the oath of God. . . The theme of the Benedictus is the Episcopacy of God . . . *“For He hath visited”* . . . Oversight . . . the celebration of God’s government in grace. . . the vision of God that leads to the action of God.

Zacharias is praising the merciful acts of God leading to the salvation of His covenant people

2. (:72b-73) Faithfulness to the Covenant

“And to remember His holy covenant,

73 The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,”

Liefeld: chiasmic structure of the Benedictus – God’s faithfulness to his covenant occupies a central position theologically in the Benedictus.

3. (:74a) Deliverance from Enemies

“To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,”

4. (:74b-75) Service in Holiness and Righteousness

“Might serve Him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.”

Thabiti Anyabwile: God saves so that we might worship. Freedom is a good goal, but it’s not the ultimate goal. The freedom God seems most interested in is the freedom to worship him. Just as Zechariah worshiped God when God mercifully opened Zechariah’s mouth and ears, so all Israel is to praise and glorify God for the salvation he brings.

C. (:76-79) Praise for the Special Role of John the Baptist to Prepare the Way for the Light of Life and Prince of Peace

1. (:76-77) Special Role of John the Baptist

a. (:76a) Prophet

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;”

b. (:76b) Forerunner

“For you will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways;”

c. (:77) Preacher with Message of Repentance from Sin

*“To give to His people the knowledge of salvation
By the forgiveness of their sins,”*

Geldenhuys: John's task as forerunner of Christ will be to bring people to the right attitude through the power of God. This attitude will mainly consist in this, that men will be brought to a realization and confession of sin and will long and hunger for the Messiah-Redeemer. Thus John will proclaim to his people the arrival of redemption, a redemption which does not consist in external political liberation (at least in the first instance) but in forgiveness of sins. . . . This preparation was most necessary because the people as a whole (with few exceptions) at that time had an altogether wrong opinion concerning the redemption to be brought about by the Messiah. They regarded the expected Messiah as a worldly ruler whose great task would be to free the people from the yoke of Rome. . . . Therefore it was necessary that John, the forerunner of Christ, should summon the people to a realization of guilt and to a confession sins, should make as many of them as possible see that the real redemption needed by them was deliverance from the power of their spiritual enemies – sin and the forces of darkness, so that they might escape from the wrath of God.

Liefeld: The role of John . . . derives its significance and greatness from God's purpose and, even more, from the greatness of the Person served.

2. (:78-79) Special Role of the Messiah

a. (:78) Source of This Messiah = Mercy of God

*“Because of the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Sunrise from on high shall visit us,”*

Geldenhuys: The original metaphor here refers to a party of travelers who, before reaching their destination, have been overtaken by the darkness of a pitch-black night and are now sitting terrified and powerless and expect any moment to be overwhelmed and killed by wild beasts or enemies. But all at once a bright light appears to show them the way, so that they reach their destination safely where they enjoy rest and peace.

Mal. 4:2 -- *the sun of righteousness*

2 Pet. 1:19 -- *the day star*

Rev. 22:16 -- *the bright and morning star*

b. (:79) Function of This Messiah

1) Light of Life

*“To shine upon those who sit in darkness
and the shadow of death,”*

John 8:12

2) Prince of Peace

“To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

(:80) POSTSCRIPT – DEVELOPMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

“And the child continued to grow, and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.”

Wiersbe: Instead of enjoying a comfortable life as a priest, John lived in the wilderness, disciplining himself physically and spiritually, waiting for the day when God would send him out

to prepare Israel for the arrival of the Messiah.

SermonWriter.com: The people of Israel have a special relationship to the wilderness (a desert wilderness rather than a forest wilderness). It was in the wilderness that God tested the people and it was in the wilderness that they rebelled. It was in the wilderness that God saved them again and again, and the wilderness was the crucible where they became a nation. The wilderness was a place where people sinned—and where they also repented to restore their relationship with God.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Did John receive the appreciation he deserved for his ministry of preparation? Would he have coveted that appreciation? What types of ministries of preparation take place today and might get overlooked?
- 2) What type of deliverance were the people of Israel expecting from the promised Messiah?
- 3) Does the church place enough emphasis today on living before God in holiness and righteousness?
- 4) What hints do you see in this text that point not only to Christ's First Coming but to His Second Coming?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Luke as a historian is writing divine history, inspired in his mind by the self-revealing God, and so his concern, that we know this is divine history. As the gospel of Luke begins, Luke is especially concerned that we see the movement of God, the purpose of God, the plan of God for redemption unfolding. And Luke focuses on staggering supernatural events, two miracle conceptions, two miracle births and some attendant miracles that go along with them. And then the coming of John and the coming of Jesus and a plethora of miracles explodes on the world through the power of Jesus and the apostles to whom He delegated that power.

The reality is that God is acting in human history. God who has been silent for 400 years, God who hasn't done a miracle in over 400 years or a series of miracles in perhaps 500 years. God who hasn't sent a visible angel to earth in that same amount of time is now acting in history. Luke wants his readers to see God being revealed, God launching the greatest era of redemptive history, the coming of the Savior of the world. He reminds us to look for God. . .

Zachariah, in his song of praise here, is linking what is unfolding before his very eyes. He is linking it to very specific covenants given in the Old Testament, a covenant to David, a covenant to Abraham, and a covenant about the forgiveness of sins, known as the New Covenant, presented in **Jeremiah 31**. . .

So these are covenants which have to do with salvation. The Davidic Covenant is

universal, insofar as it relates to the universal and eternal rule of Jesus Christ. The Abrahamic Covenant is national, insofar as it deals primarily with promises made by God to Israel for blessing. And the New Covenant is personal, in that it deals with how God works for the forgiveness of sin in the life of an individual. The Davidic Covenant, universal; the Abrahamic Covenant, national; the New Covenant, personal. They're not exclusively that but that's the main feature of those covenants . . . his whole song is a song of redemption. It's a song of salvation. That's the only way to understand it, and he sees it in his Jewish perspective with his Jewish eyes in the framework of Jewish theology as the fulfillment of Davidic, Abrahamic and New Covenant promise.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Why John Was Not Named "Little Zach"

In the culture of the Israelites, the name of a child was very significant. God sometimes changed the name of a person, such as changing the name of Abram to Abraham, of Sarai to Sarah, and of Jacob to Israel. At other times, God gave the name of the child before birth. Such is the case with both John and Jesus. The drama of our text has to do with a family argument over the name which was to be given the child of Zacharias and Elizabeth. When Gabriel informed Zacharias that he and his wife would have a child in their old age, the first thing he did was to instruct this priest as to what the child's name would be:

"... your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John" (Luke 1:13). .

The naming of the son after his father implied that this child would "walk in the steps of his father," that he would carry on the father's name, and thus his work as well. Had John been named "Little Zach," he would have been expected to grow up as a priest, just like his father. He would thus have gone about with his father as he carried out his priestly duties, learning how to do things, just like his daddy did them.

To be named by any other name would have implied just the opposite. John would not follow in his father's steps. He would not learn to do what his father did. He would not be a priest. This, of course, was precisely the case, and thus the reason for the name John. It isn't the meaning of the name "John" which is so important, then, but the message implied by having any name other than Zacharias which is such an emotional issue. If many of those gathered at the circumcision ceremony were relatives, Elizabeth's insistence that the boy be named John was to renounce the family, its work, and its perpetuation through the next generation. . .

The statement, "*For the hand of God was certainly with him*" (v. 66), may indicate that there were a number of other unusual or miraculous incidents associated with John in his childhood which testified to his unusual origin and mission in life. Luke must be selective, and thus he gives us but this general statement, suggesting that much more could have been written. The outcome of all of these things was a sense of expectancy among the people of that area. . .

If there is one thing which characterized John it was that he was a man who was set apart. He was set apart by his calling before his birth, by his unusual birth, by his life as a Nazarite, by his name, and by his childhood spent in the desert, where he lived apart from his "world," wore distinct clothing, and ate very different food. It was his separation from his "world" which facilitated his ability to see its sins, to stand firmly against them, and to speak out boldly in condemning them.

I believe that **separation** is just as essential for Christians today, if we would serve God as we should, and live up to our “calling.”

MacArthur: Like many Old Testament predictions, the Lord’s promise to David in **2 Samuel 7:12–14** has both a near and a distant fulfillment. In the short term, David’s descendant, whose kingdom God promised to establish (**2 Sa 7:12**) was his son Solomon. He was granted the privilege of building the temple that was denied to David (**2 Sa 7:13a**).

But neither Solomon’s kingdom nor the temple he built were to last. As Solomon grew old, he sank deeper and deeper into sin. As a result, after his death the kingdom split into two kingdoms: the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah. Eventually, after centuries of rebellion and disobedience, Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians (722 B.C.). Little more than a century later Judah fell to the Babylonians, who in 586 B.C. destroyed Solomon’s magnificent temple.

God’s covenant promise, however, did not fail. It extends to the One greater than Solomon (**Luke 11:31+**)—the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His kingdom that God promised to establish forever (**2 Sa 7:13, 16**). **He will one day return to establish His earthly kingdom** in fulfillment of the promise made to David, and “*there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore*” (**Isa. 9:7+**).

It was that **Messianic Kingdom**, with its hope and expectation of **salvation from Israel’s enemies, and from the hand of all who hate** the Jewish people (cf. **Ps. 106:10**), that elicited Zacharias’s praise. As noted above, he believed the kingdom’s arrival was imminent (as indeed did Jesus’ own disciples, even after His resurrection; he knew that his son was the forerunner of the Messiah, and that Mary was pregnant with the Messiah. **Zacharias did not foresee that the unthinkable would happen—that Israel would reject and execute her King.**

But Israel’s disobedience cannot nullify the promises of God (Ro 3:1–3). The King will one day return to establish His earthly kingdom, just as God promised David. In that day the remnant of Israel will come to repentance and faith and, says the Lord, “*will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn*” (**Zech. 12:10+**). They will cry out joyously, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!*” (**Mt 23:39**). “*In that day,*” *Zechariah prophesied, “His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east”* (**Zech. 14:4+**). The most detailed description of the triumphant return of Jesus Christ to judge His enemies and establish His earthly kingdom is found in **Revelation 19:11–21+**...The hope of Zacharias and the future remnant of Jews, as well as all true believers, is sure and will certainly come to pass. God will not forget His covenant with David. The redeemed will experience the blessed joy of serving and worshiping the King during the Millennial Kingdom and the eternal kingdom that will follow it. Only then will the fervent longing of the children of Israel for **salvation from their enemies, and from the hand of all who hate** them be realized.

Spurgeon: OBSERVE how Zacharias, in this his joyful song, extolled the remission of sins (**Luke 1:77**), as one of the most extraordinary proofs of the **tender mercy of our God (Luke 1:78)**. He had been dumb for a season, as a chastisement for his unbelief; and therefore he used his recovered speech to sing of pardoning mercy. No salvation is possible without forgiveness,

and so Zacharias says, “*To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.*” The Lord could not forgive them on the ground of justice, and therefore he did so because of his **tender mercy**—the tender mercy of our God, Who has made Himself “*our God “by the covenant of grace. He passes by the transgression of his people because he delighteth in mercy.*” (**Micah 7:18**). At the very outset, I want any soul here that is burdened with sin to believe in the forgiveness of sins, and to believe in it because God is love, and has a great tenderness towards the work of His hands. He is, so merciful that He loves not to condemn the guilty, but looks with anxious care upon them to see how He can turn away his wrath and restore them to favor. For this reason alone there is **remission of sins**. Forgiveness comes not to us through any merit of ours, present or foreseen; but only through the **tender mercy of our God**, and the marvelous visit of love which came of it. If He be gracious enough to forgive our sins, it can be done; for every arrangement is already made to accomplish it. The Lord is gracious enough for this—for anything. Behold Him in Christ Jesus, and there we see Him as full of compassion.

TEXT: Luke 2:1-20

TITLE: BIRTH OF THE SAVIOR – CHRIST THE LORD

BIG IDEA:

THE HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH MAKE HIS MISSION OF BRINGING GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE TO MAN EVEN MORE ASTOUNDING

INTRODUCTION:

You would think that a birth that had been heralded by the OT prophets for so many centuries would be more glorious and spectacular. But what we see emphasized in Luke's account are the humble circumstances surrounding the incarnation. This birth does not rise even to the level of a normal common-place experience. Instead, Mary finds herself in the most demeaning of situations – relegated to some type of outbuilding in a city where she has no connections where there is not even a proper crib for the baby Jesus. Yet God announces this birth in spectacular angelic fashion to highlight the cosmic mission of this infant to bring “*glory to God and peace to man*” – a mission that would resonate down through the ages in terms of its significance and impact. The chorus of the angelic choir should be mirrored by the praise and worship of our own hearts as we with Mary contemplate the meaning of this good news.

THE HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BIRTH OF THE MESSIAH MAKE HIS MISSION OF BRINGING GLORY TO GOD AND PEACE TO MAN EVEN MORE ASTOUNDING

I. (:1-7) BIRTH OF JESUS ARRANGED TO TAKE PLACE IN BETHLEHEM

A. (:1-3) Providential Circumstances = Mandatory Census

“Now it came about in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth. 2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. 3 And all were proceeding to register for the census, everyone to his own city.”

The great Caesar August envisioned himself as a strong autocratic ruler when in actuality he was a mere puppet with God pulling his strings to accomplish the divine will that had been prophesied centuries earlier in the OT. God is always sovereign and in control.

B. (:4-5) Prophetic City for the Birth = Bethlehem

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, 5 in order to register, along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with child.”

MacArthur: Critical that Joseph and Mary go to Bethlehem, which was their own city, so that they would be there when the Messiah was born so the prophecy of Micah would come to pass. Little did Caesar Augustus know that he was being moved by the Spirit of God to do exactly what he did on time, on schedule to effect exactly the result God wanted. There was a few days in which Joseph and Mary had to be in Bethlehem, right at the very time of the birth of the child. God knew exactly when that moment was, exactly when that day was. He knew when they had to be there and He had planned for that to happen under the authority and power of a

Caesar who was far removed from the little village of Bethlehem and utterly removed from the purposes of God and utterly ignorant of the Word of God. But nonetheless he was a main player in bringing the prophecy to pass, which shows the mighty, incomprehensible, providential work of Almighty God.

Deffinbaugh: the decree of Caesar was divinely intended to cause one couple to make a long difficult journey from their home town of Nazareth in Galilee to the place of their birth, Bethlehem in Judea. The ancient prophet had prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, a fact that was well known to the Jews:

C. (:6-7) Pomp and Ceremony Absent at Birth of the Messiah

1. Humble Circumstances of the City of Bethlehem

“And it came about that while they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.”

2. Humble Circumstances of the Simple Attire

“And she gave birth to her first-born son; and she wrapped Him in cloths,”

No attendants present to help Mary at the time of delivery.

Leon Morris: That Mary wrapped the child herself points to a lonely birth. . . everything points to obscurity, poverty and even rejection.

3. Humble Circumstances of the Stable Location

“and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”

Geldenhuis: He had left the glory of the Father and humbled Himself to be born as a human child in the most lowly circumstances. And . . . He was laid in a manger.

II. (:8-14) BIRTH OF JESUS ANNOUNCED TO THE SHEPHERDS

A. (:8) Ordinary Activities of the Shepherds

“And in the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields, and keeping watch over their flock by night.”

God chose a surprising class of people to give testimony to the world of the arrival of the King of Glory. Perhaps they were in charge of flocks that were intended for temple sacrifices.

Life is made up of ordinary days . . . but God can intervene at any time.

Thabiti Anyabwile: This is not glorious work.. This is not the best shift. Shepherds had bad reputations. The nature of their work meant they could not observe Israel’s ceremonial laws. They were considered unreliable and could not give testimony in the law courts. They were a despised class of people.

Deffinbaugh: In spite of their poor reputation as a class of people, these shepherds seem to have been godly men, men who were looking for the coming of Israel’s Messiah. All the others of

those who were directly informed of the birth of Messiah in Matthew and Luke were described as godly people, and so it would seem to be true of the shepherds as well. After all, news of His coming would not be “*good news of a great joy*” (v. 10) unless they were seeking Him. The haste of these shepherds to the place of Christ’s birth (vv. 15-16) also testifies to their spiritual preparedness and eagerness for the coming of Messiah. This is in contrast to the response of the Jerusalemites to the news of Messiah’s birth, as prophesied in their Scriptures and announced by the magi.

B. (:9) Extra-Ordinary Divine Visitation

“And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.”

C. (:10-12) Announcement of the Birth of Jesus

1. (:10) Significance of the Announcement – 2 Great Purposes for Such Great News

“And the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people;’”

Geldenhuys: The extreme simplicity of the narrative forms the strongest contrast to the stupendous significance of the occurrence that is recounted.

2. (:11) Substance of the Announcement

“for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Donald Miller: Jesus’ birth is set over against Caesar, too, because Jesus is a “Savior” (vs. 11). Augustus was called “savior.” His word was called “gospel”. But Augustus’ “good news” would ultimately turn to bad news. His “salvation could not meet the deepest needs of men. His kingdom could not last. Here was the true “Savior,” sent from God, who should meet men at the deep level of “*the forgiveness of their sins*” (1:77), “*Of His kingdom there will be no end*” (1:33).

3. (:12) Sign Confirming the Announcement

“And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger.”

This sign also provides the identification for the correct baby

D. (:13-14) Accompanying Angelic Choir Singing Hallelujah Chorus

“And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 14 ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.’”

III. (:15-20) BIRTH OF JESUS AUTHENTICATED AND CELEBRATED

A. (:15-16) Authentication

1. (:15) Seeking to Check Things Out

“And it came about when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds began saying to one another, ‘Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.’”

They immediately determined to go and investigate what they had been told and found things exactly as had been described.

2. (:16) Finding What Had Been Announced

“And they came in haste and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.”

B. (:17-19) Revelation

1. (:17) Communicating the Divine Revelation

“And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.”

Revelation always demands a response:

2. (:18) Response by All

“And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.”

3. (:19) Response by Mary

“But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart.”

C. (:20) Celebration

“And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have you experienced God’s providential ordering of circumstances in your life?
- 2) How shocked must the angels have been to see the humble entrance of the majestic Messiah into the human realm?
- 3) What types of thoughts would have been going through the mind of Mary as she pondered and meditated upon the message of the angels?
- 4) How much more excited about the gospel message should we saved sinners be than God’s holy angels?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Thabiti Anyabwile: Verses **17-20** lay for us a pattern to be repeated by disciples of the Lord throughout all generations. The shepherds **teach** others what they heard and saw. Mary **treasures** it in her heart. Then the shepherds return home to **tell** others of the glory of God. From the time of the Savior’s birth, those receiving the Savior have followed this pattern of **teach, treasure, and tell**. Can there be any other response to God’s mercy in Jesus Christ? Can

there be any other response to seeing the glory of God? Let us **teach it, treasure it, and tell it** abroad forever.

Steven Cole: The Best News in the World

The best news in the world is that a Savior was born for you, who is Christ the Lord.

Consider five aspects of this good news:

1. The good news about Christ the Savior is historically true.

2. The good news about Christ the Savior is based on His unique Person.

- He is fully man
- He is fully God
- This Savior is the Christ (or Messiah). Messiah is the Hebrew and Christ is the Greek word for “Anointed One.” It refers to Jesus as the special Anointed King and Priest, who brings God’s salvation to His people. In the Old Testament, the only two office bearers to be anointed were the King and the High Priest, but the messianic expectation centered on the kingly aspect, as portrayed in Psalm 2. The title, Christ, especially focuses on the fact that Jesus is the One who fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies about the promised Savior.
- this one who was born is the Savior

3. The good news about Christ the Savior is for all people, but especially the common person.

- The good news is for all people, not just for the elite.
- The good news involved the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.
- The good news provided us with a Good Shepherd.

4. The good news about Christ the Savior brings light, then fear, then joy.

5. The good news about Christ the Savior requires a personal response.

- The response of *proclamation*.
- The response of *praise*.
- The response of *endurance*.

J. Ligon Duncan: The Messiah is Born

two things strike me in particular in these verses that we’ll read today; one, the way they display God’s **sovereignty in providence**, the most amazing way God’s control of everything is on display in these verses. The other is the way these verses reveal the **character of God**. . .

I want you to be on the lookout for what we learn about the timing of Christ’s birth, the place of Christ’s birth, the manner of Christ’s birth, and the irony of it all.

Gene Brooks - Sermon Points:

1. The humble entrance of a glorious Savior (**Luke 2:1-7**)
2. The humble hearers of a glorious Announcement (**Luke 2:8-14**)

The humble proclamation of a glorious Birth (**Luke 2:15-20**)

Brian Bill - Angels appear in more than half of the books of the Bible, with over 300 total references. They have three primary responsibilities.

- They magnify God. The number one job of angels is to adore God. **Nehemiah 9:6**: “*You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you.*” According to **Job 38:7**, at creation “*the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy.*”
- They are messengers of God. The word “angel,” as used in the Bible, literally means messenger. Their job is to do what God sends them to do. Angel messengers basically convey two types of messages. Sometimes it’s good news like announcing the birth of Christ. That Christmas carol “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing” captures the fact that angels “herald” or proclaim. But, other times they bring bad news. When they serve in this capacity, they are not cute and cuddly cherub dolls that we put on top of our Christmas trees. **2 Thessalonians 1:7**: “*This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels.*” The Book of Revelation is full of avenging angels and it is anything but pretty.
- They minister to people. **Hebrews 1:14** puts it best: “*Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?*” Most of the time angels are not seen; they minister invisibly behind the scenes. And yet, on occasion, they break into our world, appearing for a short time to accomplish a specific purpose. The Bible mentions that when they do appear, they often look just like humans. Listen to **Hebrews 13:2**: “*Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.*”

It is impossible to read the Christmas story without understanding a little about angels because it begins and ends with them. The Incarnation is so incredible and so earth shaking that only the angels could be entrusted by God to be the appropriate messengers. No earthly channels of communication could be relied upon to get this amazing message out because no human person could possibly be persuasive enough. One interesting point to be made is that if you were to look at all the major events in the Bible, there is no other occurrence that has as many messages from so many angelic messengers.

John Piper: A Savior is Born – Glory to God, Peace to Man

“*For unto you is born this day . . .*” (**verse 11**). It happened on a day. A day in history. Not a day in some mythological, imaginary story, but a day when “Caesar Augustus was the emperor of Rome and Quirinius was governor of Syria.”

It was a day planned in eternity before the creation of the world. Indeed the whole universe — with untold light-years of space and billions of galaxies — was created and made glorious for this day and what it means for human history. . .

Two Great Purposes for This Great News

First and foremost, God is glorified because this child is born. And second, peace is to spread everywhere this child is received. These are the great purposes for the coming of Jesus: Glory ever-ascending from man to God. Peace ever-descending from God to man. God’s glory sung out among men for the sake of his name. God’s peace lived out among men for the sake of his name.

- Peace with God
- Peace with Ourselves
- Peace with Others

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Birth of the Messiah

To me, the shepherds' search for the baby Messiah in Bethlehem was like a scavenger hunt. The "clues" they were given were (1) that there was a newly born babe; (2) that the babe was a boy; and (3) that he was to be found in a cattle feeding trough, wrapped in strips of cloth. I can just imagine those shepherds, converging on the town of Bethlehem, in the middle of the night (**vv. 8, 15-16**), knocking on doors, seeking to find a child meeting these descriptions. One looking on the town from a distance could have seen the whole town progressively lit up, astir with the news which the shepherds brought. From every house where the baby was not found, there was probably another addition to the search party. Perhaps the entire town was awakened and engaged in the search before the babe was found. All of this served to make the news of the Christ-child's birth known, as well as to create of mood of expectation and curiosity. At some of the homes, at least, there may have been the request to come back with news of where Messiah was found.

There are four lessons which I wish to underscore here, which I believe are taught in our text.

(1) The sovereignty of God in history.

(2) Luke provides us with a lesson in the communication of the gospel.

Luke passed up the opportunity to highlight the fulfillment of Micah 5:2 because it would not have as much impact on his Gentile recipient as it would have had on a Jew. Luke emphasized the sovereignty of God over history and over a heathen king, which would have had a great impact on Theophilus. In what he has done and not done Luke teaches us that we dare not change the gospel, but we should carefully chose to focus on those details of the gospel which will have the greatest impact on our audience. Thus, the need for more than one gospel is once again apparent.

(3) Luke's account of the birth of Christ reminds us of the principle of proportion.

The principle of proportion teaches us that much time and space is devoted to what is most important, while little time and space is given to that which is of lessor import. On the basis of this simple principle we would have to conclude that the death of Christ is more important to the gospel writers than His birth.

(4) Finally, we learn that God's purposes are often achieved through suffering, and that God's purposes in our suffering are often not immediately apparent.

TEXT: Luke 2:21-40

TITLE: *PROPHETIC INSIGHT OF SIMEON AND ANNA*

BIG IDEA:

PROPHETIC INSIGHT INTO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS REVEALS HIS GLOBAL MESSIANIC AND REDEMPTIVE MISSION

INTRODUCTION:

Surprisingly few details are given of the life of Jesus on earth before the beginning of His public ministry. Therefore, all of the incidents that are related must be treated with special significance. Here we have some important details of the weeks just after the birth of Jesus followed by a more general description of His youthful growth and development.

PROPHETIC INSIGHT INTO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS REVEALS HIS GLOBAL MESSIANIC AND REDEMPTIVE MISSION

(:21-24) PRELUDE – JESUS FULFILLED THE LAW OF MOSES

A. (:21) Circumcision and Naming of Jesus

“And when eight days were completed before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.”

Circumcision -- Identified Jesus with his Jewish covenant people; fulfilled requirements of the Law – **Lev. 12:3**

B. (:22-24) Purification of Mary and Presentation Before the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem

1. (:22) Context

“And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord”

For a woman who gave birth to a male child, she would be ceremonially unclean for 7 days. Circumcision would take place on the 8th day. Then another 33 days were required before she could enter the sanctuary or touch any holy things.

Geldenhuys: The circumcision and purification customs after a birth had reference to the state of sin in which each human being is born and to the purification therefrom by blood-sprinkling and sacrifices ... serves as a sign that He voluntarily places Himself under the Law and takes upon Himself the obligations of His people so as to procure their redemption.

Wiersbe: Our Lord’s relationship to the law is an important part of His saving ministry. He was made under the law (**Gal. 4:4**); and although He rejected man’s religious traditions, He obeyed God’s law perfectly (**John 8:46**). He bore the curse of the law for us (**Gal. 3:13**) and set us free from bondage (**Gal. 5:1**).

2. (:23) Consecration

“(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, ‘Every first-born male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord’),” Ex. 13:2, 12

Leon Morris: Two quite separate ceremonies are involved here, the presentation of the child and the purification of the mother.

Liefeld: Luke, conflating the performance of these OT obligations into the single narrative, shows how Jesus was reared in conformity with them. His parents obeyed the Lord (**1:31**) in naming him. The offering of birds instead of a lamb shows that he was born into a poor family.

3. (:24) Commanded Sacrifice

“and to offer a sacrifice according to what was said in the Law of the Lord, ‘A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.’”

Lev. 12:8 – indicates that this offering reflected the poverty of Mary and Joseph

I. (:25-35) PROPHETIC INSIGHT OF SIMEON REGARDING THIS INFANT JESUS

A. (:25-26) Unique Role of Simeon

1. His Identification

“And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon;”

2. His Reputation

“and this man was righteous and devout,”

Outstanding personal character in both how he treated others and how he worshiped God

3. His Orientation

“looking for the consolation of Israel;”

Most Jews were looking for a military leader to deliver them from the oppression of the Roman government. Simeon and Anna had a spiritual orientation that gave them a different perspective towards the coming of the Messiah. They understood the need for forgiveness of sins.

4. His Association

“and the Holy Spirit was upon him.”

Leon Morris: seems to mean on him continually. In the old dispensation we read of the Spirit as coming upon people on special occasions, but a continuing presence is rare. Simeon’s endowment was something special.

5. His Anticipation

“And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.”

B. (:27-32) Universal Redemptive Mission of the Messiah

1. (:27) Revealed by the Spirit

“And he came in the Spirit into the temple;”

2. (:27b) Related to Obedience to the OT Law

“and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,”

3. (:28-29) Received in Fulfillment of OT Expectations

“then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, 29 ‘Now Lord, Thou dost let Thy bond-servant depart In peace, according to Thy word;’”

4. (:30) Recognized Upon Seeing the Baby Jesus

“For my eyes have seen Thy salvation,”

5. (:31-32) Refocused Towards Both Jews and Gentiles

“Which Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples,”

a. Directed Towards the Gentiles

“A light of revelation to the Gentiles,”

b. Directed Towards the Jews

“And the glory of Thy people Israel.”

C. (:33-35) Ultimate Impact of the Child

1. (:33) Wow Factor

“And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.”

Geldenhuys: Simeon’s words especially, regarding the universal purport and significance of the redemption wrought by God through Jesus, bring to Joseph and Mary a clearer perception of the divine majesty of the Child.

2. (:34-35) Watershed Fulcrum

“And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, ‘Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed-- 35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul-- to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.’”

Liefeld: A negative attitude toward him, however, serves to brand the unbeliever as one who has rejected not only him but the whole of God’s revelation (v. 35; cf. **John 5:45-47**). This clash will inevitably wound Jesus’ mother.

Geldenhuys: But it was especially when He was nailed to the cross that the “*sword pierced through her soul*.” She is, therefore, rightly called *Mater Dolorosa* (Mother of Sorrows) and represented as such in Christian art.

Thabiti Anyabwile: Simeon blessed them with strange words. This child will be a light, but he will be the kind of light that exposes. Because he exposes, he will face opposition. That opposition will be a violent piercing – a piercing that will penetrate his mother’s heart also.

Donald Miller: The most startling thing about Simeon’s words is that they introduce for the first time the note of sorrow into the story of Jesus’ birth (vss. 34-35). . . God’s saving action always produces a crisis, a division, depending on men’s response.

II. (:36-38) PROPHETIC INSIGHT OF ANNA REGARDING THIS INFANT JESUS

A. (:36-37) Unique Role of Anna

1. (:36a) Forgotten Prophetess

“And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.”

From the lost tribe of Asher; insignificant up to this point in time; but her life was about to take a dramatic turn

2. (:36b) Fatigued Widow

“She was advanced in years, having lived with a husband seven years after her marriage, and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four.”

She had been a widow for an exceptionally long time and had dedicated herself to serving the Lord; she had to have been tired out by this time; difficult to keep the flame lit on her messianic expectations

3. (:37) Faithful Servant

“And she never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.”

B. (:38) Unrelenting Thanksgiving and Testimony to the Redemptive Role of the Long-Awaited Messiah

“And at that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Importance of older people having a thankful spirit based on experiencing God’s faithfulness over the years; rather than becoming cranky and bitter

(:39-40) EPILOGUE – JESUS CONTINUED TO GROW AND DEVELOP

A. (:39) Settling in Hometown of Nazareth

“And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.”

B. (:40) Positive Development of Jesus

1. Physical Development

“And the Child continued to grow and become strong,”

2. Wisdom Development

“increasing in wisdom;”

3. Spiritual Development

“and the grace of God was upon Him.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can you move beyond the disappointments you have experienced in life to have a consistent perspective of hope?
- 2) What should the relationship of a Christian be to the OT law?
- 3) What type of global missionary message can you develop from this text?
- 4) How can you best be prepared for your death?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Piper: Simeon's Farewell to the World

Up until John the Baptist's coming, the word and the rule of God had been proclaimed through the law and the prophets, but now with the arrival of Jesus the King and his forerunner John, the word and rule of God is proclaimed and encountered in a new way. Jesus *is* the Word; Jesus *is* the King; the long awaited kingdom has now arrived (at least partially). For those who believe in Jesus, a tremendous shift occurs: no longer do we live merely in the era of *promise* with the law and the prophets awaiting the consolation of Israel. Now we live in the era of fulfillment when the kingdom of God is preached as present and powerful, albeit not yet consummated. . .

First, we saw that for Luke the era of the law and the prophets has grown old like Simeon and Anna and is passing away. Christ and the message of his kingdom have come. Nevertheless he does not come to abolish but fulfill. There is continuity with the old. The best OT Jewish saints are most receptive to the new age.

Second, we saw that Luke depicts this new era as marked by an amazing outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. But he also shows that this same Spirit was at work in a similar (though not identical) way in the old era, in Elizabeth and Zechariah and Simeon. So again there is newness but also *continuity* between the new and the old.

Finally, we saw in Simeon's song that in this new era of the Messiah salvation would spill over the boundaries of an unbelieving Israel and reach all the nations of the world. But even here the old is not abandoned. The Messiah will bring glory to the people Israel when he banishes ungodliness from Jacob. So again there is newness but also continuity with the old.

This is a fundamental truth that will affect the way we read our Bibles: with Jesus comes a *new era*, but the old when properly understood is not against the new but in harmony with it.

Tony Hobbs: The Days Following Jesus' Birth

Requirements of the Law following birth of a child

Males to be circumcised after 8 days. (Genesis 17:12.)

Firstborn had to be sanctified in a special way. (Based on Exodus 13:2 and repeated a number of times in the Torah.)

Mothers had to undergo a period of ritual purification and offer a sacrifice for her ritual cleansing. (Leviticus 12:1-8.)

What's going on in this passage

No requirement for the parents to go to Jerusalem to obey the requirements of the Law.
Were they so influenced by what had happened that it seemed appropriate to go to the Temple?
Start of passage has similarities with incident in OT: Where Hannah dedicated her first child, Samuel, to the Lord. (I Sam 1:21-28.)
Two people meet Mary, Joseph and Jesus and say special things about Jesus.
(Echoing/confirming things the angel had said 9 months earlier.)

Simeon: A personal dimension

Description of Simeon and language he uses concerning Jesus based on OT hopes; especially reflects hopes from book of Isaiah.

Can die in peace having seen the fulfillment of God's promises to the nation and to him personally.

Can also die with confidence of personal salvation. As one commentator puts it:

“Simeon can entrust himself to death, knowing that life and immortality have been brought to light through the gospel.”

Simeon: A wider dimension

What Simeon is experiencing personally will also be made available to others: Jews and Gentiles.

Gentiles responding to God seen in Jewish thought as a particular sign of coming of God's kingdom and fulfillment of His promises.

But the Messiah will also bring judgement. (Not clear here what form that takes but later in gospel judgement is a result of rejecting Jesus.)

Also warns that suffering is part of the coming of God's kingdom.

Anna

Again language reflects OT hopes and God's promises.

Sees Jesus as fulfillment of these hopes and promises.

She may have thought her life was effectively over many years before. But –

In dedicating her life to worshipping and praying she meets Jesus.

Some principles for us

- Good to be aware of God's promises – both in Scripture and those to us personally – and to see how Jesus meets them.

- That salvation and meeting of our deepest needs a result of meeting Jesus for ourselves.

- Age is no obstacle! (Indeed, we may need patience in earlier years!) True life fulfillment may come when society says our best years are over.

- Jesus offers salvation and true fulfillment – but He also brings judgement. And suffering may also be part of the process.

- But if we know Jesus we can look forward with confidence to everlasting life with Him.

Steven Cole: Christ Our Hope

Those who hope in God's promises in Christ will be rewarded.

1. To hope in Christ means to live righteously and expectantly in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A. TO HOPE IN CHRIST MEANS TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY.

B. TO HOPE IN CHRIST MEANS TO LIVE EXPECTANTLY.

C. TO HOPE IN CHRIST MEANS TO LIVE IN THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

2. Those who hope in Christ will be rewarded.

A. THOSE WHO HOPE IN CHRIST ARE REWARDED WITH AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE THINGS OF GOD.

B. THOSE WHO HOPE IN CHRIST ARE REWARDED WITH THE FULFILLMENT OF THEIR GODLY DESIRES.

C. THOSE WHO HOPE IN CHRIST WILL BE REWARDED WITH THE READINESS FOR DEATH.

3. The Christ we hope in is God's promised Savior.

A. HE WAS BORN WITHOUT SIN, BUT IDENTIFIED WITH SINNERS.

B. HE WAS BORN TO SAVE PEOPLE FROM EVERY NATION FROM THEIR SINS.

C. HE WAS BORN TO BRING JUDGMENT TO THOSE WHO OPPOSE.

D. HE WAS BORN TO BRING SALVATION THROUGH HIS DEATH.

J. Ligon Duncan: Fulfilling the Law – Finding the Messiah

Jesus, from His earliest days, from His childhood, obeyed the whole Mosaic code. That was absolutely essential for Him to be the Teacher of Israel. Would Israel have accepted an uncircumcised, disobedient-to-the-Law-of-Moses teacher coming to Israel to tell Israel what Moses really meant? What the Old Testament was really about? No. Israel would view a person like that as no more than an uncircumcised Philistine. And so Luke is saying, 'Let me just say that Jesus obeyed the Law of Moses better than Moses did.' Why? Because Moses broke this very law. Remember that? Moses didn't circumcise his own son, and in **Exodus 4** we're told that Moses, who wrote this law, was met by God on the way and the Lord almost killed him because he had failed to obey this law. And Luke is telling you Jesus is better than Moses. He obeyed Moses' law better than Moses obeyed Moses' law. From childhood He obeyed the whole Mosaic code. He fulfilled that Law, and that not only enabled Him to speak with authority to Israel as the Teacher of the Law, but it is also one part of His active obedience whereby we are saved. .

Do you know the Jesus that saves? If you don't know that you need forgiveness of sins and if you don't know that Jesus has come to save, then you don't know the Jesus of the gospels. . .

Who is Jesus? He fulfilled the Law perfectly. He is the only Savior of mankind. He lived in poverty on your behalf. He is the Messiah. He is the Savior of Jew and Gentile. He is the consolation of His people.

TEXT: Luke 2:41-52

TITLE: KINGDOM PRIORITIES

BIG IDEA:

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER MUST TAKE PRIORITY EVEN OVER OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR EARTHLY PARENTS

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus demonstrates in this passage the crucial distinction between His earthly parents and His heavenly Father. As the unique Son of God He is about to enter upon a public ministry (after some more years of growth and preparation) where His mission and loyalty to kingdom priorities must take precedence over other legitimate earthly priorities. He must be about His Father's business. *Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*

OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR HEAVENLY FATHER MUST TAKE PRIORITY EVEN OVER OUR RELATIONSHIP TO OUR EARTHLY PARENTS

(:41-42) SETTING – KINGDOM PRIORITIES BECOME NOTICED IN THE NORMAL COURSE OF OBEDIENT LIVING --

JESUS VISITING JERUSALEM AT AGE 12 WITH HIS EARTHLY PARENTS

“And His parents used to go to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast;”

Requirement of the OT law to visit the temple in Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. (Ex. 23:14-17; Deut. 16:16)

I. (:43-45) SURPRISE -- EARTHLY PARENTS CAN BE SURPRISED BY KINGDOM PRIORITIES –

EARTHLY PARENTS SEARCHING FOR JESUS

“and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it, 44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. 45 And when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, looking for Him.”

II. (:46-47) STUDENT/TEACHER DIALOGUE IN THE TEMPLE –

JESUS FOUND ENGAGED IN THEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE IN THE TEMPLE

“And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking them questions. 47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.”

The parents of Jesus searched for him for a total of 3-5 days – 1 day journeying without him; 1 day journeying back to Jerusalem; 1 or 3 days looking in the city itself. (Not sure if the mention of 3 days here is the total time Jesus was missing or just the time they searched for him in the city.)

Geldenhuys: With the Child Himself, however, there was no boasting, self-conceit, arrogance or self-exaltation.

III. (:48-50) SUMMARY EXPLANATION – LOYALTY TO KINGDOM PRIORITIES SHOULD BE EXPECTED

“And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.’ 49 And He said to them, ‘Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?’ 50 And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.”

Geldenhuys: It is remarkable that the first words of Jesus quoted in the Gospel narrative are these words in which He so clearly refers to His divine Sonship, and in which He points to his life’s vocation to be about His Father’s business – to serve and glorify Him in all things and at all times. The words indicate a divine inevitability: Jesus *must* be busy with the interests of His Father.

Leon Morris: Jesus had a relationship to God shared by no other. Joseph and Mary did not understand this. They learnt what Jesus’ Messiahship meant bit by bit.

(:51-52) EPILOGUE – SUBMISSION TO EARTHLY PARENTS AND CONTINUED DEVELOPMENT

A. (:51a) Consistent Pattern of Submission

“And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He continued in subjection to them;”

B. (:51b) Constant Reevaluation on the Part of Mary

“and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.”

Donald Miller: As mother of Messiah, she had a son, and yet, in a sense, she did not. He did not belong to her, but to all men, in a way that Mary could not at that time understand (see **Luke 8:19-21; 11:27-28**). There is wisdom, however, in Mary’s dealing with her lack of understanding. When God’s truth is not clear, do not cast it off; hide it in the heart and wait for fuller light (**vs. 51**).

C. (:52) Continual Growth and Development

“And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Geldenhuys: He passed through a natural but perfect spiritual and physical development. At every stage He was perfect for that stage. But there is a big difference between the perfection of a child and that of an adult.

Wiersbe: Jesus is a wonderful example for all young people to follow. He grew in a balanced way (**Luke 2:52**) without neglecting any part of life, and His priority was to do the will of His Father (see **Matt. 6:33**). He knew how to listen and how to ask the right questions. He learned how to work, and He was obedient to His parents.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) As a parent, when have you experienced the panic of seemingly having lost one of your children?
- 2) Do you think Jesus did anything wrong here?
- 3) Do you think Joseph and Mary were blaming each other for the disappearance of their special child? (They each had probably thought that he was traveling with the other parent or that permission had been granted to travel with another group.)
- 4) What does this passage teach about responsible parenting and about the relationship of a child to his parents?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

John Piper: The Son of God at 12 Years Old

At the end of the 12th year the child goes through a ceremony by which he formally takes on the yoke of the law and becomes a *bar mitzvah* or "son of the commandment." This was the year Jesus chose to stay behind in the temple. Perhaps, at this crucial turning point in every Jewish boy's life, Jesus wanted to demonstrate subtly for those who had eyes to see that he would be more than an ordinary Jewish *bar mitzvah*; his insight into the commandment was more profound than ordinary men, and his relation to God was unique. . .

Jesus has chosen this crucial stage in his life, on the brink of manhood, to tell his parents in an unforgettable way that he now knows who his **real Father** is and what it will mean for his mission. . .

It seems to me that the main teaching of the passage is that Jesus now recognizes **his unique sonship to God**, and that his mission will require of him a devotion to God's purposes so great that it **takes precedence** over the closest family ties. He must follow his calling, even if it brings pain and misunderstanding. In this way Luke sets the stage for the adult ministry of the Son of God.

Ronald Allen:

As the ministry of Jesus unfolds, Jesus has considerable conflict with Jewish authorities over how to interpret God's presence and purposes in the eschatological moment. The same thing is true of the church in Acts. By recollecting that Jesus was raised in a faithful Jewish atmosphere, and recalling that Jesus speaks as a Jewish insider, Luke assures listeners that the viewpoints of Jesus and the church are authentically Jewish. Jesus and the church do not reject Judaism. They interpret Jewish convictions in light of the eschatological turning of the ages. . .

Many people today are confused about **identity** and **vocation**, about who they are and their mission in life. This is particularly (though by no means exclusively) true of Millennials. It may go too far to say that Jesus here *claims* his own identity and mission. Whether or not that is

exegetically true, this passage could provide the preacher with an entry into the importance of claiming our own identities as disciples and witnesses.

Steven Cole: Imitating Jesus

We should imitate Jesus, the Son of God, in spiritual growth, in routine faithfulness, and in commitment to God's purpose.

1. The Jesus whom we should imitate is the unique Son of God.
2. We should imitate Jesus, the Son of God, in spiritual growth.
 - Spiritual growth takes time, but we must actively engage in the process.
 - Spiritual growth involves an active interest in the Word of God.
 - Spiritual growth should be focused in two directions: Toward God and toward others.
 - Spiritual growth can get off track if we are not on guard.
3. We should imitate Jesus, the Son of God, in routine faithfulness.
4. We should imitate Jesus, the Son of God, in commitment to God's purpose above all else.

John MacArthur:

Jesus' having to be present in His Father's house is not only the crux of the passage, but also expresses the definitive reality of Christian theology. This statement is the first time in Scripture that any individual claimed God as his personal Father. The Jews viewed God as the Father of all in a creative sense, and the Father of Israel in a national sense. But no one had the audacity to claim God as his Father in a personal, intimate sense, because of the profound implications of such a claim. In this confession, Jesus made it clear that His first priority was to do the will of His heavenly Father. He also lifted Himself above the human realm. He was not in the ultimate sense Joseph's son, or Mary's son; He was the eternal Son of God, who came down from heaven (**John 3:13; 6:38, 42**). As such, He was under the authority of His heavenly Father, not His earthly parents.

J C Ryle:

He had a Father in heaven, and that this heavenly Father's work demanded His first attention. The expression is one that ought to sink down deeply into the hearts of all Christ's people. It should supply them with a mark at which they should aim in daily life, and a test by which they should try their habits and conversation. It should quicken them when they begin to be slothful. It should check them when they feel inclined to go back to the world.—“Are we about our Father's business? Are we walking in the steps of Jesus Christ?”—Such questions will often prove very humbling, and make us ashamed of ourselves. But such questions are eminently useful to our souls. Never is a Church in so healthy a condition as when its believing members aim high, and strive in all things to be like Christ.

TEXT: Luke 3:1-14

TITLE: REPENTANCE AND THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

BIG IDEA:

PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE LORD REQUIRES REPENTANCE THAT IS PROVEN GENUINE BY THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

INTRODUCTION:

The ministry of John the Baptist paves the way for the coming of the promised Messiah who will bring salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. The core message in conjunction with the symbolic baptism administered by John is one of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. It is easy for religious people and especially religious leaders to try to cloak themselves with the trappings of spirituality while never demonstrating the fruit of genuine repentance. John the Baptist pulls no punches and bluntly condemns such hypocrisy by exposing the failure to demonstrate sacrificial love and generous care for those in need. When one's life remains characterized by greed and self-interest, the baptismal waters cannot mask the lie of an unrepentant heart. Despite false security and a religious lineage, the hypocrite should expect the axe of God's impending judgment.

PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE LORD REQUIRES REPENTANCE THAT IS PROVEN GENUINE BY THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

(:1-2a) TIMEFRAME FOR THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST DEFINED BY PROMINENT AUTHORITIES

Geldenhuys: As an author with historical aptitude, Luke gives an exceptionally full chronology for the commencement of John's public appearance. He does this because, on account of the preparatory nature of his work, it is really also the time-indication for the beginning of the public appearance of Jesus (which commenced only about six months later). . . All these chronological data, taken together, show that John was called to appear as forerunner of Christ in public between the years A.D. 26 and 29. Probably the exact year was A.D. 27.

A. Political Hierarchy

1. Ruler = Tiberius Caesar

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,"

2. Governor = Pontius Pilate

"when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea,"

3. Tetrarchs

a. Herod

"and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee,"

b. Philip

"and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis,"

c. Lysanias

“and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,”

Anyabwile: The Caesars were the rulers of the Roman world. Beneath Caesar was a governor named Pilate. And beneath Pilate were three tetrarchs who ruled various regions. Philip ruled Iturea and Trochonitis, Lysanias ruled Abilene, and Herod ruled Galilee, Jesus’s hometown area.

B. Religious Hierarchy: Annas and Caiaphas

“in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,”

Leon Morris: Annas was high priest AD 6-15, when the Roman governor Gratus deposed him. Five of his sons became high priest in due course, and Caiaphas, who held the office AD 18-36, was his son-in-law. Luke uses the singular, which shows that he knew there was only one high priest. He appears to mean that Caiaphas was officially in office but that Annas still exercised great influence, perhaps even was regarded by many Jews as the true high priest (cf. **Acts 4:6**). It may be worth pointing out that when Jesus was arrested He was first brought to Annas (**Jn. 18:13**).

I. (:2b-6) WAY OF THE LORD PREPARED BY THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

(:2b-3a) His Entrance Onto the Stage of History

1. Prophetic Burden

“the word of God came to John,”

The power and authority as well as the content for his ministry derived from God rather than human initiative

2. Pedigree

“the son of Zacharias,”

3. Place of Ministry

“in the wilderness.

And he came into all the district around the Jordan,”

Contrast lowly position of John with the movers and shakers identified up above who were in the positions of prominence; interesting platform for such an important ministry = the wilderness

Liefeld: The desert held memories for the Jews as the locale of the post-Exodus wanderings of Israel. It also had eschatological associations (cf. not only **Isa 40:3** but also **Hos 2:14**).

A. (:3b) His Core Message

“preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;”

Cf. Luke 1;16-17

Anyabwile: Repentance = that turning in the heart and mind that results in a changing of direction of the entire life

MacArthur: Saving repentance never exists except in partnership with faith. It is impossible to have true faith in Jesus Christ apart from true repentance from sin or true repentance from sin apart from true faith. They are two sides of the same work of the Holy Spirit to convict sinners of their sin and draw them to Christ. It must be clearly understood that repentance is not a human work that earns salvation. Repentance is not a pre-salvation effort by sinners to set their lives right that God rewards by saving them. In repentance sinners recognize their dire condition, acknowledge that they are unable to save themselves, and turn to Jesus Christ as the only One who can save them. Left to themselves, the unregenerate will never come to that conclusion, since they love darkness rather than light (**John 3:19**), and are dead in their trespasses and sins (**Eph. 2:1**). The conviction that produces repentance is a work of the Holy Spirit, who “*convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment*” (**John 16:8**)

Darrell Bock: John’s baptism was a step on the way to the Promised One’s forgiveness. The repentance in view here will not only make one alter the way one lives, but also will cause one to see “the Mightier One to come” as the promise of God. To submit to this baptism is to confess one’s commitment to this perspective. This is the essence of John’s baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

B. (:4-5) His Core Function

“as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord, Make His paths straight. 5 Every ravine shall be filled up, And every mountain and hill shall be brought low; And the crooked shall become straight, And the rough roads smooth;’”

MacArthur: Quoted from **Isaiah 40:3-5**. A monarch traveling in wilderness regions would have a crew of workmen go ahead to make sure the road was clear of debris, obstructions, potholes, and other hazards that made the journey difficult. In a spiritual sense, John was calling the people of Israel to prepare their hearts for the coming of their Messiah.

C. (:6) His Core Goal

“And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Speaking of the universal scope of the gospel message – both Jews and Gentiles

Geldenhuys: all flesh shall see His redemption as it finds form in the Messiah. Nothing will prevent Him. Everything is prepared for his coming. He will come and all will see Him. This does not, however, mean that all will be saved by Him. His coming will mean redemption to those that are prepared, but doom to His adversaries.

Piper: In Luke 2:30-31 Simeon says of the baby Jesus, “*My eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles. . . .*” And in **Acts 28:28** Paul says to the Jews who rejected the Gospel, “*Let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.*” So Luke begins and ends his big two-volume work with this emphasis: the salvation Jesus brings is for all men and any attempt to limit its proclamation or effect to any ethnic group or groups is wrong.

II. (:7-9) WARNING TO RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITES

A. (:7) Labeling the Hypocrites = “Brood of Vipers”

“He therefore began saying to the multitudes who were going out to be baptized by him, ‘You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?’”

They were going to try to argue their status as the spiritually elite from their physical lineage back to Abraham; but John short circuits that argument by labeling them “*brood of vipers*”

Cf. **John 8:43**

Geldenhuys: like snakes hastening to escape when the grass which sheltered them has been set on fire behind them

MacArthur: Possibly a reference to the coming destruction of Jerusalem. But this certainly also looks beyond any earthly calamity to the eschatological outpouring of divine wrath in the Day of the Lord, and especially the final judgment, where divine wrath will be the just fruit of all the unrepentant (cf. **Ro 1:18; 1 Th 1:10; Heb 10:27**).

B. (:8a) Lesson for the Hypocrites = Demonstrate Repentance

“Therefore bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance,”

Genuine repentance must always lead to observable fruit

C. (:8b) Legacy of the Hypocrites = No Free Pass

“and do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our father,’ for I say to you that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.”

In their nationalistic sense of elitism, they imagined that they had a lock on spirituality that could not be denied to them.

D. (:9) Lethal Destruction Aimed at the Hypocrites = Fire of God’s Wrath

“And also the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Piper: What these Jews had forgotten--and it's what all people forget when they try to obligate God by any of their human distinctives or human efforts--they forgot the freedom of God to have mercy on whomever he wills. They forgot the power of God who can always find a way to rebuke human self-reliance while keeping his promises. So verse 9 repeats the warning implicit in verse 7. *“Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”* Don't trust in the kind of tree you are. If there is no fruit that accords with repentance you will be destroyed. It doesn't matter if the tree is Jewish or Gentile, what matters is repentance and its fruit.

III. (:10-14) WORD OF CORRECTION: DISPLAY RIGHTEOUSNESS APPROPRIATE TO REPENTANCE BY BEING GENEROUS INSTEAD OF GREEDY

Addresses 3 very different classes of people –

A. (:10-11) Addressing the Multitudes = Common People

1. (:10) Concern: What Shall We Do?

“And the multitudes were questioning him, saying, ‘Then what shall we do?’”

2. (:11) Command: Be Generous in Providing for Those in Need

“And he would answer and say to them, ‘Let the man who has two tunics share with him who has none; and let him who has food do likewise.’”

Self sacrificial love for neighbor is the evidence of a regenerated life

Lenski: No new, strange laws are laid down; nor does John require of others the mode of life that he led as part of his peculiar calling. It is the old law and will of God that are done with a converted heart in the power of God’s grace.

B. (:12-13) Addressing the Tax-Gatherers – Hated Jews

1. (:12) Concern: What Shall We Do?

“And some tax-gatherers also came to be baptized, and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’”

2. (:13) Command: Don’t Be Greedy

“And he said to them, ‘Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.’”

Did not instruct them to leave their profession of tax gathering; but rather to act with integrity

Leon Morris: The Romans taxed people by farming out the taxing rights to the highest bidder. The successful man would pay Rome the amount he bid, but he would collect more than that to pay expenses and to give him his legitimate profit. But it was a strong temptation to levy more tax than was strictly necessary and to pocket the extra. This provoked resentment, especially among the patriotic, who in any case did not like to see Jews helping the Romans by collecting their taxes for them. So the tax collectors were hated.

C. (14) Addressing the Soldiers – Hated Romans

1. (:14a) Concern: What Shall We Do?

“And some soldiers were questioning him, saying, ‘And what about us, what shall we do?’”

2. (:14b) Command: Don’t Be Greedy

“And he said to them,

a. Don’t Abuse Your Power – to Steal Money

“Do not take money from anyone by force,”

b. Don’t Make False Accusations – to Extort Money

“or accuse anyone falsely,”

c. Be Content With Your Compensation

“and be content with your wages.”

Did not take some type of pacifist position as if it were immoral to be a soldier

Bible Background Commentary: Some commentators think these “**soldiers**” are Jewish police who accompanied tax gatherers or Herodian mercenaries, but more likely these are the light auxiliary non-Jewish troops that Rome recruited from Syria. Although the large legions were stationed in Syria, not Palestine, some soldiers were stationed in Palestine (Caesarea and Jerusalem) and smaller bands no doubt marched through. The frequency of Roman soldiers’ illegal concubinage with native women also indicates that all soldiers did not remain in their garrison at all times. Jews were exempt from required military service due especially to their dietary laws. Soldiers occasionally protested their wages, creating trouble with the government (e.g., the frontier mutiny of a.d. 14); they were known for extorting money from local people they intimidated or for falsely accusing them (see, e.g., the papyri; Apuleius). (The IVP Bible Background Commentary – New Testament)

Lenski: Each station in life has its peculiar temptations and sins. Repentance will show amendment especially in avoiding these sins. Failing in this is proof of spuriousness.

Piper: When a person turns to rely on God's mercy, he can no longer hate his neighbor. It is psychologically impossible to cherish the mercy God has shown to us and at the same time refuse to show it to another. . . negatively, the fruit that befits repentance is the refusal to exploit anyone to get more money or things. And, positively, the fruit that befits repentance is the willingness to give of our food and clothing and money to those who have need.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why was it important for Luke to reference historical leaders and dates in his gospel narrative?
- 2) What type of arguments do religious people offer today to try to justify their false confidence in salvation?
- 3) Why was John the Baptist so harsh in his calling out of these religious hypocrites?
- 4) When is ethical behavior a smokescreen for empty confession of faith and when is it a legitimate demonstration of fruit of a regenerated heart?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: John Came Preaching Repentance

Why is repentance so important? Why is repentance the prelude to the coming ministry of Jesus the Messiah? Well, think about it. The Messiah [John will say later], the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, has come to do what? To take away the sins of the world. The ministry of Jesus the Messiah is to atone for sin, to provide the way for the forgiveness of sin, and to provide a just and righteous basis where by our loving heavenly Father can forgive us of sin. What could possibly inoculate us to such a glorious message? This: Not adequately appreciating that we need to be forgiven of sin. You can't be forgiven of sin if you don't believe that you have sinned and

need forgiveness. Repentance is the recognition of our need for forgiveness of sin, and therefore it is necessary for the forgiveness of sin — not because repentance brings about or causes forgiveness. We could repent until the cows come home, and apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ it would not forgive our sins. But John makes it clear that it is necessary for forgiveness because we need to recognize our need for forgiveness before we are in a position of receiving forgiveness and trusting in the One who has purchased us forgiveness before His heavenly Father. And so repentance is absolutely vital, and Luke summarizes John the Baptist's ministry in terms of his preaching of repentance. . .

John is calling us to a life of that kind of repentance, where we own our sin, and because of the mercy of God to us in Jesus Christ, are able to accept it, acknowledge it, ask forgiveness for it, realize the consequences of it.

J C Ryle: Let us notice first, in this passage, the wickedness of the times when Christ's Gospel was brought into the world. The opening verses of the chapter tell us the names of some who were rulers and governors in the earth, when the ministry of John the Baptist began. It is a melancholy list, and full of instruction. There is hardly a name in it which is not infamous for wickedness. . . When such were the rulers, what must the people have been? Such was the state of things when Christ's forerunner was commissioned to begin preaching. Such were the times when the first foundation of Christ's church was brought out and laid.

Steven Cole: *All flesh shall see the salvation of God* – 3 Observations:

A. SALVATION IS FROM GOD.

“*The salvation of God*” means that God is the originator and provider of salvation. Luke has already used this particular word in 2:30, where Simeon holds the baby Jesus and proclaims, “*My eyes have seen Your salvation.*” What we are saved from is our sin and the impending judgment of God because of our sin. Thus a key element in salvation is the forgiveness of sins (**Lk 3:3**).

Since only God can forgive sins, and the Bible is clear that He does it only by His free grace, no man can save himself by earning it through any amount of good deeds or human merit or effort. Salvation comes totally from God who planned it before the foundation of the world, announced it through His prophets, and sent His messenger John and His Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The great British preacher, Charles Spurgeon, tells of the time, just months after his conversion at age 15, when it dawned on him that his salvation was totally from God. He was sitting in church when, he says (*Autobiography* [Banner of Truth], 1:165),

The thought struck me, “*How did you come to be a Christian?*” I sought the Lord. “*But how did you come to seek the Lord?*” The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to *make me* seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, *How came I to pray?* I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. *How came I to read the Scriptures?* I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, . . . and I desire to make this my constant confession, “I ascribe my change wholly to God.”

Writing to his father about this experience, he said, “I trust that I feel sufficiently the corruption of my own heart to know that, instead of doing one iota to forward my own

salvation, my old corrupt heart would impede it, were it not that my Redeemer is mighty, and works as He pleases” (*ibid.*, p. 115).

Salvation by man’s efforts or merits does not have the power to change the corrupt human heart. But God is mighty to save. The only message that will bring relief to this evil world is the message that salvation is from the Lord.

B. SALVATION REQUIRES FACING THE BAD NEWS ABOUT YOURSELF, THAT YOU ARE A SINNER, ALIENATED FROM THE HOLY GOD.

“*John came preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*” God’s message to a lost and hurting world begins with the issue of sin. Jesus taught that when the Holy Spirit came, He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (**John 16:8**). Until people are brought before God in His holiness and wrath against all sin, they do not realize their desperate situation. They justify themselves by comparing themselves with others, and they think that God will be tolerant on the day of judgment. So they assume that all will be okay on that day.

In a great section in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* ([Westminster Press], 3.12.1), John Calvin argues that we can never be justified before God by our own good works. He points out that before we compare ourselves with one another and so acquit ourselves, we need to remember that we will one day stand, not before a human court, but before God’s heavenly court. He asks:

How shall we reply to the Heavenly Judge when he calls us to account? Let us envisage for ourselves that Judge, not as our minds naturally imagine him, but as he is depicted for us in Scripture: by whose brightness the stars are darkened [**Job 3:9**]; by whose strength the mountains are melted; by whose wrath the earth is shaken [cf. **Job 9:5-6**]; whose wisdom catches the wise in their craftiness . . .

Luke’s quote from **Isaiah 40:3-5** shows us in figurative language the problem that sinful human hearts have in receiving the King of kings and His salvation. Isaiah pictures the scene when a king announced that he would visit a remote village. The rocky, twisted, up-and-down mountain trail was good enough for the villagers, but it was not suitable for the king. The village needed to get a road crew out there to straighten out the path, to fill in the ravines and level the mountains in the way, to remove the rocks and fill in the potholes, so that the king had a smooth, straight road for his arrival.

It’s a spiritual picture. If we just have to do with one another, we can tolerate the twisted, rocky, potholed ways of our heart. But if the King of Glory is coming, we’re in big trouble! Our hearts are full of ravines of sin and impurity. There are mountains of pride and self-righteousness in the way. We walk the crooked paths of deceit and falsehood. There are the rough, rocky, and potholed roads of greed, jealousy, self-will, blame, and disobedience. The King doesn’t travel on those kinds of roads!

Don’t misapply the analogy. It is not teaching that you must remove every trace of sin and corruption before you can receive the King into your life. That would be impossible! But the Holy Spirit must convict you of the awful sinfulness of your heart, so that you recognize your desperate need for God’s salvation. You must face the bad news about yourself as a sinner before you can welcome God’s gracious salvation.

C. SALVATION PROMISES THE GOOD NEWS, THAT IF YOU WILL REPENT AND BELIEVE IN CHRIST, GOD WILL FORGIVE ALL YOUR SINS.

Repentance and faith are often linked in Scripture and are the flip sides of the same coin. *Repentance* has the main idea of turning (**Luke 1:16, 17**-note) or changing one's thinking and behavior. It involves recognizing our sin and alienation from God so that, rather than continuing in the same direction of self-will and disobedience, we turn back to God and appeal to His mercy. *Faith* is the hand that receives God's mercy or grace. Faith lays hold of Jesus Christ as the perfect Substitute who died for our sins. *Forgiveness* means that God releases us from the penalty of our sins because His Son Jesus bore that penalty for us, and we are trusting in Him. Thus in summarizing the gospel message to the disciples after the resurrection, Jesus said, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (**Luke 24:46, 47**-note).

Repentance and faith are not something you must do to earn salvation. The shed blood of Christ merited salvation for every sinner who will lay hold of Him. Repentance and faith are God's gracious gifts that enable us to receive His mercy. J. C. Ryle explains,

There is nothing meritorious in this. It forms no part whatever of the price of our redemption. Our salvation is all of grace, from first to last. But the great fact still remains, that saved souls are always penitent souls, and that saving faith in Christ, and true repentance toward God, are never found asunder (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*).

The Scriptures instruct the person who has repented and believed in Jesus Christ to confess that faith in water baptism. John's baptism was a unique rite that pointed people ahead to the promised Messiah. It pictured God's washing or purification from sins, but it was not complete apart from what Messiah would do in offering Himself as the Lamb of God, the perfect sin-bearer. That is why, when Paul later found some disciples of John in Ephesus, who did not know about Jesus Christ, when they believed he baptized them in the name of the Lord Jesus (**Acts 19:1-6**).

For those who have believed in Christ, baptism is a public confession that symbolizes what Jesus Christ has done spiritually for the one who has believed. He has washed us from all of our sins and He has identified us totally with His death, burial, and resurrection to new life. Since the word "baptism" means dipping, and since going completely under the water best pictures what baptism means, immersion is the best mode of baptism. If you look up every occurrence of "baptism" in the New Testament, you will find that it always has reference to believers, and never to infants who cannot yet believe. If you have believed in Christ and know that He has forgiven your sins by His grace, you should be baptized in obedience to His command (**Mt. 28:19**-note).

Kent Hughes - John's answer is somewhat surprising. We might have expected that he would ask them to do something **penitential** ("Go do four good acts to the orphans in your town") or **ecclesiastical** ("Commit yourself to your local synagogue") or perhaps **devotional** ("Pray through the Psalms"). But significantly, John's advice was **ethical**. He asked them to change how they treated their fellow human beings.

It is not uncommon for people who do not know Christ to perform elevated ethical deeds in an attempt to prove the authenticity of their "Christianity." They may take up a just social cause,

then present it as evidence of their spiritual life—"I am pro-life—therefore I am a Christian," or "I am an advocate for the poor—this proves my Christianity."

A real danger comes with spiritual presumption stemming from exemplary ethical performance. However, it is also true that if you are truly regenerate and repentant, your faith will most surely affect how you treat others, especially those who are closest to you—your family, your business associates, your employees, and those in need. If there is no change in your personal ethics, no elevation of your concern and care for others, you may be self-deceived about your salvation. (Preaching the Word – Luke, Volume I: That You May Know the Truth)

TEXT: Luke 3:15-18

TITLE: *PROPHETIC TESTIMONY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST*

BIG IDEA:

THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST (DEALING WITH ULTIMATE DESTINY) IS FAR SUPERIOR TO THAT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

INTRODUCTION:

It is easy for spiritual leaders to get too full of themselves. They can imagine that their popularity and their large following equates to personal significance and indispensability. John the Baptist never made that mistake or crossed that line when it came to people comparing his ministry (that of the Forerunner) to the ministry of the Promised Messiah (the True Light). He testified that his baptism was merely symbolic while the ministry of Christ dealt with life and death issues – with regeneration and cleansing by the Holy Spirit or the eternal fire of God’s wrath. Will you be found to be among the wheat or the chaff when it comes to the winnowing of the Last Days? Those Jewish leaders who prided themselves on their physical descent from their father Abraham are going to be sorely disappointed when they are exposed as lacking the type of genuine repentance that leads to salvation.

(:15) PRELUDE – CURIOSITY ABOUT JOHN THE BAPTIST VS CHRIST

“Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ,”

The Jews had experienced a dead period of over 400 years in terms of prophetic revelation. It is no surprise that with the coming of such a powerful figure as John the Baptist, they start asking the question of his true identity.

Apparently John was doing his job in pointing people to Christ because the discussion was all about the identity of this Christ.

I. (:16) CONTRAST IN BAPTISMS BETWEEN JOHN AND CHRIST

“John answered and said to them all,”

A. Symbolic Baptism Administered by John with Water

“As for me, I baptize you with water;”

B. Superiority of Christ vs Humility of John the Baptist

‘but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals;’”

John 3:30 – Jesus must increase; I must decrease

C. Supernatural Baptism Administered by Christ in connection with the Holy Spirit and Fire

“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

Jesus will immerse people in the ultimate reality – not just dealing with symbols

MacArthur: What he's saying here is the One who is coming, the coming One, the stronger One, the mightier One, the One I'm not even worthy to untie His sandals, that One will do things that only God can do. Only God can immerse you in the Holy Spirit. Only God can immerse you in fire.

Alexander Maclaren (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], Luke, p. 76) Either we shall gladly accept the purging fire of the Spirit which burns sin out of us, or we shall have to meet the punitive fire which burns up us and our sins together. To be cleansed by the one or to be consumed by the other is the choice before each of us.

Lenski: one *en* (dative of means – “*in connection with*”) connects the *Spirit* and *fire* and thus regards the two as one concept which as one is also placed over against the one *water*. . . judgment is never conceived as a baptism; baptism and baptizing always mean cleansing and never destruction. This view assumes that “*fire*” is always a sign of judgment and destruction; but see the refiner’s fire in **Mal. 3:2, 3**; and fire as an image of purification in **Zech. 13:9**; **Isa. 6:6, 7**; **1 Pet. 1:7**, and the “*spirit of burning*,” taking away filth in **Isa. 4:4**. Clearest of all, Pentecost, the fulfillment of John’s prophecy, has the two combined: the Spirit and cloven tongues of fire as the visible manifestation of the Spirit.

II. (:17) CONDEMNATION ADMINISTERED BY CHRIST AT HIS SECOND COMING AS HE SEPARATES THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF

A. Described in General

“*And His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor,*”

The interval between Christ’s Two Comings is skipped over and John goes immediately to describe the mission of the Messiah as one to whom the Father has committed all judgment

Steven Cole: When a farmer harvested his crop, he would thresh the grain with a heavy sledge that separated the kernel of wheat from the outer shell or chaff. Then he would take a shovel-like winnowing fork and throw the wheat and chaff into the air when there was a breeze. The chaff would blow to the side, while the heavier wheat would fall to the ground. The chaff would be swept up for burning.

MacArthur: And I want to point something out to you in **verse 17**. You see that verb “to thoroughly clear, “to thoroughly clear,” that's very interesting in the Greek. That is a verb *diakathair*. That's what we call a *hapax legomena* in the Greek, which means it's the only time in the New Testament this word is used. It's a very...it's a very unusual word, and it is a rare word, this being its only usage. What it means is no traces are left, nothing is left. Everything is dealt with. The separation is **complete**. That is to say nobody is left out. The separation will take place completely. You either fall in the pile of grain, or the pile of chaff. You are either banded with the grain, which means you go into the glories of heaven, or burned with the chaff which means you go into the terrors of hell.

B. Described with Respect to Ultimate Salvation

“*and to gather the wheat into His barn,*”

Cf. **Psalm 1:4**

C. Described with Respect to Ultimate Condemnation

“but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Lenski: If the wicked were to be annihilated, the fire would burn itself out; instead it will never be quenched, it simply cannot be, it will burn on eternally as an eternal punishment for the wicked.

(:18) POSTLUDE – CONTINUING PREACHING MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

“So with many other exhortations also he preached the gospel to the people.”

G. Campbell Morgan: Somehow we are missing a vital element in our message from Christ if we fail to understand that the call to repentance must always precede the call to confidence in the redeeming Lord.

Liefeld: That John not only “*exhorted*” the people but “*preached the good news*” shows that grace accompanies the warning to flee from judgment.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why are preachers so reluctant today to preach on the subject of “unquenchable fire?” as it relates to punishment in hell?
- 2) How do we explain to our friends the difference between Christ and Christians?
- 3) What are some of the errors associated today with the teaching about baptism with the Holy Spirit?
- 4) How can such a message that includes a heavy dose of baptism with fire be characterized as good news?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Pointing people to Christ requires confronting their sin, warning of the reality of the coming judgment, and exalting His supremacy over all.

MacArthur: Now if the Jews heard the word “*fire*” in connection with Messiah, they had plenty of Old Testament scriptures to pop into their minds. Many, many times in the Old Testament “*fire*” is associated with judgment. And I’m not going to take the time this morning to give you all those scriptures. But, for example, and there are many, many of them, **Isaiah 29:6**, “*From the Lord of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.*” That’s just one of many. That’s **Isaiah 29:6**.

You can see it in **Isaiah 31:0, Ezekiel 38:22, Amos 7:4, Zephaniah 1:18, Zephaniah 3:8,**

Daniel 7:10, God's final judgment is associated with fire.

Roy Harrisville: To ignore judgment leaves the preacher with no reason for preaching the gospel. It is not a matter of scaring people into heaven. It is a matter of revealing the need for salvation and why Jesus is so important. If he is only a common messiah who does what the people expect, then he is no use to us. But if, on the other hand, he is the Messiah who lays bare the pretenses and false expectations of the people and reveals their deep seated need for personal and inner transformation, then he is someone surprising and filled with ultimate and eternal meaning. For preachers to leave out the fire is to let go of the reason for the gospel and thereby cheapen the good news.

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=500

TEXT: Luke 3:19-20

TITLE: IMPRISONMENT OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

BIG IDEA:
WICKEDNESS HATES THE LIGHT

INTRODUCTION:

John 3:19-20

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

It takes courage to confront powerful rulers with God’s truth when you know it could easily cost you your life. John the Baptist did not shrink back from his responsibility to confront Herod Antipas with his wickedness.

I. (:19) WICKEDNESS DESERVES REPROOF -- HEROD REPROVED BY JOHN THE BAPTIST

A. Reproof for Singular Sin

“But when Herod the tetrarch was reproofed by him on account of Herodias, his brother's wife,”

Steven Cole: Herod had divorced his own wife and seduced Herodias, the wife of his half-brother, who was also his own niece. By so doing, he was guilty of both adultery and incest.

Jeremy Myers: If you ever have trouble keeping all of the Herods separate, that’s okay. There are six of them in the New Testament, and all of them are related in one way or another, not only as a ruling family, but also in crime and cruelty. This Herod is **Herod Antipas**, the second surviving son of Herod the Great. As we read in **Luke 3:19**, he was the tetrarch of Galilee. Although he was an okay ruler from Rome’s perspective, he was not a real nice man. He had all of the vices, but none of the good qualities of his father, Herod the Great. He was covetous, greedy, luxurious, corrupt, suspicious and cunning. All of this though is typical of most rulers of that day.

https://redeeminggod.com/sermons/luke/luke_3_15-22/

B. Reproof for Multitude of Sins

“and on account of all the wicked things which Herod had done,”

Apparently John was aware of additional transgressions as well.

II. (:20) WICKEDNESS RESISTS REPROOF -- HEROD IMPRISONS JOHN

“he added this also to them all, that he locked John up in prison.”

Being a faithful communicator of God’s Word is often the pathway to rejection and persecution and unjust suffering.

Donald Miller: In his suffering, without knowing it, John was a forerunner of him who came to be the Suffering Servant (see **Matthew 17:12**, where Jesus connects John's sufferings with his own).

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How have you confronted the sin of others?
- 2) What must our spirit and disposition be when reproofing sin?
- 3) What opposition have you faced for taking a stand against sin and unrighteousness?
- 4) Why did John feel the need to confront Herod?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Lenski: Luke presents John's arrest as being the climax of all Herod's crimes. It was this because Herod laid hands on God's prophet, Christ's forerunner, and silenced his gospel preaching, an act that was worse than his adultery with Herodias. . . The character of John is revealed in all its courage and fearlessness. He might have kept still about Herod because of Herod's position and power; but, sent as a preacher of repentance, he preached against all sins, no matter who the sinners might be.

MacArthur: This event actually occurred much later during Jesus' ministry (**Mt 14:1-12; Jn 3:22-24**). But Luke organized his material on John the Baptist topically rather than chronologically.

Matthew Henry: John the Baptist disowned being himself the Christ, but confirmed the people in their expectations of the long-promised Messiah. He could only exhort them to repent, and assure them of forgiveness upon repentance; but he could not work repentance in them, nor confer remission on them. Thus highly does it become us to speak of Christ, and thus humbly of ourselves. John can do no more than baptize with water, in token that they ought to purify and cleanse themselves; but Christ can, and will baptize with the Holy Ghost; he can give the Spirit, to cleanse and purify the heart, not only as water washes off the dirt on the outside, but as fire clears out the dross that is within, and melts down the metal, that it may be cast into a new mold. John was an affectionate preacher; he was beseeching; he pressed things home upon his hearers. He was a practical preacher; quickening them to their duty, and directing them in it. He was a popular preacher; he addressed the people, according to their capacity. He was an evangelical preacher. In all his exhortations, he directed people to Christ. When we press duty upon people, we must direct them to Christ, both for righteousness and strength. He was a copious preacher; he shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God. But a full stop was put to John's preaching when he was in the midst of his usefulness. Herod being reproved by him for many evils, shut up John in prison. Those who injure the faithful servants of God, add still greater guilt to their other

sins.

John Calvin: This history shows clearly, what sort of reward awaits the faithful and honest ministers of the truth, particularly when they reprove vices: for scarcely one in a hundred bears reproof, and if it is at all severe, they break out into fury. If pride of this sort displays itself in some of the common people, we have no reason to wonder, that cruelty to reprovers assumes a more hideous form in tyrants, who brook nothing worse than to be classed with other men. We behold in John an illustrious example of that moral courage, which all pious teachers ought to possess, not to hesitate to incur the wrath of the great and powerful, as often as it may be found necessary: for he, with whom there is acceptance of persons, does not honestly serve God. When Luke says, he added this to all the evil actions which he did, he means, that Herod's malice is become desperate, and has reached its utmost height, when the sinner is enraged by remedies, and not only refuses correction, but takes vengeance on his adviser, as if he had been his enemy.

TEXT: Luke 3:21-22

TITLE: DIVINE TESTIMONY AT THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

BIG IDEA:

AT THE BAPTISM OF JESUS, GOD ENDORSES HIS SON AS BOTH BELOVED DEITY AND SUFFERING SERVANT EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO ACCOMPLISH HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION

INTRODUCTION:

What a majestic moment as God the Father commissions God the Son for His earthly Messianic ministry of worldwide redemption. As Jesus fulfills all righteousness in submitting to this baptism by John, there can be no greater endorsement than the words uttered from heaven on this momentous occasion. The endowment with the Holy Spirit for public ministry that will take Jesus all the way to the Cross was memorialized with the appearance of this dove-like figure.

(:21a) THE OCCASION = JESUS BEING BAPTIZED BY JOHN

“Now it came about when all the people were baptized, that Jesus also was baptized,”

Seems strange that Jesus would submit to this act since it signified repentance from sin. But here Jesus was identifying with the sinners whom He had come to redeem and was fulfilling all righteousness and presenting Himself to the nation of Israel as their promised Messiah.

I. (:21b-22a) TESTIMONY/ENDORSEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*“and while He was praying, heaven was opened,
and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove,”*

Trace the importance of prayer in the gospel of Luke and the importance of prayer in the earthly life and ministry of Jesus

Significance of heaven being “*opened*”

Geldenhuys: But although we are unable to form an idea of the “*opening of the heaven*”, it undoubtedly indicates that, after Jesus had now offered Himself so completely and voluntarily as the Substitute and Redeemer, God gave to His human consciousness a perfect revelation of the majesty and glory of the Father, and of the fact that He was the Son of God in an absolute sense.

John Martin: conveying the idea that God was breaking into human history with revelation – sovereignly declaring that Jesus is His Son.

Why the form of a dove? Possibly freedom from judgment? Purity? Innocence?

Donald Miller: Here is a coming of the Holy Spirit in a way which has no parallel in the Old Testament. On Jesus, the Spirit came in fullness and came to remain forever. For this reason, it was possible for Jesus to fulfill the mission of which John spoke, “*He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*” (3:16)

The Fourth Gospel makes unmistakably plain what is implicit here in Luke, when John the Baptist says: “*He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit*” (**John 1:33**; see also **John 3:34**). Jesus can now impart the Holy Spirit by imparting himself.

II. (:22b) TESTIMONY/ENDORSEMENT OF GOD THE FATHER

“and a voice came out of heaven,”

A. Affirmation of His Person = Beloved Son

“Thou art My beloved Son,”

Application: We all need affirmation from our Heavenly Father.

Thabiti Anyabwile: All the Son has done to please the Father has become ours through our union with Christ through faith in him. This is why Christians have every right to fight those nagging doubts and whispers that come along sometimes to suggest God is not happy with us. If we have made the hard choice of repenting of our sins and coming to God, we can expect to hear blessing from God, not condemnation. We do not have to shudder and cower for fear of a harsh word of rebuke from God. . . . Because we are in him through faith, God is pleased with us.

B. Affirmation of His Works = Well-Pleased in the works of the Suffering Servant

“in Thee I am well-pleased.”

SermonWriter.com: These are essentially the same words that God will speak at the transfiguration (9:35), except that they are addressed to Jesus at his baptism—but to the disciples at his transfiguration. **Verse 22** alludes to two Old Testament verses, “*You are my son*” (**Psalms 2:7**) and “*my chosen, in whom my soul delights*” (**Isaiah 42:1**).

Donald Miller: two strands of Old Testament thought which seem for the most part to have developed independently were brought firmly together in the mind of Jesus. Psalm 2 pictured one who bore a special relation to God as Son, “anointed” or commissioned to carry out his purposes (**Ps. 2:2**). The mission given to him was to subdue the nations and bring the ends of the earth into subjection to God’s Lordship (**Ps. 2:8**). But what was the method whereby this was to be done? Clearly that of coercive force. “*You shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel*” (**Ps. 2:9**).

Isaiah 42 is both similar and dissimilar to this. Instead of a Son, the chosen of God is a Servant. In this lies no contradiction, for what is true sonship but obedient service to the will of a father? The mission of the Servant is identical with that of the Son – “*he will bring forth justice to the nations*” (**Isa. 42:1**). His task is to bring all peoples under the divine sovereignty. But what of the method by which this was to be done? At this point there is a radical difference from the Second Psalm. Instead of violently smashing all opposition before him, “*He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street*” (**Isa. 42:2**). He is so gentle that he will not break off an already bent reed, nor snuff out the wick that gives no light (**Isa. 42:3**). . .

The Son and Servant are one and the same! . . . True sonship means obedient service. The Son must fulfill the role of the Servant.

Liefeld: the words “love” and “well pleased” convey the idea of choice and special relationship. Jesus has now received his commission. He is ready (following the Temptation, **4:1-12**) to begin his ministry.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Jesus submit to water baptism as administered by John?
- 2) Do you feel heaven is opened up to you or closed off??
- 3) Do you still feel the burden of shame and guilt or do you share in the positive affirmation here that the Father showers on His Beloved Son?
- 4) If the essence of God is Spirit, how can it be said here that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in bodily form?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The fact that heaven was opened shows that in Jesus, God was breaking into human history. The Holy Spirit’s descent as a dove probably points to the gentleness and purity of the Spirit, and also shows the Holy Trinity united in the launching of Jesus’ ministry.

The affirmation of the Father from heaven relates to two Old Testament texts:

Psalms 2:7, where the Father says of Messiah, “*You are My Son*”; and,

Isaiah 42:1, “*Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations.*”

(Note the clear reference to the Trinity in this Old Testament passage!) The Father’s being pleased with His beloved Son assures us that He is satisfied with His offering Himself on the cross for our sins. If we are in Christ, the Beloved, then we are accepted in the presence of the Holy God.

Thabiti Anyabwile: This text is obviously Trinitarian, isn’t it? At Jesus’s baptism all the persons of the Godhead are present. God the Son is baptized. God the Father speaks from heaven. God the Holy Spirit descends on the Son in the form of a dove. This one text stands in clear contrast against errors in understanding the nature of God. Some have taught that there is one God who takes different forms at different times. They say he is the Father in the Old Testament, then he takes the form of the Son in the New Testament, and at other times he takes the form of the Spirit. They argue God exists in these modes – which is false. That all three persons exist in the same scene at the same time means modalism cannot be true.

At other times people wrestling with the mystery of the Trinity have tried to subordinate one or the other in some way. So, for example, they argue that Jesus is less than God but more than man. Or they tell us that the Spirit is a force rather than a person. But that’s false too. In this

text we see the three persons, and yet there remains only one God. Each person is fully and eternally God.

Belief in the Trinity is one that makes us Christian. The historical Christian church has always understood the Trinity to be foundational to who God is and foundational to the faith. So those who deny the Trinity actually deny the Christian faith. They deny who God really is and be that denial prove they do not know God.

Daniel Wilson:

There are three parts of the Father's testimony:

A reference to the Son

"I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you."
Psalm 2:7 (ESV)

It also echoes God's declaration of Jesus, Israel's king and ultimately to Israel's Messiah.

A reference to the Beloved

"But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend;"
Isaiah 41:8 (ESV)

A reference to God's being pleased with the Son

The Father was pleased with the Son's obedience.

"Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations." **Isaiah 42:1 (ESV)**

TEXT: Luke 3:23-38

TITLE: DNA TESTIMONY

BIG IDEA:

THE GENEALOGY OF JESUS CHRIST TESTIFIES TO HIS LEGITIMATE CLAIM TO BE THE PROMISED MESSIAH AND TO THE UNIVERSALITY OF HIS SAVING WORK

INTRODUCTION:

Jeremy Myers: In those days, people naturally assumed that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. Luke corrects them here by saying that Jesus was only the supposed son of Joseph. But there is another way to translate the Greek, which I think is possible. Rather than translating it, as was supposed, it could be translated: *as was the custom, as was acknowledged by law, as was entered in the ledger, or as we find it on record.*

You see, Luke is giving the recorded genealogy of Jesus as would be found in the public documents. Luke has apparently copied down a Greek or Roman form of a genealogy here. The Greeks and Romans had a very low view of women, and so in Greek and Roman genealogies, the names of women were not allowed. And so when Jesus was born, and his genealogy was recorded in the ledgers, they wouldn't write down Mary's name, so they put down Joseph's name instead, even though they ran the genealogy through Mary. Luke can't change the legal record, and so he can't include Mary's name. So he includes the parentheses that simply says that Jesus was on record, or it was supposed, that Jesus was the son of Joseph.

But anybody who knew Jesus, and knew Joseph, and knew Mary, knew that Mary's father was Heli, and Joseph's father was a man named Jacob (**Matthew 1:16**). Therefore, when they saw the next name in the list, Heli, and the end of **Luke 3:23**, they would immediately recognize that they were reading Mary's genealogy; not Joseph's. And by the way, when **verse 23** says that Joseph was the son of Heli, the words, '*son of*' are not there in the Greek. They should be italicized in your Bible, unless you have the NIV, which shows that they were added by the translators, but they are not really in the Greek.

What can we learn from genealogies in Scripture:

- 1) Genealogies tell us that our faith is rooted in history
- 2) God is Sovereign
- 3) God is Orderly
- 4) God knows your name
- 5) Salvation is for all

And when He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being supposedly the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the

son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What do you find especially significant about any of the individuals listed in this genealogy?
- 2) What was the different emphasis in the Gospel of Matthew vs that of Luke?
- 3) How interested are you in trying to trace back your own genealogy? Why or why not?
- 4) What do we learn here about the sovereignty of God and His love and care for individuals?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Luke's genealogy moves backward, from Jesus to Adam; Matthew's moves forward, from Abraham to Joseph; Luke's entire section from Joseph to David differs starkly from that given by Matthew. The two genealogies are easily reconciled if Luke's is seen as Mary's genealogy, and Matthew's version represents Joseph's. Thus the royal line is passed through Jesus' legal father, and His physical descent from David is established by Mary's lineage. Luke, unlike Matthew, includes no women in his genealogy – even Mary herself. Joseph was “the son of Eli” by marriage (Eli having no sons of his own), and thus is named here in v. 23 as the representative of Mary's generation. Moses himself established precedent for this sort of substitution in **Nu 27:1-11; 36:1-12**.

Morris: Luke's insertion of the genealogy at this point, after the baptism that marked Him out as Son of God and before the temptation which helped define the nature of His Messianic task, may be meant to help us see something of Jesus' Messianic significance. That the genealogy is recorded at all shows Him to be a real man, not a demi-god like those in Greek and Roman mythology. That it goes back to David points to an essential element in His Messianic qualifications. That it goes back to Adam brings out His kinship not only with Israel but with the whole human race. That it goes back to God relates Him to the Creator of all. He was the Son of God.

Anyabwile: What is the purpose of the genealogy in Israel? Scattered throughout the Old

Testament are these tracings of family trees and relationships. Genealogies have a threefold purpose.

1) First, they prove who was Jewish and who was not. Such proof of Jewish ancestry was important because God's covenants were made with Israel.

2) Second, the genealogies prove who could or could not serve as priests. Only Levites could serve before the Lord in the tabernacle and the temple.

3) Third, the genealogies prove who was or was not a "*son of David*." Do you remember the promise of 2 Samuel 7, when God promised to establish David's throne forever? David's son would be ruler over Israel and the hoped-for Messiah. But not just any son or descendant of David could fill that role. The genealogy also had to prove that anyone claiming to be Messiah was not descended from David through Jeconiah (**Jer 22:24-30; 36:30-31**). God declared that no one from Jeconiah's house would sit on David's throne.

Donald Miller: Luke traces his genealogy . . . beginning with Jesus, and carrying it back to "Adam" (3:38). Jesus is the climax not only of holy history but of **all** history. He not only fulfills the hopes of Israel, he brings fullness of life to **all men**. In his life, death, and resurrection, the center of all history is reached. Every life ever born, before or since, is related to him. He is the goal toward which all history moves, the end for which all things were created.

In this way, Luke was suggesting Paul's conception of Jesus as the "*last Adam*" (**1 Cor. 15:20-22, 45-49; Rom. 5:12-19**). The first Adam was the originator of the old humanity, characterized by disobedience and death (**Gen. 3**). Here is a new Adam, the originator of a new order of humanity, characterized by obedience and eternal life. In him, estranged humanity is once more given the "*power to become children of God*" (**John 1:12**). This new Adam will perform an "*act of righteousness*" which will lead "*to acquittal and life for all men*" (**Rom. 5:18**). This is the significance of Luke's genealogy. It establishes the universality of the saving work of the Son who is the Suffering Servant.

TEXT: Luke 4:1-15

TITLE: TEMPTATION OF JESUS

BIG IDEA:

JESUS AS THE SECOND ADAM DEFEATED THE TEMPTATIONS OF SATAN BY RELYING ON THE WORD OF GOD IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION:

We know that there is no temptation but such as is common to man. We know that Adam and Eve were defeated by Satan in their temptation encounter in the Garden of Eden. Here as Jesus launches His public ministry right after His baptism, He goes head-to-head with the 3 key temptations presented by Satan and defeats him in every area. Jesus as the Son of God and the Suffering Servant will not be deterred from the Redemptive Mission assigned to Him by the Father. There is no short-cut to a life of obedience and submitting to death on the Cross. Jesus has gained the victory for all those who will run to Him and trust Him when confronted with temptation.

(:1-2) PRELUDE – THE 5 CONDITIONS OF THE TESTING

A. Led by the Holy Spirit

*“And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit,
and was led about by the Spirit”*

B. Isolated in the Wilderness

“returned from the Jordan . . . in the wilderness”

C. Endured a Period of 40 Days

“for forty days,”

Deut. 9:9 – experience of Moses on the mountain

Deut. 8:2 – 40 years of testing in the wilderness

D. Tempted by Satan

“being tempted by the devil.”

E. Fasted

*“And He ate nothing during those days;
and when they had ended, He became hungry.”*

**I. (:3-4) FIRST TEMPTATION – FAILURE TO TRUST GOD’S PROVISION –
Can God care for me? Goodness and Love of God attacked
SUFFICIENCY -- Lust of the Flesh**

A. (:3) Satan’s Challenge

“And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’”

Geldenhuys: Satan attempts to incite Jesus to dissatisfaction, impatience and self-will. Why should He undergo such privation any longer – while He has the power of making bread even of

the stones? Why should He deny Himself and submit to the laws of an ordinary human existence and so run the risk of starvation if He is able to change all by an authoritative utterance? This temptation of the evil one is thus directed against the chief requisites for the execution of His calling as Messiah: His consciousness of His vocation, His faith in God and His self-renunciation.

B. (:4) Christ's Response

“And Jesus answered him, ‘It is written, Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

D. Miller: Refused to become an **economic Messiah** – refused to be diverted from the pathway of suffering by meeting man's superficial needs in place of his deepest needs. He also refused to use his power to minister to his own needs.

II. (:5-8) SECOND TEMPTATION – FAILURE TO TRUST GOD'S KINGDOM PROGRAM –

How does God want to accomplish His agenda? Wisdom of God attacked SUPREMACY – Pride of Life

A. (:5-7) Satan's Challenge

“And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. 7 Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.’”

The temptation is to take a short-cut and bypass the Cross

G. Campbell Morgan: His way to the possession of the Kingdom was a way through death, the way of the Cross, the way of travail. Satan said: Do not take that way; here is a short cut, use this method.

B. (:8) Christ's Response

“And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’”

D. Miller: Refused to become a **political Messiah** – Much as Jesus must have wished political deliverance for his people, he saw that their real needs lay deeper. They, and the whole universe, needed deliverance from Satan. Through the power of suffering love, he would “put all his enemies under his feet” (I Cor. 15:25).

III. (:9-12) THIRD TEMPTATION – FAILURE TO TRUST GOD'S PROVIDENCE – How does God want to deliver and exalt me? Sovereignty of God attacked SUSTAINABILITY -- Lust of the Eyes

A. (:9-11) Satan's Challenge

“And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here; 10 for it is written, He will give His angels charge concerning You to guard You, 11 and, On their hands they will bear You up, Lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’”

B. (:12) Christ's Response

“And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

D. Miller: Refused to become a **miracle-working Messiah** – one who would win the allegiance of men by wonders. God’s promises are not give to be used for selfish ends.

Geldenhuys: Jesus, however, again firmly repels the suggestion of the devil that He should test the faithfulness of God by exposing Himself to danger in a self-willed, unlawful manner and then expecting God to preserve Him. He does not for a moment waver in His trust in God and is not going to put Him to the test – for, indeed, he who tests God in this fashion proves thereby that he does not trust Him completely.

(:13-15) POSTLUDE

A. (:13) Satan Departs Until Later

“And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”

B. (:14) Jesus Returns to Galilee and His Reputation Spreads

“And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.”

C. (:15) Jesus Begins Effective Public Teaching Ministry

“And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) There can be no question about the reality of Satan. How real is he in your thinking?
- 2) When are you at your weakest and most susceptible to temptation?
- 3) What type of temptations give you the most trouble?
- 4) How do we use the Scriptures when we face temptation? Do we truly believe in the sufficiency of God’s Word? How do we flee to Christ?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

D. Miller: The temptation of Jesus is not so much a preparation for his ministry as its opening act. He had come to be a Savior (**2:11**). This meant doing battle with God’s enemy, whom Jesus

later called "the *“ruler of this world”* (**John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11**), and whom Paul termed *“the god of this world”* and *“the prince of the power of the air”* (**II Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2**). This was the first engagement with the Devil in a battle which continued to the end. It introduces us to a struggle in which no quarter may be given and no compromise is possible. It is a battle for the Lordship of the world. Either Jesus or the Devil must win, and the power of the other be broken.

..

The Baptism clarified his mission as Suffering Servant. The Temptation confronted him with the costliness of this mission and tested whether he would be obedient to it. The Temptation, therefore, was not designed to make him doubt his Messiahship. It was rather Satan’s effort to divert him from being a suffering Messiah. Would he seek to achieve his mission by fulfilling the Messianic hopes of his people, or would he be obedient to the Father’s will and go to the Cross – a choice which meant rejection by his people right from the start? This was what Jesus faced at the Temptation.

Anyabwile: In all these temptations Jesus relies on God’s Word. Our Lord quotes and trusts the Scriptures. From that fact we can deduce Jesus’s view of the Bible. First, Jesus believes the Bible applies to our temptations. Second, Jesus believes the Bible to truly be the word of God. Third, our Lord believes in the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures. He does not equivocate or quibble but stands on God’s Word. . .

Our primary application is “Jesus is God’s Son; trust him.” The Lord endured temptation in our place. So in our temptation, we must flee to Christ! He conquered our adversary. [not primarily offering the use of Scripture as an example for us]

Kevin Zuber summarizes Jesus' temptations as:

- (1) Serve Yourself (**Lk 4:3-4**);
- (2) Honor Yourself (**Lk 4:5-8**);
- (3) Be spectacular (be presumptuous and prove Your self-importance; **Lk 4:9-12**).

Jesus countered each temptation with an appeal to Scripture (cf. **Dt 8:3; 6:13; 6:16**). These events proved Jesus was the right man, with the appropriate background, with the proper credentials, and with the desirable experience for the ministry He was about to begin. (The Moody Bible Commentary)

MacArthur: Comparing Adam’s temptation with that of Jesus reveals some obvious differences and makes Jesus’ victory over His temptation all the more remarkable. Adam faced temptation in the best possible surroundings, the Garden of Eden. Jesus faced temptation in the worst imaginable setting—the wasteland of the Judean desert. Adam lived in the sinless perfection of the pre-fall world. Jesus lived in a sinful, fallen world. No overwhelming buildup of temptation lured Adam into sin, because he yielded to the first temptation he faced. Jesus, on the other hand, faced repeated temptations over the first thirty years of His life (**Heb. 4:15**), and intense temptation during the forty days before the final three recorded here. Adam feasted on all the lush provisions the garden had to offer. Jesus was weakened by forty days of fasting. In the best of circumstances, Adam fell; in the worst imaginable circumstances, Jesus did not. The consequences of Adam’s fall to temptation were lethal to the human race; the consequences of Jesus’ triumph over temptation were life-giving. (MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Luke 1-5)

Steven Cole: Like a clever salesman, Satan sets out his wares without mentioning the price tag. He always shows the pleasures of sin (which are real), but he doesn't mention the stiff consequences that inevitably follow. "Worship me and I'll give you dominion over all the kingdoms of the earth." Sounds good! But he fails to mention that Jesus will then be the servant of Satan, not of the Father, that the holy union between Father and Son will be forever broken and that Jesus' mission as Savior will be ruined. Satan still works that way: "Give in and enjoy the pleasures of sex like all your friends are doing! Why deprive yourself? Life is short, this may be your only opportunity." He doesn't mention the risk of venereal disease (including AIDS), or pregnancy, or the spiritual and emotional consequences of giving yourself to someone outside of God's design of lifelong marriage. He dangles before you the good feelings of taking drugs or getting drunk, but he hides the ruined lives of the drug addict or drunkard on the streets. And, of course, he never sets before you the eternal wrath of God!

J Vernon McGee - What is Satan really saying to our Lord? His implication is this: "You are on the way to the throne, and I know You are going by way of the Cross. I have a detour for You. You can miss the horror of the Cross and come to the throne without the Cross." May I say to you, that is without doubt the most satanic insinuation in the world. This same appeal to the mind has gotten into the pulpits of America today, that we should be intellectual, that we should not preach the death of Christ, that the cross of Christ should not be held up. Yet the most brilliant of them all came yonder to Corinth, the city that boasted of its Greek philosophy. This man Paul, who knew their philosophy better than they knew it, came and said to them: *For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (1 Corinthians 2:2)* And he said: *For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. (1 Corinthians 1:18)*

But he said, "That's what I preach." And, my friend, if Christ went by way of the Cross because it was necessary, then I'll preach the Cross because it is necessary for your salvation and mine. There's no other way. No other way.

Dr. Edward Judson, the son of Adoniram Judson, who headed up the mission after his father's death, made this observation: "My father suffered greatly in Burma, and as a result there has come into existence all these great missionary agencies of this day." And then he made this remarkable statement: "If you get anything without suffering, it's because somebody else suffered for you. And if you suffer and do not succeed, somebody else will get something because you suffered." Oh, what a glorious, wonderful truth that is. It contradicts the philosophy of Satan: "Miss the Cross; You don't need the Cross—it's not essential. You can come to the throne without the Cross." Our Lord said, and will you notice this: And Jesus answered and said to him, "*Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'*" (**Luke 4:8**)

Oh, Satan left out something. Satan said, "If You will worship me only for a moment, I'll give You the kingdom." Our Lord said in effect, "You left out something. You cannot worship without serving. If I worship you, I'll serve you. And we are to worship God only, and Him only are we to serve."

TEXT: Luke 4:16-30

TITLE: *HOMETOWN RECEPTION OF JESUS TURNS UGLY FAST*

BIG IDEA:

PROCLAMATION OF GRACIOUS MESSIANIC MISSION THAT EXTENDS TO THE GENTILES REJECTED BY HOSTILE HOMETOWN CROWD

INTRODUCTION:

The gospel message is only Good News to those who humble themselves and acknowledge that their spiritual condition is characterized by poverty, bondage, blindness and oppression. The launch of the public ministry of Jesus in His hometown setting of Nazareth in the synagogue that He knew so well stirred up extreme opposition. The Jews were inclined to seek after signs and miracles rather than embrace God's Word with hearts of faith. They especially hated to hear about God sovereignly passing over unrepentant Jews to show His mercy to pagan Gentiles. What started out as hometown curiosity quickly degenerated into crowd rage. Jesus in turn rejected the city of Nazareth and moved on to offer His ministry to other regions.

I. (:16-21) THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN HIS HOME TOWN OF HIS MESSIANIC REDEMPITIVE MISSION – JESUS PREACHES FROM ISAIAH 61

A. (:16-17) Preparation for the Public Reading of Scripture

1. (:16a) Stopping in His Home Town for a Public Appearance

“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up;”

2. (:16b) Speaking in the Synagogue on the Sabbath

“and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.”

3. (:17) Selecting the Text

“And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written,”

B. (:18-19) Proclamation of the Messianic Text from Isaiah 61

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,”

Don't overlook the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of Jesus

Chiastic Structure:

1a. (:18a) Preaching the Gospel

“Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.”

2a. (:18b) Proclaiming Release

“He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,”

3. (:18c) Restoring Sight

“And recovery of sight to the blind,”

2b. (:18d) Setting Free

“To set free those who are downtrodden,”

1b. (:19) Proclaiming Blessing

“To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”

C. (:20-21) Prophetic Fulfillment of the Scripture

1. (:20a) Conclusion of the Prophetic Reading

“And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down;”

2. (:20b) Concentration of the Curious Worshipers

“and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him.”

Lenski: There must have been a dignity and a power in his whole appearance, in every inflection of his voice, and in every gesture and movement, that riveted all eyes in the synagogue upon him. The scene was far above what any one in Nazareth realized. The Word himself had read the Word to them. When Jesus sat down, this was a signal that he would make an address.

3. (:21) Clarification of the Messianic Fulfillment

“And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”

Donald Miller: So, Jesus boldly links this Coming Age to himself. . Here we see that the heart of Jesus’ message lay in the fact that he was the fulfiller of the Old Testament. Now is God’s gracious time, for the One who is to usher it in is in their midst. All that the prophets had announced, all that Jewish history prefigured, was unrolling before their very eyes in him! There was a deeper poverty, a worse captivity, a more tragic blindness, a more shattering oppression, than that of ancient Babylon or the Rome of their day. It was that wrought by Satan. Here was the “stronger” One who had come to invade Satan’s domain and conquer him (**Luke 11:22**).

II. (:22-30) THE ANTICIPATION OF A NEGATIVE HOME TOWN RESPONSE – JESUS DRIVEN OUT OF NAZARETH

A. (:22) Superficial Praise

“All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. ‘Isn’t this Joseph’s son?’ they asked.”

Wiersbe: At first, they admired the way He taught, but it didn’t take long for their admiration to turn into antagonism. Why? Because Jesus began to remind them of God’s goodness to the Gentiles. . . Our Lord’s message of grace was a blow to the proud Jewish exclusivism of the congregation, and they would not repent. Imagine this hometown Boy saying that Jews had to be saved by grace just like the pagan Gentiles!

B. (:23-24) Stunning Principle

1. Hometown Expectations

a. Expectation of Healing

“Jesus said to them, ‘Surely you will quote this proverb to me: Physician, heal yourself!’”

Cf. mocking taunts hurled at Jesus when He was on the cross

b. Expectation of Miracles

“And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

Donald Miller: Men cannot demand of God that he send the Messiah in the form they have predetermined. Faith cannot rest on visible confirmation of a sort which the believer himself has determined.

2. Hometown Rejection

“Truly I tell you,’ he continued, ‘no prophet is accepted in his hometown.’”

Luke has primarily Gentile audience in view; stresses the universality of the gospel

C. (:25-27) Surprising Proof – 2 OT Examples of Prophetic Blessing Directed Towards Outsiders Instead of Insiders

1. (:25-26) Example from Ministry of Elijah 1 Kings 17:8-16

“I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon.”

Hiding him from wrath of King Ahab; the queen was on a mission to butcher God’s prophets; withdrawal of God’s Word from the land in preparation for judgment; the heart of Baal worship – showing God’s grace extending beyond the scope of Jewish nationalistic pride; every morning was a fresh evidence of the gracious provision of the Lord

2. (:27) Example from Ministry of Elisha 2 Kings 5:1-14

“And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed-- only Naaman the Syrian.”

Look at his testimony in vs. 15 -- would that the Jews had the same depth of theology and testimony

J. Ligon Duncan: What's different about them and the people in Nazareth and the people in Israel around them in their own time? They believed the prophets’ words. And Jesus says, ‘You know, you people here in Galilee, you haven't learned much in the last 800 years. You’re just like your forebears before you: you don't believe. God sent His anointed to you, and His word's not enough. You want to see a miracle, and you don't even think that I've done the miracles that I've done in the other parts of this place.’ And He says, ‘So guess what? God's going to do you just like He did them. He's not going to give you the miracles. There will be no miracle-doing here in Nazareth because you've got hard hearts. You’re laden with your sins, and you don't believe My words.’

People of Nazareth got the point of these 2 OT examples

D. (:28-30) Severe Persecution – Complete Reversal of Reaction from the People

“All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.”

Remember **reaction of Jonah** to God’s mercy in sparing the people of Nineveh

Am I right to be angry?? These people were furious

Leon Morris: He simply passed through the midst of them and went away. He spoke no angry word, nor did He work any spectacular miracle. He simply walked through the mob. Some have felt that this was itself a miracle – though not the kind of miracle the Nazarenes wanted! As far as is known Jesus never returned to Nazareth. Rejection can be final.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does familiarity with Jesus become a stumbling block to nominal Christians who are blind to their need for repentance and regeneration?
- 2) What is the significance of Jesus stopping His reading at that particular point in Isaiah 61?
- 3) Does our commitment to the Great Commission mirror the type of mission functionality described in these verses?
- 4) Why were the Jews so antagonistic to the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s redemptive program?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: in a very subtle way, Luke suggests that the presence of the multitudes was really a repetition of the Temptation, where Jesus was faced with the decision between meeting the superficial needs of his people or being his Father’s obedient Servant. When the crowds were at their height *“he withdrew to the wilderness and prayed”* (5:16). He must fortify his soul once more against the temptation to succumb to the popular acclaim of those who did not understand his mission.

G. Campbell Morgan: We thank God for Luke’s first picture of a Sabbath day. Mark the sequence. The synagogue, the place of religion; the home, the place of the family; the street, the place of crowding necessity; and the desert, the place of quietness with God. We have seen His authority, ethical authority, and executive authority, which is power; power over disease, power over demons, power sufficient to set men free from the trammels of false teaching, and from the bondage of evil. Such is the picture of the Lord on that first Sabbath day in Galilee.

Leon Morris: Synagogue Customs

The service would have commenced with prayer and there would have been a reading from the Law (the books from Genesis to Deuteronomy) before Jesus read from the prophets. There were no ministers as we understand the term, but the local synagogue authorities would invite people to read and to preach. Scripture seems always to have been read in the original Hebrew, though a translation into Aramaic would have been made by the reader or someone else. From Acts it is plain that it was not uncommon for distinguished visitors to be invited to preach. The synagogue was used for instruction as well as for worship. . .

TEXT: Luke 4:31-44

TITLE: POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

WE NEED TO SUBMIT TO THE ABSOLUTE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST WHO REIGNS OVER THE KINGDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

If the demons understand the person and power and authority of Jesus Christ, how much more so should we submit and enjoy the blessing of His dominion. The preaching of the kingdom of God means nothing apart from the authority and Lordship of the King. This is good news for us who if left to our own designs would live a life of frustration and futility. Everything Jesus said and did was for a purpose – He truly lived the “Purpose-Driven Life.” We should have no expectation that Jesus will always heal or always deliver us with a miracle, etc. Instead we should submit to His power and authority and embrace His sovereign kingdom agenda. But at the same time we must maintain our confidence that He is all powerful to do whatever He wishes for our benefit in any situation of life.

(:31-32) PRELUDE – DEVELOPING A REPUTATION FOR POWER AND AUTHORITY IN CAPERNAUM AND BEYOND

A. (:31a) Place of Teaching = Capernaum

“And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee.”

descended in altitude -- Capernaum was 680 feet below sea level while Nazareth was about 1200 feet above sea level.

Significance of Capernaum – became the base of operations for His public ministry; city in Galilee; 20 miles NE from Nazareth; northern shores of Sea of Galilee;

3 main highways ran thru here:

- Up to Tyre and Sidon
- Across to Damascus
- Down to Jerusalem

B. (:31b) Pattern of Teaching = Sabbath

“And He was teaching them on the Sabbath;”

Primary ministry function = teaching the people

C. (:32) Power of Teaching = Message was With Authority

“and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.”

Donald Miller: Here is one whose word carried authority over disease, nature, the world of demonic spirits, the human heart, and sin. In every realm where evil reigns, a mightier authority had come to intervene and to set men free. His authority resided in his Person. It was not the authority of the scribes, which lay in citing passages of Scripture or the tradition which had grown up around the Scriptures (**Mark 1:22**). It was an authority inherent in who Jesus was.

Robertson: He struck a note not found by the Jewish rabbis. They quoted other rabbis and felt their function to be expounders of the traditions which they made a millstone around the necks of the people (cf Lk 17:2+, Mt 18:6, Mk 9:42+). By so doing they set aside the word and will of God by their traditions (*paradosis*) and petty legalism (Mk 7:9, 13+). They were casuists and made false interpretations to prove their punctilious points of external etiquette to the utter neglect of the spiritual reality (cf Mt 23:23, 24, 25). The people noticed at once that here was a personality Who got His power (authority) direct from God, not from the current scribes.

I. (:33-37) POWER AND AUTHORITY OVER DEMONS

A. (:33a) Demon Possession

“And there was a man in the synagogue possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon,”

What was a demon doing in the synagogue? They are impure spirits

B. (:33b-34) Demon Testimony

“and he cried out with a loud voice, 34 ‘Ha! What do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are-- the Holy One of God!’”

C. (:35) Demon Exorcism

“And Jesus rebuked him, saying, ‘Be quiet and come out of him!’ And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him without doing him any harm.”

Geldenhuys: In his desperate rage the demon threw the man down, but Jesus’ manifestation of power was so perfect that He even prevented the man from being in any way hurt.

D. (:36-37) Reaction of the People

1. (:36a) Amazement of the People

“And amazement came upon them all,

2. (:36b) Authority and Power of His Teaching

“and they began discussing with one another saying, ‘What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.’”

Note the switch to the plural – this was not the only instance of Jesus commanding the impure spirits

3. (:37) Growing Reputation

“And the report about Him was getting out into every locality in the surrounding district.”

II. (:38-41) POWER AND AUTHORITY OVER DISEASE

A. (:38-39) Very Personal Healing – Mother-in-law of Simon Peter

“And He arose and left the synagogue, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever; and they made request of Him on her behalf. 39 And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately arose and waited on them.”

Donald Miller: The fact that the fever was “*high*” and that the cured one “*immediately . . . rose and served them*” (vs. 39), attests the power and the completeness of the cure.

B. (:40-41) General Scope of Healing

1. (:40) Various Kinds of Sickness – quite the medical clinic – no need for specialists
“And while the sun was setting, all who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on every one of them, He was healing them.”

Geldenhuys: The Jewish days commenced and ended with the setting of the sun. That was the reason why the inhabitants of Capernaum waited on that day (which was a Sabbath) until sunset (when the Sabbath ended) and then brought their sick and demon-possessed people to Jesus.

How would you contrast the healing ministry of Jesus with that of self-proclaimed faith healers today?

J. Ligon Duncan: Notice that Luke does not ascribe all sickness to demonic activity. There are some who are sick and have diseases and need to be healed, and there are others who are possessed by demons and perhaps have physical manifestations of that, and what they need is for the demons to be cast out. And Jesus does both.

Steven Cole: Contrary to what many think, miracles are not uniformly distributed throughout the Bible. They occur mostly in clusters around the time of Moses, again with Elijah and Elisha, a few in Daniel’s time, and at the time of Christ and the apostles. These were all crucial periods of God’s dealings with His people.

2. (:41) Miraculous Healing From Demons

“And demons also were coming out of many, crying out and saying, “You are the Son of God!” And rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.”

Relationship between demon possession and physical and emotional ailments

Why did Jesus refuse the testimony of these demons?

Why don’t we see the same type of ministry to demon-possessed people today?

(:42-44) POSTLUDE -- PRIORITY OF HIS MINISTRY

A. (:42a) Seeking Solitude – Needs Private Time with the Father

“And when day came, He departed and went to a lonely place;”

Mark 1:35 -- for the purpose of prayer

B. (:42b) Swarmed by the Multitudes – Not Constrained by People’s Desires

“and the multitudes were searching for Him, and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from going away from them.”

C. (:43-44) Set on His Course – Committed to His Widespread Preaching Mission

“But He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.’ 44 And He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.”

MacArthur: He came not merely to demonstrate His power over the effects of sin in the body by physical healing and the mind by overcoming demonic influence, but most importantly His power to overcome sin’s eternal consequences. For that to happen required repentance and faith in the gospel preached (cf. **Rom. 10:13-17**). Only by faith in the truth preached could sinners be rescued from Satan’s kingdom of darkness and enter into the kingdom of God

Are you on target with God’s calling on your life?

What distracts you from fulfilling your role in the Great Commission?

Donald Miller: Jesus had not come to be a mere wonder-worker, but to preach the good news of the Kingdom. And the miracles were a part of that good news! Those who saw only the wonders but did not see them as signs that Jesus had come to inaugurate the Kingdom of God, missed the point entirely.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you respond to the teaching of Jesus Christ in a way consistent with His power and authority?
- 2) How important should preaching the Word be in our ministry priorities?
- 3) How can we tell the difference between a situation that involves demonic activity (the unusual case in this age) and one that does not.
- 4) Why did the demons seem to have more insight into the person of Jesus Christ than the Jews to whom He was preaching did?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

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authority, ethical authority, and executive authority, which is power; power over disease, power over demons, power sufficient to set men free from the trammels of false teaching, and from the bondage of evil. Such is the picture of the Lord on that first Sabbath day in Galilee.

Steven Cole: Much could be said about the kingdom, but at bare minimum, it is the place where Jesus is Lord and people are subject to Him. **Leon Morris** sums it up as “God’s rule in action” (*Luke* [IVP/Eerdmans], p. 111). The kingdom of God is both present and yet future. It is present to the extent that people live in submission to God’s authoritative Word. It is future in that the day is coming when Jesus will return and rule with a rod of iron on the throne of David. In His earthly ministry, Jesus always upheld the authority of Scripture and the need for us to obey it (see **Matt. 5:17, 18**).

MacArthur: Four things made the demons tremble. Number one was the **preaching** of the Son of God. . . The second thing that frightens demons is the **purpose** of the Son of God. . . There’s a third thing that terrifies demons, not only the preaching of the Son of God and the purpose of the Son of God, but the **person** of the Son of God (including His **purity**). . . And lastly, demons are terrified by the **power** of the Son of God.

Anyabwile: Dualism is the idea that good and evil are locked in a struggle and the battle is almost equal. But the Christian worldview does not allow any such thinking. There is Jesus -- King of kings and Lord of lords with all authority in heaven and on earth. He always wins! He rules over even the demonic powers!

TEXT: Luke 5:1-11

TITLE: MAKING FISHERS OF MEN – PATHWAY OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

BIG IDEA:

THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP (FORSAKING ALL AND FOLLOWING CHRIST) OFFERS THE PROSPECT OF ABUNDANT MINISTRY FRUIT DESPITE OUR SINFULNESS BECAUSE OF THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

How can we with all of our sinfulness possibly be adequate as ministers of the New Covenant? Here in this fishing expedition we have a valuable object lesson depicting the power and authority of Jesus Christ to take ordinary people and equip them to be successful beyond their wildest dreams in gospel ministry. What is required is that we forsake everything and depend completely and only on Jesus as we follow Him in the path of discipleship.

I. (:1-3) TEACHING LESSON – FEEDING THE MULTITUDES THE WORD OF GOD – SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE OBJECT LESSON

A. (:1a) Logistical Problem – Need a Better Platform for Teaching

“Now it came about that while the multitude were pressing around Him and listening to the word of God,”

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus is teaching on the shore. There are so many people there that they are having a hard time hearing Him. They are getting closer and closer. He knows that that is making it harder and harder for the people that are on the fringes of this multitude. We don't know how many are there...hundreds, maybe. And so He decides [since He doesn't have one of these things] that He is going to get in a boat, go out just a little ways and use the water as His amplification system. If He can get a little distance from them and speak up, more of them will be able to hear Him plainly teach the word of God. But why are they pressing in on Him? Because they want to hear Him. (Again, look at verse 1). They want to hear Him preach and teach the word of God. Jesus is teaching the word of God, and the crowd is responding by pressing in on Him to hear the word of God because they sense the importance of hearing the word of God...of hearing Jesus teach the word of God. They want to hear the word of God.

B. (:1b-2) Recognizing the Resources at Hand

1. (:1b) The Need

“He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret;”

Leon Morris: It measures roughly 13 miles by 7 miles and is situated about 700 feet below sea-level. This is the only place where it is called Gennesaret, the usual name being Galilee (Chinneroth in the Old Testament; Tiberias twice in John).

2. (:2a) The Resources

“and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake;”

3. (:2b) The Opportunity

“but the fishermen had gotten out of them, and were washing their nets.”

Donald Miller: The casting net was circular, and might be as much as nine feet across. It was skillfully cast into the water from the land, or from the shallow water at the edge of the lake. It was weighted with pellets of lead round the circumference. It sank into the sea and surrounded the fishes; it was then drawn through the water as if the top of a bell tent were being drawn to land, and in it the fish were caught. That was the kind of net that Peter and Andrew, and James and John, were handling when Jesus saw them.

C. (:3) Effective Solution

1. Commandeered Simon's Boat

“And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land.”

Divine appointment; Jesus chose this boat because He was going to focus in later on His encounter with Peter in calling him to leave all and Follow Him. Jesus did nothing by accident.

2. Continued the Teaching Lesson

“And He sat down and began teaching the multitudes from the boat.”

II. (:4-7) FISHING LESSON = OBJECT LESSON – JESUS CAN CATCH A LOT OF FISH

A. (:4) Bold Command – Jesus Knows Where the Fish Are

“And when He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, ‘Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.’”

- Giving instructions to professional fisherman
- Going against what experience and human reason would recommend
- Giving opportunity for the embarrassment of public failure

B. (:5) Natural Impossibility – Human Resources are Not the Issue or the Limitation

“And Simon answered and said, ‘Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets.’”

- Natural reluctance
- Respectful submission

Donald Miller: Nighttime was the time to fish, not the heat of the day. Furthermore, they had just fished all night and had taken “*nothing*”! It was useless to make another attempt at that time. Yet Peter had seen Jesus heal, and had just heard him preach. The “authority,” therefore, both of his words and deeds, led Peter to obey his command, even though it ran counter to all his experience in a calling in which he was a master.

C. (:6-7) Supernatural Catch – Fellowship in the Gospel Requires Partnership to Reel in the Huge Catch that Jesus Will Command

“And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break; and they signaled to their partners in the other boat, for them to come and help them. And they came, and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.”

III. (:8-11) DISCIPLESHIP LESSON = APPLICATION OF THE OBJECT LESSON – THE PATHWAY OF OBEDIENT CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP INVOLVES FISHING FOR MEN

A. (:8) Jesus Can Deal With Our Doubts and Fears

“But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, ‘Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’”

J. Ligon Duncan: Now it is an amazing thing, isn't it? There has been nothing in this passage so far said about sin. I don't know, maybe Jesus preached about it in the sermon, but it is not recorded here. There is nothing in this passage about Jesus' holiness or about sin, but immediately in the wake of this miracle Peter is overwhelmed by two things: the greatness of Jesus and the greatness of his own sin. He is brought face to face with the inestimable, the incalculable greatness of Jesus and he is brought face to face with the greatness of his own sin.

Donald Miller: It is significant that Peter's response to Jesus' miraculous dealing with him lay in the moral and spiritual realm. His attention was not riveted on the marvel. The marvel rather revealed that about Jesus' Person which made Peter see his own sinfulness. In this is seen the true meaning of Jesus' miracles. They were signs of the marvel of his Person.

B. (:9-10a) Jesus Will Constantly Amaze Us

“For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.”

Morris: Luke brings out the extraordinary nature of the catch by referring to the astonishment of the fishermen.

C. (:10B) Jesus Keeps Us Focused on the Goal of Fishing for Men

“And Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.’”

D. (:11) Jesus Demands That We Forsake All and Follow Him

“And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.”

They left behind the greatest catch of fish they had ever experienced; it meant nothing in comparison to a life dedicated to serving Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Fishing Tips

Go where the “fish” are.

Use the right “bait.”

Be patient!

It's never out of season to fish for souls.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When has God asked you to do something that you thought was unreasonable or ridiculous or did not make sense to you? How did you respond?
- 2) Why did Peter respond the way he did and ask the Lord to depart from him?
- 3) How many parallels can you draw between fishing and evangelizing?
- 4) What have you “forsaken” in order to wholeheartedly follow Jesus?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The **conditions** on which Jesus can use men in his Kingdom are:

- A willingness to work (vss. 2, 10)
- Obedience to his commands (vs. 5)
- Honesty about one’s own unworthiness and sin (vs. 8)
- A willingness to make whatever sacrifice his service demands (vs. 11)

Thabiti Anyabwile: Peter glimpses the face of God in Jesus Christ, and from that vision he comes down to see into himself. He finds in himself what we all find in ourselves: sin. Because he knows such a holy being as God should not be around a sinful man, Peter cries out, “*Go away from me!*” (v. 8).

Uniquely, here is a holiness that **comes to sinners**. Rather than going away, Jesus says, “*Join me.*” Here is a holiness that uses a confessing sinner in its mission. Here is holiness that not only calls the sinner but **commissions the sinner** to become a fisher of men. Here is holiness so stunningly beautiful it causes a man to leave everything for its sake. It gives the former sinner a new purpose, direction, and call.

J. Ligon Duncan: The call to leave everything and follow Him is the call of Jesus to every disciple...every disciple. Now what leaving everything and following Him looks like is very different for every disciple. For instance, did His call to them to leave everything and follow Him mean that they would never fish again? No, you will find them fishing before you have gotten to the end of the Gospels. But it is a call to recognize that everything else does not equal to Jesus, and that Jesus is greater than everything else; and, therefore, He is worth leaving everything else behind to follow Him.

Bock: details how Jesus confirms the call of four disciples to serve with him. In this passage, **miracle, teaching and discipleship** form a collage that explains mission and who is qualified for it. Jesus performs a nature miracle, but the saying in **Lk 5:10** turns the entire miracle into a picture of mission. Here **event and symbol merge**. The event signifies not only what disciples are called to do but who disciples are as they do it. Simon Peter and Jesus represent different sides of the theology that undergirds the community Jesus is forging. Simon, for his part, knows that he is a sinner who is not worthy to experience the benefits of God's power and presence. There is no presumption that God owes him anything. Jesus, exemplifying God's grace, makes it

clear that such a humble approach to God is exactly what God will use. Jesus calls these fishermen to fish for people rather than for finned water-dwellers. Luke presents these two truths quite dramatically and vividly.

Spurgeon - Morning and Evening - We learn from this narrative, the necessity of human agency. The draught of fishes was miraculous, yet neither the fisherman nor his boat, nor his fishing tackle were ignored; but all were used to take the fishes. So in the saving of souls, God worketh by means; and while the present economy of grace shall stand, God will be pleased by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. When God worketh without instruments, doubtless he is glorified; but he hath himself selected the plan of instrumentality as being that by which he is most magnified in the earth. Means of themselves are utterly unavailing. "*Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing.*" What was the reason of this? Were they not fishermen plying their special calling? Verily, they were no raw hands; they understood the work. Had they gone about the toil unskilfully? No. Had they lacked industry? No, they had toiled. Had they lacked perseverance? No, they had toiled all the night. Was there a deficiency of fish in the sea? Certainly not, for as soon as the Master came, they swam to the net in shoals. What, then, is the reason? Is it because there is no power in the means of themselves apart from the presence of Jesus? "*Without him we can do nothing.*" But with Christ we can do all things. Christ's presence confers success. Jesus sat in Peter's boat, and his will, by a mysterious influence, drew the fish to the net. When Jesus is lifted up in his Church, his presence is the Church's power-the shout of a king is in the midst of her. "*I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*" Let us go out this morning on our work of soul fishing, looking up in faith, and around us in solemn anxiety. Let us toil till night comes, and we shall not labour in vain, for he who bids us let down the net, will fill it with fishes.

TEXT: Luke 5:12-26

TITLE: ONLY JESUS CAN DO THIS – 2 LEVELS OF HEALING

BIG IDEA:

THE MIRACLES OF PHYSICAL HEALING AUTHENTICATE THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS TO CLEANSE FROM SIN AND TO FORGIVE SINS

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus constantly used miracles of healing in the physical realm to authenticate His Person and to point to the deeper spiritual level of healing that only He can accomplish. We need to sense our desperate brokenness in terms of being dead in our sins and trespasses so that we can identify with this hopeless leper and this helpless paralytic. The religious leaders of the day were present to observe the teaching and miracles of Jesus – but only for the purpose of finding fault and trying to build a case against him. The multitudes responded in amazement and general fear and reverence, but fell short of coming to Jesus to receive forgiveness for their own sins. We need to humbly receive from Jesus that which only He can provide = cleansing from sin and the forgiveness of our sins so that we might be restored to full spiritual health and a right relationship with God.

THE MIRACLES OF PHYSICAL HEALING AUTHENTICATE THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS TO CLEANSE FROM SIN AND TO FORGIVE SINS

I. (:12-16) HEALING THE LEPER – JESUS CAN MAKE THE UNCLEAN CLEAN

A. (:12) MINISTRY PETITION

1. Dire Need

“And it came about that while He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man full of leprosy;”

Donald Miller: To the Jews, leprosy was more than a disease. It was a sign of moral uncleanness. It was a stroke of divine judgment for disobedience to the divine will (**Num. 12; II Kings 5:19-27; II Chron. 26:16-21**). Consequently, lepers were cast out of the congregation, not only as a hygienic measure but as a sign that they were cut off from fellowship with the people of God. They lived miserable existences, depending on alms of passers-by or on scavenging.

Bruce Hurt: Luke could just have said a **leper** approached and we would have understood. But he adds an interesting detail telling us the man is covered (*pleres*) which means full of and speaks of the totality of this man's body which was "wholly filled" with the disease and with no skin surface lacking the effect of the disease! One can just picture the sight! . . . It may have been the worst case of leprosy in all of Palestine, but this leper would soon find that Jesus' power is enough for even the worst case!

2. Desperate Plea

“and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, ‘Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’”

Mattoon - This word "**clean**" is a strong word in the Greek. It is the word *katharizo* which forms our English words "cauterize, Kathy, Katherine, Katie, Katelyn." *Katharizo* has the idea of purity. It means "to make clean, to purify physically and also spiritually." He had absolute confidence in the ability of Jesus Christ to cure him physically and also spiritually.

B. (:13-14) MINISTRY PERFORMANCE

1. (:13) The Miracle of Cleansing the Leper

"And He stretched out His hand, and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him."

Anyabwile: Jesus possesses a holiness that is not defiled by touching the unclean, but with a touch he cleanses the unclean. Jesus possesses a holiness that produces what the law requires but cannot produce.

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus can do what no priest can do. A priest would have been instantaneously declared unclean by this action. Not Jesus. And a priest cannot cleanse a man. It's interesting. You go to **Leviticus 13-14**, what's to happen? If a leper is healed of his leprosy, then he goes to the priest. The priest examines him to see if he has been healed of his leprosy, and then the priest declares him to be ceremonially clean, he baptizes him, and then he welcomes him back into the community. But in **Leviticus 13-14**, guess what the priest can't do? The priest can't make him clean! The priest can declare that he has been clean, but he can't make him clean, except ceremonially. Jesus, on the other hand, can make this man clean. In drawing attention to cleanness and uncleanness, Jesus is drawing attention to the forgiveness of sins.

Wiersbe: By the grace and power of God, this man was changed! In fact, Jesus even touched the man, which meant that He became unclean Himself. This is a beautiful picture of what Jesus has done for lost sinners: He became sin for us that we might be made clean (**2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24**). Jesus is not only **willing** to save (**1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9**), but He is also **able** to save (**Heb. 7:25**); and He can do it **now** (**2 Cor. 6:2**).

2. (:14) The Religious Validation of the Cleansing

"And He ordered him to tell no one, 'But go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.'"

Leon Morris: The words probably point to a safeguard for the healed man. People would know that he had been a leper and would be slow to accept him. But if a priest had inspected him and accepted his offering, there was proof that he had been healed. It would also show that Jesus upheld the law. And it would be a testimony to people in general that the power of God was at work in Jesus.

C. (:15-16) MINISTRY PRESSURE

1. (:15) The Pressure of His Growing Reputation

"But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and great multitudes were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses."

2. (:16) The Pressure Requiring Intense Private Prayers

"But He Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray."

Spurgeon - The tense of the verb implies that he often did this; it was his habit to withdraw himself for private prayer even in his busiest times, and when he could occupy every minute with great advantage to the people. Thus he gathered new strength from above for each day's work; and when there was most to be done, then he took most time to pray. It is an evil economy that tries to take time for other things that should be spent in prayer, for the shortening of prayer will be the weakening of our power.

Bruce Hurt: Bill Gaither wrote the words of the famous song *He touched Me* in 1963 being inspired by Jesus' touch healing the leper in Mark's Gospel.

He touched Me

Shackled by a heavy burden
'Neath a load of guilt and shame
Then the hand of Jesus touched me
And now I am no longer the same.

He touched, oh, he touched me
And oh the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened, and now I know
He touched me, and made me whole.

Since I've met this blessed savior
Since he's cleansed and made me whole
I will never cease to praise him
I'll shout it while eternity rolls.

Oh! he touched me! Oh! he touched me!
He touched me! And Oh the joy that floods my soul!
Something happened, and now I know
He touched me, and made me whole.

II. (:17-26) HEALING THE PARALYZED MAN – JESUS CAN FORGIVE SINS

A. (:17) The Circumstances Surrounding the Miraculous Healing

1. Authority of Jesus Evident In His Normal Ministry Activity of Teaching

“And it came about one day that He was teaching;”

2. Antagonistic Observers

“and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem;”

3. Access to the Power of the Lord

“and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.”

Donald Miller: The story of the paralytic comes last in this section of the Gospel, as the climactic revelation of Jesus' authority and power. He has *“authority on earth to forgive sins”* (vs. 24). It is this claim which marks the beginning of open hostility to Jesus.

B. (:18-19) The Persistence and Creativity of Seeking Healing From Jesus

1. (:18) The Goal

“And behold, some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in, and to set him down in front of Him.”

2. (:19) The Game Plan

“And not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, right in the center, in front of Jesus.”

C. (:20) The Spiritual Reality of Forgiving Sins By Grace Through Faith

“And seeing their faith, He said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’”

All of them gave evidence of faith – the 4 friends as well as the paralytic

D. (:21-26) The Physical Object Lesson of Healing the Paralytic

1. (:21) Blind Reasoning

“And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, ‘Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?’”

2. (:22-23) Perceptive Probing

“But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, Your sins have been forgiven you, or to say, Rise and walk?’”

3. (:24-25) Purposeful Miracle

a. (:24) Instructive Command

“But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,— He said to the paralytic—‘I say to you, rise, and take up your stretcher and go home.’”

b. (:25) Immediate and Complete Healing

“And at once he rose up before them, and took up what he had been lying on, and went home, glorifying God.”

4. (:26) Shallow Response

“And they were all seized with astonishment and began glorifying God; and they were filled with fear, saying, ‘We have seen remarkable things today.’”

Climax of this section – the reaction of the people to the demonstration by Jesus of His power and authority that extended even to the forgiveness of sins

Anyabwile: Look at the people’s reaction in **verse 26**. Do you know what I find extraordinary? They watched Jesus forgive a man’s sin. Then they watched Jesus prove he could forgive sin by healing a paralyzed man. But not one of them then said to Jesus, “Since you can forgive sins, please forgive my sins, too!” They experienced general amazement and gave general praise to God, but they did not worship Jesus or seek forgiveness for their sin. That is amazing and tragic. Having eyes, they do not see. Having ears, they do not hear.

J. Ligon Duncan: at that point the Pharisees should have been on their faces before Jesus, saying, “The One that Isaiah prophesied about in **Isaiah 35**, the One who, when He comes, the blind are going to see and the lame are going to leap for joy, and the deaf are going to hear — He's here! We've just seen Him make a lame man walk, and that man leapt for joy going home, glorifying God! And we've just seen a leper healed just like Isaiah says in Isaiah 35. This is the One we've been waiting for!” But they didn't. Why? Because unlike that leper, and unlike that lame man, they did not see their need. They didn't see how much they needed Jesus. They didn't see how much they needed the forgiveness of sins. And so they stood there in judgment over Jesus.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of groups of people do Christians today view as “*unclean*” and try to keep their distance from instead of ministering the gospel to them with compassion and love?
- 2) Why is Jesus not always *willing* to heal someone?
- 3) What type of *intercessors* are we for our friends in terms of bringing them to Jesus for healing and restoration?
- 4) What *remarkable things* have you seen God do in your life?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: For the first time in this Gospel, Jesus calls himself “*the Son of man*” (**vs. 24**). This expression is first found in Daniel, where “*one like a son of man*” is given dominion over all peoples in an everlasting kingdom “*that shall not be destroyed*” (**7:13-14**). In the Intertestamental period this figure had been emphasized and given a Messianic interpretation. The expression, however, did not have the political overtones of the term “Messiah,” from which Jesus shrank. It seemed to be the Messianic designation least likely to provoke his followers to political revolution against Rome. It also furnished Jesus with an indirect title of Messiahship, which could well arouse spiritual curiosity and thus lead men further into an understanding of him.

J. Ligon Duncan: there are two stories here, that the stories are related, and that they're told together for a specific reason. You know that they're told for a specific reason because the authors of the Gospels never tell you anything without having an agenda. They are concerned to tell you the truth as it happened, but they're also concerned to tell you the truth as it happened for a reason. They are teaching you things about God, about the gospel, and about the Christian life constantly, even as they recount the stories of Jesus. And so it's always generally true. But it's specifically true of this passage, and you can tell by looking at **verses 14 and 24**. Twice in this passage we are told why Jesus did what He did, and it is those two verses, **14 and 24**, that tip you off to the main point of this passage. So as we look at these two stories, we're not looking at two unrelated stories, we're looking at two stories that are part of emphasizing the same point. . .

At the heart of this passage is Jesus' forgiveness of sins. He makes this very clear in **verse 24**. And so this passage raises for us the question "Who can fix what we have messed up by our sin?"

This passage first of all points to the fact that the core of Jesus' ministry is the forgiveness of sins. This passage points to the centrality of our need for the forgiveness of sin.

Secondly, this passage shows us that only Jesus has the power and authority to forgive sins.

And, third, this passage shows us that Jesus has the power and authority to forgive sins because He is the Son of Man, the Messiah, God in the flesh, the Second Person of the Trinity. Jesus of Nazareth is not just a great moral prophet. He is the Son of the living God sent into this world to be the Savior of His people's sins. And those are three things we need desperately to learn today.

Kent Hughes: Along with their love and conviction, **the four friends had great faith**. There is no way they would have gone to such outrageous extremes if they did not believe that Jesus could and would heal their friend. They all possessed faith's dynamic certitude (cf. **Hebrews 11:1**). A wavering faith would have opted out when they began digging up the roof, if not sooner. "Ah, man, this is embarrassing. You'll have to finish without me." Determined to bring their friend to Jesus, confident he would help the invalid, the faithful quartet worked on.

Their faith was persistent. Once they had their friend on the stretcher, there was no stopping them. None of them said, "The crowd is too big. I guess this isn't the Lord's will." Instead, they started climbing! Jesus lauded such action when he said, "*From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it*" (**Matthew 11:12**). When the four tore through the roof, they took the kingdom with determined force. Such graced violence is the key for the church making the impact it should.

Their faith was creative. Some who were standing idly by and saw the four's success probably thought, "Why didn't I think of that?" Perhaps they did not love as much or believe as passionately as the four friends. A faith that truly believes Christ is the only way will be inventive. This is the genius behind the Quito radio station HCJB, which sits directly on the equator at 10,000 feet and broadcasts the gospel to virtually the entire globe seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. The almost legendary creativity of that ministry springs from the passionate, driving conviction that Christ is the only hope for the world. If you really love your neighbors, you will find a way to bring them to the love of Christ.

Their faith was sacrificial. Someone would have to repair the roof, and that would require time, labor, and expense. A faith that brings Christ's power to the world must always be willing to pay the price.

Lenski: Nothing is said about the effect produced on the Pharisees and scribes. This silence on the part of all the evangelists is significant. They had come to spy upon Jesus, to find something fatal against him, and thought that they had caught him in nothing less than blasphemy. Jesus gave them something to see and to hear, something that made the thought of blasphemy vanish completely, something that should have turned their hearts from hatred to faith in Jesus and to praise of God. But their obduracy continued in spite of all that Jesus did to break it. It even grew more pronounced because they had been frustrated in their evil intention.

TEXT: Luke 5:27-39

TITLE: WHAT'S RADICALLY DIFFERENT ABOUT JESUS?

BIG IDEA:

CRITICS OF CHRISTIANITY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE RADICAL MISSION AND THE NEW MOVEMENT COMMANDED BY JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

Leaders who sit on top of any hierarchical system with its perks and advantages oppose any changes that would threaten to unseat them and puncture the bubble of their supremacy. So it was with the Pharisees and scribes at the time of Christ. In contrast to those like Levi who genuinely repented at the preaching of Jesus and responded to His call to Forsake all and Follow Him in discipleship, the Jewish rulers remained sideline observers who could only criticize what they didn't understand. With the answers to two complaining questions and the lessons from two very short parables, Jesus puts His finger on what is so radically different about His Mission and His Movement.

CRITICS OF CHRISTIANITY FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE RADICAL MISSION AND THE NEW MOVEMENT COMMANDED BY JESUS

(:27-28) TRANSITION – RADICAL MISSION = CALL OF A TAX COLLECTOR TO FOLLOW JESUS

“And after that He went out, and noticed a tax-gatherer named Levi, sitting in the tax office, and He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ 28 And he left everything behind, and rose and began to follow Him.”

Links to the previous section – call to Forsake all and Follow Jesus

Who “gets it” are the sinners who repent and forsake all to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in genuine discipleship.

The Jews hated these tax collectors who operated on the basis of extortion to extract as much money as they could from their fellow countrymen; viewed on the same level as prostitutes

Geldenhuis: Along the main road between Acre, on the Mediterranean Sea, and Damascus, in the north, that went past Capernaum, Levi was sitting in his custom-house to collect for Herod the customs on the goods transported by that road.

J. Ligon Duncan: Matthew is a part of a despised segment of society, because his fellow Jews would have considered him both a traitor and an extortioner. You see, he was a traitor because the Jewish people would have viewed tax collectors as being in cahoots with their Roman oppressors, because it was the Roman emperor who appointed petty kings in the provinces in the outlying part of the Roman world to collect taxes, and then those petty kings would have appointed others to collect taxes. And of the taxes that Matthew was collecting, some of them would go back to the petty king, and then some of them would go back to Rome. And so ultimately the Jewish people viewed people that were participating in the tax collector profession

to be traitors. They were serving the interests of the very people who are oppressing them. And they viewed them as extortioners. . .

This is not something that Jesus just asked the twelve apostles to do. It's something that He asks every disciple to do. He is saying, "There is no one, there is nothing in this world that equals Me. There is no one, there is nothing in this world that I will allow to be a competitor with Me. I will be your Lord. And if you're going to follow Me, you're going to have to leave everything, and I'm going to have to be your Lord."

Leon Morris: Matthew must have been the richest of the apostles. We should not miss the quiet heroism involved in this. If following Jesus had not worked out for the fishermen, they could have returned to their trade without difficulty. But when Levi walked out of his job he was through. They would surely never take back a man who had simply abandoned his tax office. His following of Jesus was a final commitment.

(:29) – SETTING – RECEPTION AT THE HOUSE OF LEVI

"And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax-gatherers and other people who were reclining at the table with them."

Levi's circle of acquaintances and co-workers were not respected by the Jewish religious leaders; Levi had the resources to throw a very lavish feast

Our response to finding Jesus should be to joyfully celebrate and be enthusiastic about introducing our circle of people to this Jesus

We find the critics of Jesus, probably not invited to the feast, but onlooker who were dumbstruck by what they saw and how it conflicted with their Messianic expectations based on their misinterpretation of the Old Testament.

I. (:30-35) TWO COMPLAINING QUESTIONS – THE CONDUCT OF JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES MAKES SENSE WHEN YOU UNDERSTAND THEIR RADICAL MISSION

These are essentially Gripes – charges that the religious leaders are leveling against Jesus – All about external conduct because that was their measure for righteousness – appearances were everything

A. (:30-32) Question #1 – Why Associate with Sinners?

1. (:30) Complaining Question – Regarding Association with Sinners

"And the Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with the tax-gatherers and sinners?'"

This question is actually directed to the disciples, but Jesus answers them

2. (:31-32) Corrective Answer – The Mission is Directed to Sinners

"And Jesus answered and said to them, 'It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'"

B. (:33-35) Question #2 – Why Not Fast?

1. (:33) Complaining Question – Regarding the Appropriateness of Fasting

“And they said to Him, ‘The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers; the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same; but Yours eat and drink.’”

2. (:34-35) Corrective Answer – The Mission Changes Based on Whether Jesus is Physically Present or Absent

“And Jesus said to them, ‘You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.’”

First reference to the coming death of the Messiah, followed by His resurrection and ascension

Donald Miller: The inappropriateness of fasting when Jesus was here, therefore, does not rule out fasting entirely. When Jesus was here, the Kingdom was present. But in the period between his death and his Final Coming, the Kingdom, though present, is not here in its fullness. Fasting, therefore, may again be appropriate in the life of the Church as a sign of desire for the final coming of the kingdom, and as a spontaneous self-discipline undertaken to keep the joy of the Kingdom bright, and to make it possible to share one’s goods with the needy (see **Isa. 58:1-12**).

II. (:36-39) TWO INSIGHTFUL PARABLES – THE NEW MOVEMENT USHERED IN BY JESUS:

- **BREAKS WITH TRADITION AND**
- **SURPASSES THE OLD**

A. (:36) Parable #1 – The New Movement Breaks with Tradition

“And He was also telling them a parable: ‘No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.’”

B. (:37-39) Parable #2 – The New Movement Surpasses the Old

1. (:37-38) New Movement is Different

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins, and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.”

2. (:39) New Movement is Resisted by Traditionalists

“And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’”

Leon Morris: Both this and the previous illustration drive home the point that Jesus is not simply patching up Judaism; He is teaching something radically new.

Geldenhuis: New wine which has the power to ferment cannot be put into old, stretched leathern bottles, for the fermenting wine will cause the bottles to burst and thus the wine as well as the bottles will be lost. But when the wine is put into new, elastic wineskins, both will be preserved. In like manner it is fatal to attempt to preserve the vigorous, new form of divine worship, which Jesus brought, in the old, obsolete forms of religion of the disciples of John and of the Pharisees.

Jesus' new way of life also demands new forms of worshipping God. There must be no mixing of the old with the new. There is indeed the closest connection between the Old and the New Dispensations, but only in the sense of preparation and fulfilment, shadow and reality. And now that Jesus has come as the Fulfiller of the promises of the Old Covenant, everything has been made new and no room is left for the old ceremonial, shadowy forms of divine worship. The new spirit existing in the religion of the New Covenant demands new forms of expression. So Jesus does not allow His disciples to act like those of John and of the Pharisees.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How enthusiastic are we about inviting our circle of acquaintances to get to know Jesus?
- 2) Are we messed up in our views regarding separation from sin so that we actually have very little contact with the very people to whom we are called to witness?
- 3) Where do we struggle with letting go of traditions and embracing the new freedoms that we have in Jesus Christ?
- 4) Are we radically following Jesus as a new creation in Christ or are we trying to patch Jesus into our old way of living?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: In this section [5:27 – 6:11], Luke selects materials which bring out the opposition of the religious leaders to Jesus. . . no compromise between them is possible. Jesus' "new wine" cannot be poured into the "old wineskins" (5:37). There is something revolutionary here which is too vital to be contained in the rigid forms which Judaism had produced.

It is well to note that the major point at issue is the meaning of the Old Testament. The "newness" of Jesus is not wholly new in the sense that it has no roots. It is rather a "new" way of looking at the Old Testament. The Pharisees and their scribes were doctors of the Law, experts in the Scriptures. Jesus' sharpest challenge lay in his insistence that they did not understand the Scriptures, and had missed the will of God revealed there.

Three issues dear to the hearts of the Pharisees are brought into the open – eating with the morally unworthy, fasting, and Sabbath observance.

Thabiti Anyabwile: We cannot have the gospel with just a little touch of law and legalism. We cannot have the law with just a few ounces of "Jesus" poured in. The gospel is an entirely different garment – a complete garment in itself. The gospel requires the fresh wineskins of New Testament Christianity for the fresh wine it brings. Those who drink the old religion of self-righteousness will not will not enjoy the new wine of the gospel (v. 39). There's something about legalism and self-righteousness that is natural to us. We are tempted to cling to it and to reject the new vintage that is altogether different. . .

Let me offer a simple lesson on applying Scripture. There are *necessary* applications and *possible* applications. *Necessary* applications apply to all. They follow directly from the text of the Bible. For example, the command “*Do not covet*” (**Exod 20:17**) applies to us all and forbids any type of envy we can conceive. How we deep that command may vary. One person may say, “I will not watch commercials in order not to covet.” That’s great for you. That’s one *possible* application, but it’s not *necessary* for everyone to observe. The Pharisees take the *possible* and make it *necessary* for all people all the time. By doing so they effectively destroy Christian joy and Christian freedom.

J. Ligon Duncan: A man named Ray Miller wrote some amazing lyrics in the early 1920's, and a woman named Bev Shea took those lyrics and put them on her son's piano because she wanted her son to read those words and think about them with regard to his commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Her son was a very talented composer and had been offered a lucrative contract by NBC to come and write music for the National Broadcasting Corporation. And he sat down at his piano that morning and saw the words, and he was deeply moved by those words, and he wrote a tune to go with those words. The words were:

“I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold.
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands;
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand,
Than to be the king of a vast domain,
Or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.
“I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause,
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause.
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame,
I'd rather be true to His holy name.”

You know his name: **George Beverly Shea**. And he traveled around with **Billy Graham** for many years and wrote many, many songs that have encouraged the saints over his time. But he had the choice — follow his dreams into a lucrative career, or follow Jesus.

Keathley: The problem was that the Pharisees liked the old system. They were at the top and didn't want it to change. They had the power, prestige, praise, etc. It sort of reminds me of our

government. Everyone in America knows things are getting worse and worse with government getting bigger and bigger. But those at the top don't want to change it. They are getting rich off of the system. The Pharisees had written the Talmud and the Mishnah which were huge books filled with rules and their own interpretations of the scriptures. They gave more emphasis to their writings than the Word of God. Why isn't it possible to make repairs on the old system of Judaism? Time and again, Israel was disciplined and brought back to the land and given another chance. But not this time. **Christianity is not a patch for Judaism.** It is the replacement of Pharisaic Judaism because Pharisaic Judaism cannot contain Christianity. In what way? There was no place for Gentiles, Samaritans, blind, sick, lame, etc in Pharisaic Judaism. The law was no match for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I say Pharisaic Judaism because Christ was the fulfillment of Judaism, but it had been twisted into something evil. This is not teaching a permanent replacement of Israel by the church as the Reformed theologians teach. Remember that the parables say something about a subject but not everything about the subject. We have to look elsewhere to see what the future holds for the Jews.

TEXT: Luke 6:1-11

TITLE: TWO SABBATH CONTROVERSIES

BIG IDEA:

COMPASSION FOR HUMAN NEED TRUMPS LEGALISTIC CONFORMITY

BECAUSE:

- **JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH**
- **JESUS PUTS A PRIORITY ON DOING GOOD**

INTRODUCTION:

Self-righteousness always blinds us to the true inner demands of God's moral standards. We can be so concerned with conformity to some legalistic standard of do's and don'ts that may or may not have any biblical validity that we lose touch with God's heart of compassion to meet the needs of people. Instead of love and mercy and compassion and justice, we pride ourselves on some lesser code of conduct that does not require godly motivation and God-glorifying goals. So the Pharisees interacted with Jesus on these two occasions to try to catch him in some type of sabbath-breaking scandal. Their intention was only to find fault. Jesus exposed their hard hearts and asked them probing questions that left them speechless.

William Bradley: The strictness with which the Sabbath was observed was a point of pride with the Pharisees. The Sabbath was considered the most valuable treasure of Judaism, next to the Temple. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was related both to creation (**Gen. 2:2-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:12-17**) and redemption (**Deut. 5:12-15**). It was a weekly reminder that the God who had created the universe was present with them, and that he had given them rest by redeeming them from their bondage in Egypt. . . The **purpose** of the Sabbath law was glory to God. The means was cessation from work. The Pharisees, however, had forgotten the purpose, and had turned the means into an end. **To do no work** was to keep the Sabbath! The glory of God was forgotten. Hence, the Sabbath had become a day of prohibitions, many of which were laughable. Work had to be defined. It was divided into thirty-nine categories, each of which was broken down further. To keep the Sabbath rightly, therefore, one had to remember dozens of specific rules about things not to do!

I. (:1-5) SABBATH CONTROVERSY #1 – DEALING WITH HUNGER

A. (:1) Fundamental Human Need -- Hunger

“Now it came about that on a certain Sabbath He was passing through some grain fields; and His disciples were picking and eating the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands.”

Pharisees were always spying on Jesus and His disciples – on the lookout for some way to accuse them.

Morris: The Pharisees would find in the plucking of the ears a breach of the regulation which forbade reaping and in the rubbing in their hands that which prohibited threshing. Throwing away the husks probably represented winnowing, while eating showed that they had prepared food. Four distinct breaches of the sabbath in one mouthful!

B. (:2-4) Fundamental Difference in Perspective – Legalistic Conformity vs. Showing Compassion

1. (:2) Legalistic Complaint – Legalistic Conformity – Leading to Finding Fault

“But some of the Pharisees said, ‘Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?’”

2. (:3-4) Historical Biblical Precedent – Compassion for Human Need

“And Jesus answering them said, ‘Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?’”

Morris: David’s action was technically a breach of the law, for only the priests should eat this bread (**Lv. 24:9**). But the need of his band overrode the legal nicety and no one blamed him. Human need must not be subjected to barren legalism.

Jesus is present as one who is greater than David – in fact the Messiah himself – so the one who could supremely dictate what would glorify God on the Sabbath day

Lenski: Jesus proves by David’s own example that even the divine ceremonial law was not intended to be absolute in its application. The rabbinical refinements are left entirely behind as being unworthy of notice. God cares more for the proper spiritual condition of the heart than for the outward observance of his own ceremonial regulations. The argument is thus overwhelming. David’s hunger sets aside even a divine regulation; shall not the hunger of the disciples set aside mere rabbinical notions that lack all binding force to begin with?

C. (:5) Fundamental Principle – Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

“And He was saying to them, ‘The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.’”

Anyabwile: He can only rule the Sabbath if, in fact, he owns it. He can only own it if he is the one who made it and gave it. . . a powerful statement from Jesus’s own mouth that he is God. The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath, not servant to it, and he is guiltless before it. . . Should we serve the law or serve the Son? Oh beloved, serve the Son and find rest for your souls.

Lenski: The idea that “*lord of the Sabbath*” means that he is so superior to the Sabbath that he can do what he pleases with the Sabbath . . . is just about the opposite of what Jesus means. Jesus was under the law (**Gal. 4:4**) to fulfill it for us, which included the ceremonial law and thus also the Sabbath law. . . The Sabbath desecrations with which the Jews charged him were contradictions only of the man-made Pharisaical regulations that were contrary to the divine law. But in the Son of man and in his fulfillment the whole ceremonial law would attain its divinely intended purpose and would thus eventually fall away as being no longer needed. This would come about with the death and the resurrection of the Son of man. The new covenant without ceremonies would then supersede the old with its ceremonies. Thus the Jewish Sabbath and all the sacrifices plus even the Temple would disappear and be abrogated. It is, however, unwarranted to think that Jesus was already abrogating the Jewish Sabbath, Temple, etc. The Christian Sunday still lay in the future.

Donald Miller: By claiming Lordship over the Sabbath, therefore, Jesus was declaring that the Messianic Age had come. God is now present in him! The “*rest*” which God had promised was

the redemption which Jesus had brought! God had ceased from his work of creation, but he was active in his work of redemption, even on the Sabbath. . . Jesus was not setting aside the Sabbath law. He was rather fulfilling it.

II. (:6-11) SABBATH CONTROVERSY #2 – DEALING WITH PHYSICAL HANDICAP

A. (:6) Fundamental Human Need – Physical Handicap

“And it came about on another Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.”

Customary practice of Jesus was to observe the Sabbath in a context of corporate worship while pursuing His primary ministry activity of teaching

B. (:7-8) Fundamental Difference in Perspective – Legalistic Conformity vs. Showing Compassion

1. (:7) Legalistic Concern – Legalistic Conformity -- Leading to Finding Fault

“And the scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely, to see if He healed on the Sabbath, in order that they might find reason to accuse Him.”

Geldenhuys: It was the recognized opinion of the Jews at that time that only in a case of deadly peril could a sick person be treated medically on the Sabbath.

2. (:8) Aggressive Confrontation – Compassion for Human Need

“But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Rise and come forward!’ And he rose and came forward.”

C. (:9) Fundamental Principle – Jesus Puts a Priority on Doing Good

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or to do harm, to save a life, or to destroy it?’”

D. (:10-11) Fundamental Difference in Action – Healing vs. Malice

1. (:10) Public Miracle of Healing on the Part of Jesus

“And after looking around at them all, He said to him, ‘Stretch out your hand!’ And he did so; and his hand was restored.”

2. (:11) Private Scheming to Attack Jesus on the Part of the Scribes and Pharisees

“But they themselves were filled with rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.”

Geldenhuys: Instead of seeing in His revelation of divine power the genuineness of His claims and believing in Him, His persecutors now became more fanatical than ever in their determination to compass His death (cf. **Mark iii.6**).

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have we made our religious rules more important than Jesus Himself or more important than the well-being of others?
- 2) Where do you see legalism in the church?
- 3) How did the predisposition of the Pharisees blind them to any objective evaluation of the claims of Christ? How do we see a similar lack of objectivity in political attacks in our American context of civil government?
- 4) How does our view of God influence our perspective towards the commandments He issues?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Warren Wiersbe: The sanctity of the seventh day was a distinctive part of the Jewish faith. God gave Israel the Sabbath law at Sinai (**Neh. 9:13-14**) and made it a sign between Him and the nation (**Ex. 20:8-11; 31:12-17**). The word Sabbath means "rest" and is linked with God's cessation of work after the six days of Creation (**Ge 2:2-3**). Some of the rabbis taught that Messiah could not come until Israel had perfectly kept the Sabbath, so obeying this law was very important both personally and nationally.

To call **Sunday "the Sabbath"** is to confuse the first day and the seventh day and what each signifies.

The **Sabbath** is a reminder of the completion of "the old Creation," while the **Lord's Day** is a reminder of our Lord's finished work in "the new Creation" (**2 Cor. 5:21; Eph 2:10; Eph 4:24**).

The **Sabbath** speaks of rest after work and relates to the Law, while the **Lord's Day** speaks of rest before work and relates to grace.

The **Lord's Day** commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit and the "birthday" of the church (**Acts 2**).

The early church met on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2**). However, some Jewish believers kept the Sabbath, and this sometimes led to division. Paul addressed this problem in **Romans 14:1-15:13** where he gave principles to promote both liberty and unity in the church. But Paul always made it clear that observing special days had nothing to do with salvation (**Gal. 4:1-11; Col. 2:8-17**).

We are not saved from sin by faith in Christ plus keeping the Sabbath. We are saved by faith in Christ alone.

By their strict and oppressive rules, the Pharisees and scribes had turned the Sabbath Day into a burden instead of the blessing God meant it to be, and Jesus challenged both their doctrine and their authority. He had announced a new "Year of Jubilee" (**Luke 4:19**), and now He would declare a new Sabbath. He had already healed a lame man on the Sabbath, and the religious leaders had determined to kill Him (**John 5:18; also John 5:16**). Now He was to violate their Sabbath laws on two more occasions.

MacArthur: The **Talmud devotes twenty-four chapters to Sabbath regulations**, describing in painfully exhaustive detail what was and was not permitted to be done. The result was a ridiculously complex system of external behavior restraints—so much so that one rabbi spent two and a half years studying just one of the twenty-four chapters! For example, traveling more than 3,000 feet from home was forbidden. But if one had placed food at the 3,000 foot point before the Sabbath, that point would then be considered a home, since there was food there, and allow another 3,000 feet of travel. Similarly, a piece of wood or a rope placed across the end of a narrow street or alley constituted a doorway. That could then be considered the front door of one’s house, and permit the 3,000 feet of travel to begin there. There were also regulations about carrying items. Something lifted up in a public place could only be set down in a private place, and vice versa. An object tossed into the air could be caught with the same hand, but if it was caught with the other hand, it would be a Sabbath violation. If a person had reached out to pick up food when the Sabbath began, the food had to be dropped; to bring the arm back while holding the food would be to carry a burden on the Sabbath. It was forbidden to carry anything heavier than a dried fig (though something weighing half as much could be carried two times). A tailor could not carry his needle, a scribe his pen, or a student his books. Only enough ink to write two letters (of the alphabet) could be carried. A letter could not be sent, not even with a non-Jew. Clothes could not be examined or shaken out before being put on because an insect might be killed in the process, which would be work. No fire could be lit, or put out. Cold water could be poured into warm water, but not warm into cold. An egg could not be cooked, not even by placing it in hot sand during the summer. Nothing could be sold or bought. Bathing was forbidden, lest water be spilled on the floor and wash it. Moving a chair was not allowed, since it might make a rut in a dirt floor, which was too much like plowing. Women were forbidden to look in a mirror, since if they saw a white hair, they might be tempted to pull it out. Other forbidden things included sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, grinding, kneading, baking, shearing, washing, beating, dyeing, or spinning wool, tying or untying a knot, catching, killing, or skinning a deer, salting its meat, or preparing its skin....It was to people crushed by the unbearable burden (**Matt. 23:4; Luke 11:46; Acts 15:10**) of manmade, legalistic regulations that the Lord Jesus Christ said, *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”* (**Matt. 11:28-30**).

Steven Cole: So what is legalism? Essentially, it is an attitude of pride in which I congratulate myself for keeping certain standards and condemn those who do not keep them. Usually the legalist thinks that his conformity to these rules makes him acceptable to God, either for salvation or sanctification. Invariably, these standards are not the great commandments of the Bible, such as loving God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. Most often they are external things which the legalist is able to keep (see Mt 23:23-28).

The legalist judges spirituality by external conformity to certain rules. “Do you keep the Sabbath as we have defined it? Very well.” It doesn’t matter whether your heart is full of pride or lust or greed. What matters is that you keep the Sabbath rules. Legalists ignore motives and inner righteousness. What matters to them is outward conformity. God hates that sort of thing, because it stems from the flesh (**Is 1:11-14**). God is concerned that we please Him from our hearts.

What about this matter of the Sabbath? Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath? Are we required to observe it as the Jews observed Saturday? If not, does it apply in any way to us? After all, it is

one of the Ten Commandments, and all of the others apply to us! . . . I think that in reacting against legalism concerning the Lord's Day, we've thrown the baby out with the bath water. The principle of setting one day in seven apart for worship and rest is a gift that God has given to the human race for our benefit. "The Sabbath was made for man." If we treat every day the same, except that on Sunday we attend a church service, we're missing the blessing God intended by giving us the Sabbath commandment. We should set apart the Lord's Day as a special day for worship and for rest from our normal duties. If we do not, we will suffer for it.

Clearly, we are not under the rigorous regulations which applied to the Jewish nation, where God demanded that a man caught gathering sticks on the Sabbath should be stoned (**Nu 15:32-36**). But neither are we free to shrug off the Sabbath principle completely. Some say that Christ is to be Lord of all our time, so we don't have to set apart one day a week to Him. That's like saying that since all our money belongs to God, we don't have to give regularly. God knows how we're made and that we need one day a week to worship, to rest, and to reflect on spiritual matters. There is a biblical basis for arguing that that day should be Sunday.

So even though we are not under the letter of the Jewish Law, there is an abiding principle of setting apart unto the Lord one day each week. We don't do it to earn points with God or to check it off our list to prove that we're spiritual. We don't take pride in our observance of the Lord's Day and condemn those who are not up to our level of spiritual insight. But we should set aside the Lord's Day out of love for Him, in order to honor Him.

Bob Deffinbaugh: The Great Sabbath Controversy

While in **chapter 5** the Pharisees (first mentioned by Luke in conjunction with the pronouncement to the paralytic that his sins were forgiven) object to Jesus' authority to forgive sins, they do not seem to have come to a resolved opposition against Him. When we come to **verses 6-11** in chapter 6, they have their minds made up. They are no longer looking for evidence as a basis for making a decision about Jesus, they are looking for proof to validate their rejection of Him. What began with curiosity, and led to concern, has, by the time we have reached our text, become condemnation and criticism. . .

Jesus does not want to argue about different methods of interpretation here. The Sermon on the Mount, as recorded by Matthew, does spell out the differences between the correct interpretation of the law and those of the Pharisees, but this is not His purpose here. As I understand this text, Jesus wants to establish His right to violate the law, even though He has not done so. He therefore grants His opponents their argument (that it was unlawful to harvest on the Sabbath, as the disciples had done) and presses on to show that they were wrong in accusing Him, not because of a wrong interpretation of the Sabbath, but because Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, had the right to break the Sabbath.

Our Lord's argument, as outlined by Luke, is based upon a very simple premise: **WHO YOU ARE DETERMINES WHETHER OR NOT YOU ARE FREE TO BREAK THE SABBATH . . .**

If Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath by coming with a greater rest, then the commandment to keep the Sabbath can be set aside. Why work to rest under the law when Christ gives rest from the law?

Furthermore, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath in the sense that He is greater than the Sabbath, and

thus able to set it aside. To be Lord of the Sabbath is to be Lord over the Sabbath.¹³⁰ When Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath, He claimed to be greater than the Sabbath, in authority over the Sabbath, and thus far more qualified than David to break the law pertaining to the Sabbath . . .

One's perception of the purpose of the Law has everything to do with one's motivation for obeying it.

If I view God as harsh and unloving, and His law as restrictive and burdensome, then I will do everything I can to avoid its instructions. I will distinguish between my joy, my best interest, and the commands of God. This is exactly what the Pharisees did. For all their talk about keeping the law, the Pharisees had become experts at avoiding its commands. The very things which God required most (mercy and compassion), the Pharisees were able to escape, and even to feel righteous for so doing.

When I once come to the liberating conclusion that the psalmists had long ago reached—that the law was good, wholesome, and a delight to obey—then I will strive to learn it, to understand it, and to apply it:

How blessed are those whose way is blameless, Who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed art Thou, O LORD; Teach me Thy statutes. With my lips I have told of All the ordinances of Thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies, As much as in all riches. I will meditate on Thy precepts, And regard Thy ways. I shall delight in Thy statutes; I shall not forget Thy word. ... O how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day (Ps. 119:1, 12-16, 97).

God's commandments, Old Testament or New, were to be viewed as blessed, a joy to carry out, and a joy when carried out. That is much needed perspective today. That is not the spirit of legalism.

TEXT: Luke 6:12-16

TITLE: THE DREAM TEAM – SELECTION OF THE APOSTLES – A FEW GOOD MEN

BIG IDEA:
PAY ATTENTION TO LEADERSHIP SELECTION

INTRODUCTION:

Leadership selection is critical to the success of any enterprise. You must have clearly defined character qualifications and job definitions. You must both choose wisely and then provide the necessary mentoring and discipling to equip them to function in their new roles. Jesus was the Master Trainer. He wrote the book when it comes to Leadership. Here we see Jesus making the selection of the twelve key players that will serve as the foundation for the NT church.

Background: Jesus had just performed a controversial healing on the Sabbath of a man whose right hand was withered.

What stage in the ministry of Jesus did this calling of the 12 occur?

- Maybe about midway – marking **a transition in his ministry**
- Definitely more than year before His crucifixion
- Right before the important Sermon on the Mount

I. (:12-13) CHOOSING OF THE 12 – A SIGNIFICANT MINISTRY TRANSITION

A. (:12) Prayer Preparation

“And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.”

Prayer is our #1 Strategy – because that is what prayer was for Jesus

What was Jesus praying about for an entire night? Only place in NT we see this happening

- Must have had a lot to say – was not given to just babbling and multiplying repetitious words
- Must have had some concerns – for the needs of the multitudes
- For how to develop and train His primary leaders
- Evaluating which disciples to select
- Planning His lengthy Sermon on the Mount

B. (:13) Selection Process

“And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:”

Ultimate Reality Show – ahead of His time

Why did he pick 12?

- Parallel with the number of tribes in Israel in the OT – Jesus was divine Messianic King **Matt. 19:28** “*you also shall sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel*”; cf. need to replace Judas so that there were still 12 going forward – **Matthias** (end of **Acts 1**)

he must be a man who had accompanied them during the whole time of Jesus' ministry and who was a witness of His resurrection (**Acts 1:21, 22**).

- Good number for small group dynamics; ministry of **multiplication** – book Training of the 12 – **Alexander Bruce**, 1901

“The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (**2 Tim. 2:2**).

How should we expect this principle of multiplication to work in our church context?

Jesus later would choose 70 others for a mission tour (**Luke 10:1**)

How did the others feel? Any significant ministry for them?

- Body dynamics from 1 Cor. 12; every part of the body must play its role
- No room for jealousy or envy

What would be the role of the 12 as the Apostles as distinct from the other disciples?

- special calling, privilege, charge, mission
- special authority – cf. role of ambassadors
- special authenticating signs and wonders
- special suffering and martyrdom
- several of them wrote a good portion of the NT (Matthew, Peter, James, John)

II. (:14-16) COMPOSITION OF THE 12 -- 6 Groupings of 2 Apostles Each

There are four lists of the apostles: **Matthew 10:2-4**, **Mark 3:16-19**, here, and in **Acts 1:13**.

A. *“Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother;”*

1. Peter: always mentioned first in list of apostles; strength, power, impetuous, impulsive, natural leadership qualities, bold; famous failure and then restored by Jesus

Jeremy Myers: Jesus takes this unstable man who always acts before he thinks, and steps into every pothole, and truly does transform him into a rock.

2. Andrew: always bringing someone to Jesus

Jeremy Myers: Andrew was content to not be the center of attention. We never see him getting resentful about the attention his brother or some of the other apostles receive. He was pleased to do what Jesus wanted him to do whether he received recognition or not.

B. *and James and John;* brothers and cousins of Jesus; sons of thunder

3. James: first of the 12 to be martyred

4. John: the disciple Jesus especially loved, the one to whom Jesus from the cross entrusted the care of His mother. He became the author of the fourth Gospel, of the three Johannine Epistles, and of the Book of Revelation. Apostle of Love

C. *and Philip and Bartholomew = son of Tholomai [Nathanael];*

5. Philip: the evangelist; deliberate; slow in arriving at decisions; earnest inquirer after truth; from the same town, Bethsaida, as Peter and Andrew.

6. **Bartholomew**: man of great moral excellence; pure-hearted – “*in whom there is no guile*” **John 1:45-51; 21:2**

D. *and Matthew and Thomas*;

7. **Matthew (or Levi)**: tax collector

8. **Thomas**: doubter; slow to believe in the resurrection

Jeremy Myers: He was more of a brooder than a doubter. He had a tendency to see the negative side of things. He anticipated the worst in everything.

E. *James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot*;

9. **James son of Alphaeus**: not much known about him

10. **Simon the Zealot**: member of the radical political party that was known for its hatred of Rome, including those who collected taxes for Rome – now teamed with Matthew – made for interesting group dynamics; the apostles needed a team mentality; required relationship bonding and trust

F. *Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*”

11. **Judas – son of James = Thaddeus (Mark 3:18)**: not much known about him

12. **Judas Iscariot**: always mentioned last in list of apostles – Keep your friends close and your enemies closer!

Jeremy Myers: I don't think Judas intended to kill Christ. In many ways, Judas was just like the other apostles, including Peter. Judas wanted the Roman government overthrown. He wanted Christ to be set up as King. He wanted to gain a throne for himself also. He had originally signed on with Jesus because he thought Jesus was going to pass out glory and honor and riches. But it never happened. They just kept getting poorer and poorer. They made more and more enemies. Judas was not getting rich the way he thought he would. He began to steal a few coins from the money purse now and then. After all, it was only a little bit, and he deserved it for all of his hard work. And Jesus just wasn't doing things right. Jesus wasn't operating the way Judas thought he should. So Judas decided to give Jesus a little nudge in the right direction.

It was a perfect plan. Judas would hand Jesus over the religious authorities and the government. When they threatened to kill Jesus, Jesus would defend Himself, and the long awaited revolt would begin! The outcome would be that Jesus would defeat all his enemies, and Judas and the other apostles would receive their thrones. Of course, on the other hand, if Jesus ended up not defending himself, then nothing really was lost, for all Judas had done was unmask a false Messiah, and Judas would then be in good standing with the rich and powerful rulers of the day. It was a win-win situation for Judas. There was just one problem which Judas failed to see. What if Jesus truly was the Messiah, but He had not come to rule and reign, but to serve? Judas must have heard this a number of times from Jesus, but he never quite grasped it. So because Judas never grasped what Jesus had come for, Judas tried to grasp at wealth and power instead.

Surprising how little we know about many of these very significant men who formed the foundation of the NT church. – The story is all about Jesus Christ.

III. LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

- A. Importance of Work Ethic -- but you can't work your way into successful ministry
- B. Diversity of Personalities – God loves variety – He created variety!
- C. Largely a Blue Collar Group – not the elite of society – not the well-educated and the well-connected that you might expect would become movers and shakers in such a worldwide movement; cf. book by **John MacArthur**: Twelve Ordinary Men
- D. Necessity of Commitment – these were all busy men; but at the command of Jesus, they left everything to follow Him
- E. Importance of Relationships – two sets of brothers chosen
- F. Redeemed and Transformed Men – Sovereignly chosen and equipped for their task – God is able to use us despite our sins and failures and inadequacies

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why don't we believe there are any apostles today – on the level of the 12 chosen by Jesus? What is the relationship between present day missionaries and apostles?
- 2) Are you living and conducting your ministry as if prayer is your #1 strategy?
- 3) How could Jesus function without any sleep?
- 4) What do you find encouraging about this list of the apostles?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Alexander Bruce: The selection by Jesus of the twelve from the band of disciples who had gradually gathered around His person is an important landmark in the Gospel history. It divides the ministry of our Lord into two portions, nearly equal, possibly, as to duration, but unequal as to the extent and importance of the work done in each respectively. In the earlier period Jesus labored single-handed; His miraculous deeds were confined for the most part to a limited area, and His teaching was in the main of an elementary character. But by the time when the twelve were chosen, the work of the kingdom had assumed such dimensions as to require organization and division of labor; and the teaching of Jesus was beginning to be of a deeper and more elaborate nature, and His gracious activities were taking on ever-widening range.

Steven Cole: The Master's Men and Method (Luke 6:12-19)

Big Idea: Jesus' method for ministry was prayerfully to choose a few men to minister to the needy masses.

The setting for Jesus' choosing the twelve apostles was the growing hostility against Him (6:12, "at this time"). Jesus knew that He would not always be with His followers (5:35), and so He spent the night alone on a mountain with God in prayer. The next morning He chose the twelve from among the larger number of His disciples. Then, Jesus descended to a place where a great multitude of needy people surrounded Him, eager to hear Him teach, to be healed of their diseases, and to be freed from the demonic forces that oppressed them. While verses 17-19 introduce the setting for the sermon that follows, they also tie in to the selection of the twelve. We see four things here: The needy *masses*; the powerful *Master*; the Master's *method* of selecting a few to minister to the many; and the *men* the Master selected. . .

Luke refers to both "a great multitude of His disciples" and "a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon" (6:17). The multitude of disciples would include all those who were following Jesus. The fact that the great throng had left their normal jobs or daily routines and had traveled on foot, some for great distances, to reach Jesus shows their extreme neediness. Their desperate situation is also pictured in 6:19, as they all try to touch Jesus, since "power was coming from Him and healing them all." Some of these people had carried their loved ones to that place on donkeys or carts on rough, rutted roads. Most were Jews, but probably many of those from Tyre and Sidon were Gentiles who had heard of Jesus. But whoever they were and wherever they were from, their sense of great need had impelled them to overcome the difficulties and get to Jesus. . .

This is the only instance in the New Testament of someone spending the whole night in prayer. As the perfect Man, the Lord Jesus shows us how we as men and women should live in total dependence on the Father. Since Luke emphasizes Jesus as the Son of Man, he often shows us the importance of prayer in Jesus' life. When Jesus was baptized, He was praying (3:21). When His popularity was increasing, and multitudes were flocking to Him, Jesus "would often slip away to the wilderness and pray" (5:16). Just prior to Peter's confession, Jesus had been praying (9:18). It was observing Jesus praying that led the disciples to ask, "Lord, teach us to pray (11:1, 2). And, near the end, Jesus faced the prospect of Peter's denials and His own impending suffering on the cross through prayer (22:32, 41-45).

Jeremy Myers: A Few Good Men: The Twelve Apostles

Jesus prepares Himself as well as He can for this incredibly important decision. And the amazing thing about it, is that unlike us, He doesn't get a good night of sleep. When we face a difficult decision, or a rough day ahead, we think the most important thing is to get a good night of sleep. Jesus, on the other hand, realizes that the most important thing for Him is to be in touch and communion with God. The most important thing for Jesus is to spend the night praying.

Jesus is not only praying for the choice he must make the next day, but also for the healing (**Luke 6:17-19**) and teaching (**Luke 6:20-49**) He would do. Jesus always makes prayer his number one priority, because without prayer, His ministry would have no power. Did Jesus think carefully about His choice? Certainly. Did he watch his disciples interact with one another and base his decision on that? Of course. But prayer and communication with God was the primary step in making such a decision. **John Bunyan** once said that "You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed." Jesus knows this, which is why whenever we see Jesus facing a critical decision, or an important action, he spends extra time in prayer. Prayer becomes more important for Jesus than food or rest. Prayer was His spiritual lifeblood. It is His wide open secret to being connected with God.

I found a humorous letter in my files which shows this. It is a fictional letter written to Jesus from the Jordan Management Consultants. Jesus apparently is looking for some coworkers, and has submitted some names to these management consultants who write back with their recommendations. It reads this way (I edited it down):

Dear Sir:

Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking.

Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership.

The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty.

Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale.

We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.

One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man.

Sincerely, Jordan Management Consultants

You see? God's way of doing things is not man's way. According to **1 Corinthians 1:26-29**, God chooses the humble, the lowly, the weak and the meek. He doesn't choose the strong and the talented, the powerful and the rich. He chooses those who would never be chosen so that when He works powerfully through them, everybody knows that only God could do such things. The people we would pick are not the ones God picks. If you feel like you are not qualified to be a follower of Jesus, then you are just right. If you feel, however, that you are just what God needs, then you may have some things to learn before God can start using you.

TEXT: Luke 6:17-26

TITLE: BEATITUDES – BLESSINGS VS WOES

BIG IDEA:

THOSE WHO EMBRACE THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD RECEIVE BLESSING RATHER THAN CONDEMNATION

INTRODUCTION:

The shocking impact of the message delivered here by Jesus has been blunted by our familiarity with the Sermon on the Mount. This dramatic contrast between kingdom and worldly value systems would have been an unexpected challenge to the gathered disciples. Jesus never sugar-coated what was involved in being a genuine disciple, a true follower. But after counting the cost, one must conclude that the bountiful promised blessings are more than worth the suffering and persecution of loyalty to Jesus Christ.

John MacArthur: You see, the teaching of Jesus doesn't add a little to conventional religious wisdom. It doesn't just subtract a little. It replaces it. The teaching of Jesus then and the teaching of Jesus now...because it's the same...it's here in Scripture recorded for all time and eternity. The teaching of Jesus then and now shatters all man's basic foundational thinking. It destroys his motives whether they are secular or religious. It turns man's world upside-down. It turns his thinking on its head. The teaching of Jesus then and now is not PC; it's not political correct. It's not CW; it's not conventional wisdom. In fact, the teaching of Jesus is alien to everything we consider to be true in the natural mind. It runs counter to everything. It is the antithesis of human ideas. It is the antithesis of human motivation. . . Now the idea of **blessing** and **cursing** wasn't new to the Jews. They had Old Testament. They knew whether God had distinguished the two. Sure He had, **Deuteronomy 27 and 28**.

THOSE WHO EMBRACE THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD RECEIVE BLESSING RATHER THAN CONDEMNATION

(:17-19) SETTING

A. (:17) 3 Groups of People Gathered

“And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon,”

- 12 Apostles
- Larger group of dedicated disciples
- Crowd of onlookers

B. (:18) 3 Activities of Jesus Drawing the Crowds

“who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.”

- Teaching Ministry
- Healing Ministry
- Exorcism of Demons

C. (:19) Fundamental Point of Attraction = Power of Jesus to Heal

“And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.”

I. (:20-23) BLESSINGS = HAPPINESS NOW AND FOREVER FOR EMBRACING THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

“And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say,”

It seems that this portion of the sermon is directed primarily to that middle group = the large number of disciples.

**A. (:20-21) Kingdom Character Traits – Lead to Blessing
(cf. Matt 5 for more complete list)**

*“Blessed are you who are **poor**, for yours is the kingdom of God.
Blessed are you who **hunger now**, for you shall be satisfied.
Blessed are you who **weep now**, for you shall laugh.”*

Matthew emphasizes the spiritual aspect of these characteristics – *poor in spirit; hunger and thirst for righteousness*; etc. Luke emphasizes the temporary duration of present hardship vs. future fulfillment which allows the disciples to experience joy and happiness even in the midst of present difficulties. Disciples must learn what it means to take up the cross and follow Jesus. They must delay instant gratification for the long term kingdom benefit.

You must adopt kingdom values rather than the world’s values to be truly happy and blessed.

Gene Brooks: Among first century Jews, giving to the poor was one way a wealthy person might commend himself to God. But among Greek Gentiles, Christ’s affirmation of the poor must have stunned them. The wealthy Greeks were increasingly dedicated to their own personal fortunes. The few who did anything for anyone else might endow a library, a school, a bath, or establish a fund to pay for an annual banquet for the town. But rather than real generosity, they were only ostentatious displays. Roman society viewed the poor man who worked for hire with disgust, not pity or respect. Even self-made wealth was looked down on with disdain by the upper classes. Against this background we can better understand the difficult choice these words call Jesus’ followers to make. If one is to follow Jesus, the values of human society truly must be rejected and replaced with those appropriate for a kingdom ruled by the Messiah.

Geldenhuys: persons who do not seek their wealth and life in earthly things, but who acknowledge their own poverty and come to Him to seek real life.

Donald Miller: If you set your heart and bend your whole energies to obtain the things which the world values, you will get them--but that is all you will ever get. In the expressive modern phrase, literally, you have had it! But if on the other hand you set your heart and bend all your energies to be utterly loyal to God and true to Christ, you will run into all kinds of trouble, you may by the world's standards look unhappy, but much of your payment is still to come; and it will be joy eternal.

Bob Deffinbaugh: To identify with Christ as His disciples meant adopting Jesus' lifestyle. For the eleven this meant poverty, hunger (at times) and weeping, and rejection.

B. (:22-23) Kingdom Persecution Indicates Alignment with Jesus and the OT Prophets -- Leads to Great Reward

*“Blessed are you when men **hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.**”*

Constable: Various forms of persecution will give way to ultimate reward and consequent joy. Note the logical progression in **Luke 6:22** from hatred to ostracism to insults and finally to character assassination. Luke recorded in Acts that all these forms of persecution overtook the early Christians. The New Testament epistles also warn Christians about them (e.g, **1 John 3:13; 1 Peter 4:14; James 2:7**). Not just the prophets of old but also Jesus Himself experienced these persecutions. Disciples can expect the same. God will vindicate them eventually and reward them for their faithfulness (cf. **Luke 12:37; Luke 12:42-44; Luke 18:1-8**).

II. (:24-26) WOES = CONDEMNATION FOR EMBRACING THE VALUE SYSTEM OF THE WORLD

A. (:24-25) Worldly Character Traits – Lead to Condemnation

*“But woe to you who are **rich**, for you are receiving your comfort in full.
25 Woe to you who are **well-fed** now, for you shall be hungry.
Woe to you who **laugh** now, for you shall mourn and weep.”*

John MacArthur:

- Curse of riches
- Curse of satisfaction
- Curse of happiness

Thabiti Anyabwile: In the Bible, when a prophet warned people of condemnation, he would often begin with the word “*woe*.” Woe refers to unrelenting sorrow, pain, and agony, the kind that cannot be relieved. Woe crushes a person. And when prophets pronounce a “*woe*” against people, the woe comes at the hand of God's condemnation. . .

The **rich** “*have received*” (v. 24) (past tense) their comfort. Their comfort was their money. When their lives end and their money is gone, there will be no comfort for them. They will outlive their money, and their money will outlive its usefulness. All that will be left apart from Jesus is woe.

The **now full** live high off the hog. They satisfy their desires now. They have refrigerators full and money to eat out. Now. But when judgment comes, they will be hungry. Hell for them will be a constant hungering, never being satisfied, a gnawing in their guts. Their worm will never die. They had it all in this life, and they will have nothing in the life to come because they did not have Christ.

Those who are **now laughing** will not laugh last. They “*will mourn and weep*” (v. 25). In fact, many places in the Bible describe judgment and hell as “*weeping and gnashing of teeth*.” In the

end they will be sorry they spent their lives laughing – laughing in worldly pleasures apart from Jesus.

The **popular** – those who knew what it meant to have “*all people speak well of you*” – will suffer woe too. . . Popularity is sometimes evidence of God’s condemnation and a disciple’s unfaithfulness rather than God’s approval or favor.

B. (:26) Widespread Popularity Indicates Alignment with the World’s Value System and the False Prophets of the OT – Leads to Condemnation

“Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.”

Constable: The opposite of experiencing persecution (**Luke 6:22-23**) is having everyone speak well of you. Disciples who find that everyone thinks that all they are doing is just fine need to examine their commitment to Jesus Christ. Unbelievers should disagree with and oppose to some extent those who follow God’s will faithfully because they hold different values. Jesus’ experience is what all of His disciples can expect to reproduce to some extent. False prophets often win wide acclaim (cf. **Jeremiah 5:31**).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you define *blessing* and *woe* in the context of this text?
- 2) What values must you must embrace and what values must you reject if you want God’s blessing on your life?
- 3) What is involved in living for eternity?
- 4) Why should we raise concerns when a minister of the gospel seems to enjoy widespread popularity even within the world system?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: How to Live Happily Ever After (Luke 6:20-26)

The most obvious question is whether or not this sermon in **Luke 6** is the same as the Sermon on the Mount recorded in **Matthew 5-7**. The bottom line is, we can’t know for certain. There are solid commentators on both sides of the issue. Luke’s version is much shorter than Matthew’s (30 verses compared to 107), and there are some differences in the parts that overlap. Both versions are obviously summaries of longer messages that Jesus delivered. Both begin with a set of beatitudes and end with the parable of building the two houses, although there are differences in many of the details.

The most obvious difference is that **Matthew 5:1** reports that Jesus went up on a mountain to deliver this sermon, whereas **Luke 6:17** states that He descended to a level place. . .

Jesus draws a clear line between two groups of people, so that you must identify yourself with one group or the other. You can't straddle the line. On the one hand are those who are poor, who hunger now, who weep now, and who are despised by men because of their identification with Jesus. These folks are blessed because of both present, but mainly future, rewards. On the other hand are those who are rich, who are well-fed now, who laugh now, and who are acclaimed by men. These are under woe because of what awaits them.

These terms, "*poor, hungry, and those who weep,*" are not exclusively spiritual, in that those who are destitute of life's essentials are often much more aware of their spiritual need before God. Those who are rich in this world's goods often do not sense their desperate need for God. But the terms are *primarily* spiritual in that Jesus did not come to offer Himself on the cross to deliver men from physical poverty, hunger, and grief. He came to deliver sinners from their spiritual poverty, spiritual hunger, and grief over sin. . .

The kingdom Jesus speaks of is both a present reality and a future promise. To the poor who have followed Him, Jesus says, "*Yours is the kingdom of God.*" They presently possess it. In this sense, the kingdom means living decidedly under the lordship of Jesus, obeying His commands, living with the aim of pleasing Him. But, the kingdom is also a future promise, in that Jesus plainly taught that He would return to reign on the throne of David and to rule the nations with a rod of iron. In this sense, Jesus' followers all mourn at the present reign of darkness under the prince of this world, and we long for the soon-coming day when, according to His promise, there will be a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells (**2 Pet. 3:13**).

J. Ligon Duncan: Poor, Hungry, Weeping, Hated, Rejected...and Blessed! 6:20-23

He tells them about the nature of true happiness in the midst of the most unimaginable suffering because Jesus is a good and a wise and a kind King, and He is the master discipler, and He doesn't want His people to be caught off guard about what they're about to be up against. He wants them to be prepared for the fight. He wants them to be built for the battle. He wants them to be able to rejoice in sorrow. He wants them to be able to value the things that last, and so He has to say what He says here in **verses 20-23** especially.

To experience blessing is to experience the favor of God, so to be blessed is to be truly, deeply, everlastingly favored by God to know deep, true, real happiness because of the blessing of God. And Jesus wants His disciples to experience that kind of blessedness, that kind of true, deep, real, lasting happiness. He wants, expects, and His whole ministry is pointed toward them having that blessing. . .

Now, a couple of things immediately pop into your mind — this is happiness? Thank you for laughing! Yes, that's the right response. This is ridiculous! What do you mean this is happiness? And the second question that pops into your mind is — where does this happiness come from? Because I don't think it's coming from the poverty and the hunger and the weeping and the hatred and the reviling and the spurning and the rejection and the death — I don't think that's where it's coming from. . .

Happiness is when you have nothing left but Me. Happiness is when you're dirt poor but you still have Me. . . Whenever we've lived, if we've been a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, anytime in history, we're all called to a battle of trust and of treasure. Will I trust God in the mess that I find myself in right now, and will I treasure Jesus more than anything?

J. Ligon Duncan: Blessed or Cursed? Weal or Woe – 6:20-26

The blessings and woes are designed to exalt what the world despises and reject what the world admires. . . what you value most, is going to set you apart from the world around you. What you treasure most is going to set you apart from the world around you. So let me explain it to you this way, disciple — you are going to be blessed, even when you are poor, because you understand that **I am the only real treasure**. You're going to be blessed, even when you're hungry, because you understand that **I am the bread of life**. You're going to be blessed, even when you are weeping, because you know that **I came to bring joy** inexpressible and fully of glory. You're going to be blessed, even when you are friendless, because **I am the friend of sinners**, and I will never leave you or forsake you. You're going to be blessed, even when you are persecuted for My sake, because frankly, **I'm worth it.**"

Gene Brooks: Those who point to discrepancies between this passage and **Matt. 5-7** ignore the obvious. We don't find it unusual when politicians repeat the same themes and comments in speech after speech. Why should anyone expect Jesus, traveling and teaching about the kingdom He is bringing in, never to repeat Himself? Luke purposefully places this sermon "*on a level place*" (**Luke 6:17**) so we will not mistake it for Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (**Matt 5:1**). While it touches on many of the same subjects, it is an entirely different sermon. Not only the geography, but the Sermon on the Mount was only to his disciples (until **Matt 7:12**) while crowds came to hear (**Luke 6:18**) the Sermon on the Plain, even though he directed it to his disciples (**Luke 6:20**). Matthew's sermon is placed earlier in the Galilean ministry and precedes the calling of the Twelve. Matthew's version is much fuller than Luke's, and there are considerable differences in details. Matthew has nine Beatitudes while Luke selects the first, fourth, second, and ninth, but adds four woes, recalling OT prophetic language (**Deut 27-28**). While the first eight of Matthew's Beatitudes are in third person, Luke's are all in second. What is most significant is not the differences between the accounts, but rather the fundamental consistency. Both begin with the Beatitudes and end with the wise and foolish builders. Both include love for enemies, judging others, and trees known by their fruit. Those who heard Jesus were so deeply impressed that when Luke interviewed them years later, they remembered his teachings with great clarity.

Bob Deffinbaugh: Defining Discipleship

The point of the passage is clear. Men must make a decision as to their values and their priorities. We must all choose to forsake some things in the pursuit of others. Not all men must forsake wealth to follow Christ, although all must forsake the love of money. Life involves choices. We must choose what in life to pursue. Every choice has both benefits (blessings) and a price to pay. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of a gift, the gift of eternal life, which is of infinite value. To have it is worth the loss of anything else. The price is that we must acknowledge our sins and trust only in Christ. We must forsake all other gods and follow Christ alone. If such a choice comes at the price of poverty, hunger, sadness and rejection, it is well worth it, and it is still blessed.

TEXT: Luke 6:27-38

TITLE: RADICAL LOVE AND MERCY

BIG IDEA:

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

- **DISTINGUISHES DISCIPLES FROM THE WORLD**
- **REVEALS OUR CONNECTION TO OUR MERCIFUL FATHER AND**
- **IMPROVES OUR RELATIONSHIP FOR THE SAKE OF EVANGELISM**

INTRODUCTION:

The command to love our neighbor as ourself is radical enough once we understand who our neighbor is. But Jesus challenges His disciples to an even more radical level of love in our text for today when he commands love towards our **enemies**. Our natural self is selfishly bent towards retaliation and payback. But if we are to prove ourselves to be genuine sons of a most loving and merciful heavenly Father we must display His character in our actions towards others. Remember, the goal is to win our enemies to Christ. We must have evangelism at the forefront of our relationship with our enemies.

LOVING OUR ENEMIES

- **DISTINGUISHES DISCIPLES FROM THE WORLD**
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I. (:27-31) COMMAND TO LOVE EVEN OUR ENEMIES

“But I say to you who hear,”

Jesus is about to speak startling words of truth that are radically different from the traditional rabbinical teachings of His time.

A. (:27-28) Practice Love and Goodness to Your Enemies

*“love your enemies,
do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you,
pray for those who mistreat you.”*

Good definition of enemies provided here = those who hate you, curse you and mistreat you. Who were the enemies of Jesus and the disciples? Certainly the religious leaders who had grown in their opposition to the ministry of Jesus. But each individual would have personal enemies as well.

Dr. Ralph Wilson: Jesus uses some heavy words to describe the Christian-haters:

- Greek *echthros* means "the (personal) enemy" from echtho, "to hate." Ethros means "hateful," and as a noun, "adversary, enemy, foe."
- Greek *miseo* means "hate, persecute in hatred, detest, abhor." These are people with an active desire for our hurt. Miseo is particularly used as "to persecute." There is a malicious attitude. These are people you can't turn your back on.

- Greek *katakaomai* means "to curse." Curses are utterances that are designed to bring harm by supernatural operation.
- Greek *epereazo* means "threaten, mistreat, abuse."

Loving them will involve doing practical acts of goodness towards them, actively blessing them and purposefully praying for their welfare.

Geldenhuys: The Jews limited the divine commandment to love one's neighbor (**Lev. xix. 18**) by regarding only fellow-Jews as their neighbors (and then only those who were looked upon by them as worthy fellow-countrymen). Jesus, however, rejects this false limitation completely and commands that even one's enemies should be treated with affection and good-will.

Ray Pritchard: Refuse to speak evil of them. That's what Jesus meant when he said, "*Bless those who curse you.*" It means you refuse to think evil thoughts and you refuse to speak evil words against those who have wronged you. Proverbs has a great deal to say about the power of words. "*The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit*" (**Proverbs 18:21 NIV**). Every time we open our mouth, life or death comes out.

B. (:29) Practice Unnatural Restraint and Undeserved Kindness

1. (:29a) Unnatural Restraint

"Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also;"

2. (:29b) Undeserved Kindness

"and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either."

Jesus uses hyperbole to make His point.

C. (:30) Practice Unlimited Generosity

"Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back."

D. (:31) Practice the Golden Rule to Everyone

"And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way."

This will be developed in more detail in **vs 37-38** below

Ray Ritchie: Notice that our Lord did not lay out principles of passive resistance, but rather principles of aggressive love. The apostle Paul summarized the spiritual principles of aggressive love in **Romans 12:17-21**: "*Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. . . . If possible so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord' (Deut. 32:35). But if your enemy is hungry, [aggressive love] feed him, and if he is thirsty, [aggressive love] give him a drink (Prov. 25: 21f). Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil [aggressive love] with good."*

II. (:32-34) CONTRAST BETWEEN RADICAL CHRIST-LIKE LOVE AND LOVE

PRACTICED BY THE WORLD - 3 EXAMPLES TO PROVE HIS POINT

A. (:32) Regarding Loving

*“And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?
For even sinners love those who love them.”*

B. (:33) Regarding Doing Good

*“And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?
For even sinners do the same.”*

C. (:34) Regarding Lending Expecting Nothing in Return

*“And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you?
Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount.”*

Lenski: The three illustrations used bring out most clearly the unselfishness of the love that Jesus demands.

Leon Morris: It is easy for the Christian to congratulate himself on some virtue he fancies he detects in himself. But before he can claim that he is obeying Christ’s command, he should ask whether he is doing anything more than sinners do in similar circumstances.

III. (:35-36) CONNECTION TO THE FATHER EXPLAINS WHY WE ARE TO LOVE IN THIS MANNER AND TO THIS EXTENT

A. (:35a) Repetition of the Command

*“But love your enemies,
and do good,
and lend, expecting nothing in return;”*

Jeremy Myers: Illustration: David Cho, pastor of the world’s largest church in Seoul, Korea – with some 750,000 members – has an interesting rule for his congregation. He tells them that they are not allowed to witness to someone until they have performed three good deeds for them. They are actually forbidden to mention the name of Jesus until they have first helped that person fix an appliance, or brought them a meal when they were sick, or helped them construct their house. Pastor Cho believes that only after three such acts will the heart be open to the gospel.

B. (:35b) Reward Promised

“and your reward will be great,”

C. (:35c) Reason for Obedience is Your Connection to the Father – by Nature and by Action

1. Connection by Nature

“and you will be sons of the Most High;”

Ray Pritchard: God specializes in being kind to the unkind and showing mercy to mean people. He specializes in showering grace upon sinners and he loves to turn enemies into friends. When we love our enemies, we’re showing forth the character of God to the world and proving that we are part of God’s family. There ought to be a family resemblance that even the unsaved can spot.

Lenski: Love, etc., to our fellow men does not *make* us sons of the Highest but *proves* us such

sons, namely by revealing that we are truly like him in character and in action.

2. Connection by Action

“for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.”

D. (:36) Repetition of the Command Now Linked to Family Character

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Liefeld: singles out that area of life in which, given the preceding examples, one is very likely to come short. The Pharisees tithed spices but neglected *“justice, mercy and faithfulness”* (**Matt 23:23**). The believer’s righteousness must exceed theirs (**Matt 5:20**).

IV. (:37-38) COMMAND TO PURSUE GRACIOUS PARDON OVER JUDGMENTAL CONDEMNATION – WITH CORRESPONDING BENEFITS THAT IMPROVE OUR RELATIONSHIP FOR THE SAKE OF EVANGELISM

This is one of the most misunderstood and misapplied commands in all of Scripture. We must tread carefully here and be precise in our distinctions and definitions and applications. We will get the interpretation wrong if we fail to take into account the above context of the overall passage.

J. Ligon Duncan: Context: falls within the larger context of this section where Jesus is talking about how we can love those who don't love us or how we can love those who have failed us in some significant way or how we can love those who have not loved us well. . .

Does that mean that we will ignore the cause of justice? No. Does that mean that we will sweep all wickedness and evil doing under the carpet and pretend like it isn't there? No. Does it mean that we will forever forsake availing ourselves of the judicial instruments of government? No. It doesn't mean any of that. But it does mean in our dealing relationally with those who have done us wrong, who have not loved us, or who have not loved us well, there will always be, even when we are following the dictates of justice and meeting out the requirements of right and wrong, there will be a savor of compassion, mercy and grace in our dealings

A. (:37-38a) Clear Command With Corresponding Benefits – Pursue Gracious Pardon Over Judgmental Condemnation

1. Command Stated Negatively -- With Corresponding Benefits

a. Do Not Judge – Critical Disposition

“And do not judge and you will not be judged;”

What type of Judging is prohibited here? Certainly not all judging because we are commanded to exercise discernment – to judge the words and actions of others

What type of judging and condemning had just been demonstrated by the scribes and Pharisees in the previous section regarding the two Sabbath controversies?

Steven Cole: To judge others is to look down on them with a condemning spirit, presuming that we know their heart motives. It stems from a self-righteous spirit on our part. To judge someone stems from a desire to get even or to make the person pay for what he did. We don't want God to

pardon him; we want God to zap him! We would be gratified to hear that the guy got into major trials: “It serves him right after what he did to me!” If we heard that he repented and God saved him, we would think, “That’s not fair!” All of this reflects a spirit of judgment on our part, not a spirit of mercy.

b. Do Not Condemn – Punishing Disposition

“and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned;”

When you are not judged and not condemned by your enemies you will have greater opportunity to reach the with the gospel

2. Command Stated Positively -- With Corresponding Benefits

a. Pardon – Merciful Disposition

“pardon, and you will be pardoned.”

1 Cor. 13 teaches that love gives others the benefit of the doubt rather than holding them to severe standards

b. Give – Gracious Disposition

*“Give, and it will be given to you;
good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over,
they will pour into your lap.”*

Here the statement of corresponding benefits is **expanded** to show the abundant blessings that will flow to those who show mercy and grace

Steven Cole: Does our Lord mean that *people* will treat us that way? Or, does He mean that *God* will treat us that way? I take it to mean both. On the human plane, the statements are proverbial in the sense that they are generally true, not absolutely true in every case. It is generally true that if you are a merciful person, not condemning others for their faults, others will be gracious toward you. If you are quick to forgive, others will be prone to forgive you. If you are generous, others will be generous toward you. On the other hand, if you condemn people, if you refuse to forgive, if you are stingy, it will come back to you.

When you are pardoned and shown grace by your enemies you will have improved your relationship and gained a better foothold for evangelism.

B. (:38b) Fundamental Principle – You Will Get What You Give

“For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

Steven Cole: The description “*good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap*” comes from the grain markets of that day. A good merchant would pour grain into his measure. Then he would press it down and shake it so that it would settle. Then he would pour in more grain until it ran over. He would take that overflowing measure and pour it into the lap of your robe, which could be pulled up to serve as a big pocket. That’s how God poured out His generous mercy on us! That’s how we should respond to needy people. To show mercy to others means not to judge them, to pardon them, and to be generous toward them. Children of the merciful heavenly Father should be marked by such mercy, even toward those who have wronged us.

Cf. the **Golden Rule** – How do you want others to treat you? Let that govern your disposition

Boomerang effect – back at you

What goes around comes around

J. Ligon Duncan: it is God's normal principle of providence over His children, that as they measure out in these circumstances, so He will measure back to them.

Steven Cole: Illustration - General Oglethorpe once said to John Wesley, “I never forgive and I never forget.” Wesley replied, “Then, sir, I hope you never sin.” If we are sinners who need mercy, we must show God’s mercy to those who have wronged us. Jesus goes on to show us that rather than judging others, our focus should be on judging ourselves.

Geldenhuys: Only God knows and understands every person in all his circumstances and conditions, and only He has in the final instance the right to judge as to the guilt or innocence of any person, and to condemn where His salvation has been rejected. No human being has the power or the right to this. By His words the Lord does not prohibit the administration of justice in law-courts or the distinction between good and evil, but he does forbid the attitude of those people who want to appoint themselves in God’s place as judges over their fellow-men and to judge and condemn right and left. According to the light we possess we must distinguish between good and evil and in His power first combat the evil in ourselves and then in others. But we are never to encroach upon God’s right to judge and to condemn. We must avoid all censoriousness and revengefulness, and forgive those who have sinned against us.

MacArthur: Jesus said, “If you love people like this, they’ll love you back like that.” You can actually be loved by sinners. Christians need a good dose of this, don’t they? We live in a time when Christians are making enemies out of the mission field. Wouldn’t you like sinners to do that? You love them. Love your persecutors. Love sinners and they will love you back the way you love them. That’s how sinners love. They love those who love them. They do good to those who do good to them. They lend to those who lend to them. That’s the way they work. The problem is, that’s all they can do. But you can love your enemies and benefit.

And what is the goal? The goal, then, would be to have sinners not judge you, not condemn you, forgive you for the offense against them, and be generous with you. If that’s the case, that would indicate that they have accepted you, and you now have an opportunity to proclaim to them - what? - the gospel.

So take advantage of sinners’ limitations. They can’t love their enemies, but you can. They do love those who love them, they do give to those who give to them, and they do good to those who do good to them. You do that when they are enemies, and you will lay down a testimony that you are not like them, but you are like God, who loves His enemies compassionately, kindly, mercifully, invitingly, and that becomes the basis of your witness. This is what marks a true disciple.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Who do you see as your enemies?
- 2) What are the types of practical ways we can show love to our enemies in our culture?
- 3) Where do you see yourself turning the other cheek and giving expecting nothing in return?
- 4) How will the radical love of a Christian look different from the type of love the world knows?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Radical Love (Luke 6:27-35)

God's radical love extends to all people, even to those who are ungrateful and evil. As His children, our love should reflect His love. While in Matthew Jesus sets forth this radical love against the backdrop of pharisaic misinterpretations, Luke, writing primarily for Gentiles, sets it before us in raw form. He shows us that we must love all people, not just those who are nice to us. Further, it is not enough passively to endure wrongs. We must actively engage in good deeds toward those who have treated us wrongfully. Our love must be self-denying, not self-seeking. We must set aside what we think to be our personal rights if we want to follow our Lord in practicing this radical love. . .

Clearly, Jesus is confronting our sinful motives of selfishness, greed, and standing for our rights. We're all prone to blame others and exonerate ourselves. But Jesus here aims at our hearts and challenges us to apply it. When He says, "*But I say to you who hear*" (6:27), He is contrasting it with those who are under woe because they do not hear so as to obey. Those who really hear what Jesus says will not point the finger at others; they will point it at themselves and will deal with their wrong motives. To sum up, we should not take Jesus' commands with a strict literalism that contradicts other Scripture, but neither should we dodge their cutting edge. They convict us all and we all need to grow in this radical love. Jesus' teaching falls under four points:

1. Radical love requires responding to wrongs with positive ministry toward the wrongdoer, not with retaliation (6:27-30).
2. Radical love requires treating others as we wish to be treated (6:31).
3. Radical love exceeds the world's standards of love (6:32-34).
4. Radical love shows the nature of God to people who desperately need Him (6:35).

John Stott: ...all human love, even the highest, the noblest and the best, is contaminated to some degree by the impurities of self-interest. We Christians are specifically called to love our enemies (in which love there is no self-interest) and this is impossible without the supernatural grace of God flowing through us. . . . The question Jesus asked is 'What more are you doing than others?' This simple word 'more' is the quintessence of what he is saying. It is not enough for Christians to resemble non-Christians; our calling is to outstrip them in virtue. Our righteousness is to exceed that of the Pharisees and our love is to be more than that of the Gentiles.

Jeremy Myers: Understand though, what loving our enemies does not mean. It doesn't mean we support them in what they do, or agree with them, or even necessarily become good friends with

them. Loving our enemies means that when they hate us, we love them in return. It means that the cycle of hate, the cycle of revenge, the cycle of retaliation stops with us. You can be angry at a person for what they do, and yet still love them. Jesus was upset at the people of Jerusalem for how they abused and murdered the prophets, and yet He still shed loving tears over the city. Jesus, as always, is our best example for how to live out such principles.

Wiersbe: We must not look at these admonitions as a series of rules to be obeyed. They describe an attitude of heart that expresses itself positively when others are negative, and generously when others are selfish, all to the glory of God. It is an inner disposition, not a legal duty. We must have wisdom to know when to turn the other cheek and when to claim our rights (**John 18:22-23; Acts 16:35-40**). Even Christian love must exercise discernment (**Phil. 1:9-11**).

Two principles stand out: we must treat others as we would want to be treated (**Luke 6:31**), which assumes we want the very best spiritually for ourselves; and we must imitate our Father in heaven and be merciful (**Luke 6:36**). The important thing is not that we are vindicated before our enemies but that we become more like God in our character (**Luke 6:35**).

TEXT: Luke 6:39-45

TITLE: WARNING AGAINST FOLLOWING THE WRONG TYPE OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS

BIG IDEA:
BE CAREFUL WHOM YOU FOLLOW –
4 TYPES OF LEADERS NOT TO FOLLOW

INTRODUCTION:

As parents we understand how important it is for our children to have good role models. We know that children very easily can pick up bad traits from having friends who are a bad influence. “Bad company corrupts good morals.”

When it comes to spiritual discipleship, the same principles apply – but with much more serious impact. The type of leaders who disciple you will play a determining factor in your spiritual development. Jesus has been interacting with the religious leaders of his day. They were secure in their self-righteousness and placed themselves on a pedestal as model teachers and interpreters of God’s law. But they had no clue regarding spirituality as demonstrated by their hostile reaction to the Son of God Himself.

Jesus at the same time was training His disciples to be effective leaders down the road. He wanted to clearly expose the types of characteristics that would disqualify someone from effectively discipling others.

Morris: Jesus now turns to the responsibility that rests on disciples to make more disciples.

Offers a series of very short metaphors – introduced as “parables”

Anyabwile: Be careful whom you follow.

MacArthur: The options were clear on that day on the hillside in Galilee when Jesus was giving this sermon on the mount, as it is called. And what Jesus is saying here is you have leaders in your nation: Pharisees, scribes, priests, the spiritual establishment of Judaism, and you have Me, and you have to choose between us. They are spiritually deadly and I give life. That is clearly the issue in this sermon because the closing illustration in verse 46, “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not what I say? Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like.*”

4 TYPES OF LEADERS NOT TO FOLLOW

I. (:39) THE BLIND – YOU NEED DISCERNMENT = LIGHT VS DARKNESS

“And He also spoke a parable to them: ‘A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?’”

MacArthur: In fact, what I just read you is four little proverbs, or four parables. You think of a parable, you think of a long story, a protracted story. But a parable can be one line. It can be synonymous with an analogy, an illustration, a proverb. You have in the Gospel of Luke in a number of places, chapter 12 and several other places further on, parables that are

prolonged. You also have parables that are one brief sentence, such as in **4:23, 5:36**. And here you have very brief pithy little parables, or proverbs, or axioms, truisms, self-evident truths. . .

Blindness is used metaphorically, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, for being void of truth, for not having any spiritual sight, or insight. **Isaiah 29:10, Isaiah 44:18, Jeremiah 5:21**, many other passages. **Psalm 82:5** says, “*The wicked don’t know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness;*” that’s a categorical description. **Second Corinthians 4:4**, “*The god of this world has blinded their minds.*” People who don’t know God are blind to truth and if you follow them, you’re going to end up in the pit.

Don’t follow spiritual leaders like the Pharisees who will only lead you into the pit. Instead, follow Jesus as your Master since He can make you a true disciple who will be equipped to disciple others.

Factors contributing to Blindness:

- Condition of the heart of natural man – unable to grasp spiritual truth (**1 Cor. 2**)
- Tradition
- Sin
- Prejudice
- Narrow scope of vision (like horse with blinder on)
- Activity of Satan (**2 Cor. 4:3-4**)

II. (:40) THE NOVICE – YOU NEED EXPERIENCE AND WISDOM = EXPERTISE

“A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.”

Some people are not very coachable – especially those who think they know it all already. Characterized by arrogance and pride. To be a good teacher you must first be teachable.

Paul was able to exhort: “*Imitate me as I imitate Christ.*”

Mark Twain once said “it only took two characteristics to be a preacher: ignorance and confidence.”

When you think of the model of Teacher/Student relationship back in days of Jesus, there was a very singular focus on the person who was providing the training. As the sources of input broaden, you lose somewhat the force of this proverbial saying. But the principle still holds that the disciple is not going to progress beyond the Master.

That is why even in the business world, leadership development gurus stress the importance of effective mentoring. It is important not only to know what you know . . . but to know what you don’t know.

Lenski: In the whole sermon Jesus is trying to imbue his disciples with his own spirit and his principles. Those who are at this time his disciples are such only because they have in some measure imbibed his spirit. They will thus never get above him, for if they absorb some other spirit they will become only renegades and apostates who are no longer “under” him but far from

him. The relation expressed by Jesus is one that has no exceptions.

III. (:41-42) THE HYPOCRITE – YOU NEED INTEGRITY = WALK THE TALK

A. (:41-42a) Tendency to Concentrate on the Sins of Others

1. (:41) Inspection

“And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?”

Shows sense of humor on the part of Jesus – would make an effective cartoon

2. (:42a) Confrontation

“Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye?”

David Guzik: Our **hypocrisy** in these matters is almost always more evident to others than to ourselves. We may find a way to ignore the plank in our own eye, but others notice it immediately. A good example of this kind of **hypocrisy** was David's reaction to Nathan's story about a man who unjustly stole and killed another man's lamb. David quickly condemned the man, but was blind to his own sin, which was much greater (**2 Samuel 12:1-9**).

B. (:42b) Priority of Dealing With Your Own Sins

“You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.”

Donald Miller: To try to exercise moral authority over others without first having subjected one's self to the most careful moral judgment, is like trying to remove a “speck” from the eye of another with a “log” in one's own eye.

Anyabwile: Deal With Your Own Stuff -- If you have ever taken a flight on an airplane, you have heard an illustration of this point. Before takeoff, the attendant reviews the safety instructions, including instructions for putting on oxygen masks in case of an emergency. The attendant tells the passengers they must put on their own mask before helping those around them. So it is with our sin and the sins of others.

MacArthur: Here's the problem false teachers have. They can't fix you because they can't fix themselves. They can't solve your problem because they've got a massive one of their own. This is really very - it's cartoonish. The word “speck,” *karphos*, means “a chip.” This is not a tiny little piece of sand like you get in your eye. This would be like a wood chip or a piece of chaff or straw, serious problem in your eye. . .

Self-righteousness is the sin that Jesus repeatedly condemned the scribes and Pharisees for, not only in the Sermon on the Mount, but all the way through His entire ministry. Self-righteousness is a sin of blindness, it puts a beam in your eye so you can't see reality. It distorts your vision of everything because there you are looking at your own wretched sinfulness and you can't see it. You won't see it.

IV. (:43-45) THE UNRIGHTEOUS – YOU NEED RIGHTEOUSNESS = PROVEN BY FRUIT

A. (:43-44) The Condition of the Tree Will Show Itself in Fruit – Good vs Bad

1. (:43) No Exceptions

*“For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit;
nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit.”*

2. (:44a) No Surprises

“For each tree is known by its own fruit.”

Morris: A man’s deeds show what he is like at heart.

3. (:44b) Clear Expectations

*“For men do not gather figs from thorns,
nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush.”*

B. (:45) The Condition of the Heart Will Show Itself in Speech – Good vs Evil

1. (:45a) No Exceptions

*“The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good;
and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil;”*

Donald Miller: What is a true heart? It is the disposition to obey. True discipleship is the glad acknowledgment of Christ’s Lordship. And this acknowledgment lies in obedience. It is not enough to call Jesus Lord with the lips. One must own his Lordship with an obedient life.

Warren Wiersbe: A man who apologized for swearing by saying, “It really wasn’t in me!” heard a friend say, “It had to be in you or it couldn’t have come out of you!”

2. (:45b) No Surprises

“for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.”

J. C. Ryle: What kind of evidence do our words supply as to the state of our hearts? Do we talk like men whose hearts are "right in the sight of God?"--There is no evading the doctrine laid down by our Lord in this passage. Conduct is the grand test of character. Words are one great evidence of the condition of the heart.

We need the righteousness of Christ because our hearts are evil. Otherwise we won’t love others; we won’t show mercy and be gracious; we won’t deal with our own sin; we will be super critical and always finding fault with others; we will be arrogant and resistant to the truth of God’s Word. We need the righteousness of Christ.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) How can you seek counsel from others to uncover any blind spots in your life or in your understanding of the Scriptures?

- 2) How does a model of discipleship within the context of a church help to mitigate against the limitations of being disciplined by just one individual?
- 3) Where have you been able to identify your own spiritual faults and effectively address them?
- 4) When have you been tempted to give someone a pass and assume their Christian profession is valid despite an absence of visible fruit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: Again our world tells us, “You cannot know someone’s heart.” The culture proclaims that “judging someone’s heart” is about the most immoral thing we can attempt. Everyone says the heart is a secret place, closed off to the world, and no one must tell you what lies in your heart.

Consider what the Great Moral Teacher says. All of us are like fruit trees. We produce either good fruit or bad fruit. The fruit we produce actually comes from our hearts. The invisible things of the heart are revealed by the visible actions and audible words of a person. We do not see into another person’s heart, but that does not mean the heart never reveals itself. The words and actions tell us what lies beyond natural sight in the heart. . .

We will not discern or judge the hearts of others with any kind of clarity or accuracy unless we are first generous in our posture toward them, are following sound teaching ourselves, and are eager to deal with our own stuff first. . . A generous posture keeps us from being mean and stingy in our judgments. Following sound teaching helps us know what is and is not moral. Dealing with our own sin creates compassion and integrity.

MacArthur: So be careful who you follow, folks. Be careful who your teacher is. The world is full of teachers, spiritual terrorists hiding in apparently safe places, dispensing spiritual anthrax, and doing it in a way that is so deceptive and so subtle people are literally inhaling it gladly. And in the end, they wind up in the pit because their teachers are blind, they are earthly, they are hypocritical, and they are evil. And what they produce is the same blindness, the same earthiness, the same hypocrisy, and the same evil that is characteristic of their own lives.

Steven Cole - Some commentators struggle with the flow of thought here, but I think there is a logical flow. **Jesus was speaking primarily to His disciples, whom He was training to be leaders.** Rather than judging others (**Lu 6:36-38**), they must judge themselves or they will be like blind guides of the blind, whose followers would be just like them (**Lu 6:39-40**). Thus they must take the log out of their own eye before they try to help others with the speck in their eye (**Lu 6:41-42**). As they examine themselves, they should look at their fruit (**Lu 6:43-45**). If their words are judgmental, bitter, and evil, it indicates that their hearts are evil. But if they are merciful, forgiving, and generous, it indicates that God has truly done a work of grace in their hearts. That is the flow of thought here.

Joanie Yoder: Our Daily Bread – Pointer and Beaners – Luke 6:42

Some people make judging others their specialty. According to some century-old church records, a congregation in a small midwestern town in the United States appointed two officers in the

church and gave them the titles of “Pointer” and “Beaner.” They each had a special responsibility during the Sunday sermons.

The duty of Pointer was to call out the names of those in the congregation who needed to take particular note of the sermon. Beaner’s task was to sit in the choir loft with a bean shooter (no doubt the envy of young boys) and awaken drowsy attenders with a well-aimed bean. Who would want to attend that church?

Jesus warned about the danger of pointing out the faults of others. He said people with planks in their eyes should not attempt to remove specks out of other people’s eyes. He challenged His hearers to choose humility rather than hypocrisy by always applying the truth to themselves before noting the faults in others.

What would people find in our churches today? Those who specialize in speck removal or plank removal? If it’s the latter, they’ll likely hear someone say, “I’m glad I heard today’s sermon—I really needed it!” And they may want to return next Sunday.

By grace one day I came to see
That it would wiser be
To cease my criticizing "them"
And right what's wrong with me.
—Beck

Be patient with the faults of others; they have to be patient with yours.

TEXT: Luke 6:46-49

TITLE: TWO CONTRASTING FOUNDATIONS

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL SECURITY COMES FROM OBEYING THE WORD OF THE LORD

INTRODUCTION:

This is one of the simplest lessons the Lord Jesus ever taught His disciples. It is a familiar story to any child from their Sunday School days. The interpretation is straightforward. The application is what is critical. Obedience to Christ is not optional. It lies at the heart of genuine conversion and true discipleship. The false dichotomy between accepting Jesus only as Savior while reserving for some time in the future the decision regarding embracing His Lordship is exposed here. If you profess a connection to Jesus Christ but fail to obey His commands and teachings you are a hypocrite and your religious life will eventually collapse into permanent ruin.

Steven Cole: Many other New Testament verses virtually equate saving faith with obedience and unbelief with disobedience, because the connection is inseparable (see **Acts 5:32; 6:7; Rom. 1:5; 2:4-10; 6:16; 10:16, 21; 15:18; 16:19, 26; 2 Thess. 1:8; Heb. 3:18, 19; 5:9; 11:8, 31; 1 Pet. 1:2, 22; 2:8; 4:17**). As we saw in our last study, the nature of the tree determines the type of fruit. If a person has received a new nature through faith in Christ, that new nature will bear good fruit. We are saved by grace through faith apart from works, but the faith that saves always results in good works.

I. (:46) TEACHING LESSON = EMBRACING THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST REQUIRES OBEDIENCE, NOT JUST LIP SERVICE

“And why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?”

Jesus offers up His simple teaching here by way of one probing question.

The genuineness of your discipleship commitment will be demonstrated by the extent of your obedience to the commands of Christ.

Morris: To call anyone “*Lord*” is to admit that allegiance is owed.

Lenski: This means pretense, hypocrisy, exclusion from the kingdom more decisively than for those who never knew Jesus or claimed connection with him.

II. (:47-49) OBJECT LESSON = HOUSES BUILT ON 2 DIFFERENT FOUNDATIONS

A. (:47-48) House Built on Solid Foundation = Well Built / Destined for Permanence

1. (:47a) Case Study: the Obedient Disciple

“Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like:”

2. (:48a) Characteristic: Solid Foundation

“he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock;”

Morris: This is an essential for sound building, but it is time-consuming and it is hard work. So some avoid it.

3. (:48b) Calamity: Torrential Flooding

“and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house”

4. (:48c) Final Condition: House Stood Firm

“and could not shake it, because it had been well built.”

B. (:49) House Built on No Foundation = Poorly Built / Destined for Destruction

1. Case Study: the Disobedient Disciple

“But the one who has heard, and has not acted accordingly,”

2. Characteristic: No Foundation

“is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation;”

3. Calamity: Torrential Flooding

“and the torrent burst against it”

4. Final Condition: House Collapsed

“and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

Morris: He may have every outward appearance of respectability and he may be noted for his religious observances, but lacking a foundation he is nothing.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is this paragraph connected to the previous context in chapter 6?
- 2) Have you encountered folks who have tried to characterize “Lordship salvation” (in contrast to just believing in Jesus as Savior) as some type of false gospel that is works oriented? How does this passage play into that controversy?
- 3) Where does the power come to obey the commands of Christ and thus prove to be a genuine disciple?
- 4) How can we better warn people against false security based on a simple profession of some type of connection to Jesus Christ?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: What is a true heart? It is the disposition to obey. True discipleship is the glad acknowledgment of Christ’s Lordship. And this acknowledgment lies in obedience. It is not

enough to call Jesus Lord with the lips. One must own his Lordship with an obedient life -- “*do what I tell you*” (vs. 46; see **James 1:22-25**; **Ezek. 33:30-33**). Whether one’s acknowledgment of Jesus’ Lordship is only in word or is in reality will be revealed by the crises of life. If one stands when floods of trouble arise for the sake of Christ, his discipleship has been real. But if not – the “*ruin*” is “*great*” (vs. 49). It may be that in the background of the picture here is the Last Judgment, when “*all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do*” (**Heb. 4:13**). The reader is left with the seriousness of this sounding in his ears.

Lenski: But the supreme test is the final flood of death, which is described only by a relative clause: “*against which the river broke,*” this river again occurs with the article and is made as definite as the rock and the earth.

J. Ligon Duncan: a disciple is a person who comes to look like his teacher. Jesus is saying that His disciples are led by His Word in their lives because their hearts are fixed on Him as their treasure. And thus, when their earthly lives are assaulted, whether it's by temptation or by trial, they hold fast to the life that He has given them - that they have been called to - because their lives are built on a foundation that is sure and certain and cannot be shaken by all of the circumstances of this life. Their treasure is in heaven so it's secure, it can't be taken away by trials and it can't be equaled by anything offered in temptation.

And so Jesus’ disciples’ lives are led by His Word and they bear out the truth that they are His disciples, not just by what they claim, but by what they do, what they choose, how they respond to the trials of this life.

MacArthur: There is this new inclusivism that says anybody in any religion who is **sincere** is going to go to heaven. And it’s being espoused by people with Ph. D.s from theological institutions and who have religious titles and they’re broadening everything. They, frankly, all these Ph.D.s, and religious leaders, and theologians could learn something very important from uneducated American slaves who knew the truth and invented a little song that said, “*Everybody talking about heaven ain’t going there.*” And that was true, and it still is, and they had a far better theology than the erudite today who want to include everybody. . .

But that is the group to whom He speaks, very religious people. They are as close to the truth as they can possibly get because they bought the entire Old Testament, they’re worshipping the God of the Old Testament, and they’re looking for the fulfillment of the promises of the God of the Old Testament in the coming of Messiah and the salvation that’s going to come with Him. So it’s as close as you can get. And they follow Jesus.

And Jesus never says to them, “You guys are okay, you’re close enough. Close is good.” He never says that. This is not horseshoes. Close is not enough. How close were they? **Verse 46**, “*Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord?’*” This is good. Is it appropriate to call Jesus “Lord”? It is. It is appropriate to call Jesus Lord. “*Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord?’*” Well you could say, “Because we respect You so much. You have divine power. You speak divine truth. You are definitely from God, so we call you ‘Lord, Lord.’” . . .

Jesus won’t have it. Jesus says, “The problem is you call me ‘Lord’ but you don’t do what I say. That’s the problem. I’m not looking for your curiosity. I’m not looking for your fascination. I’m not looking for your admiration. I’m telling you what it is to be a true follower.” . . .

How close is close enough? Close doesn't count at all. Judaism doesn't count. Judaism that acknowledged Jesus as a spokesman for God didn't count. Judaism that went so far as to actually try to function in Jesus' name, and there were some people among the Jews who were trying to cast out demons in Jesus' name. Remember, the disciples reported that to Him. Close doesn't count. You have to do what He said. What He said, of course, was to recognize your sin, cry out to God for grace, and mercy, and forgiveness. . .

And so you have a choice, the most important choice you'll ever make. And the choice is between damning religion, and Christ. Okay? That's it. And anything but Christ is damning religion. It catapults people into hell, no matter what it promises or what it claims about heaven. And truly, everybody talking about heaven ain't going there unless by true obedience to the gospel you have repented, confessed, believed, received Christ as the foundation, you will not survive divine judgment.

Steven Cole: A widespread false teaching in the evangelical church today is that you can accept Jesus as your Savior, but that obeying Him as Lord of your life is optional. Those who promote this teaching mistakenly think that they are preserving the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, apart from human works. They do not deny the importance of submitting to Christ as Lord, but they do insist that it has nothing to do with saving faith. And so they teach that it is possible for a person truly to believe in Christ as Savior even though he never submits to Him as Lord.

I believe that this teaching rests on a mistaken notion of the nature of saving faith and that it gives false assurance to many who think they are Christians, but are not truly saved.

Scripture is clear that without holiness, no one will see the Lord (**Heb. 12:14**).

Genuine saving faith always results in a life of progressive godliness. If a person claims to be saved, but has no hunger for God's Word, no growing hatred of sin, and no growth in godly living, he needs to examine whether he is truly in the faith (**2 Cor. 13:5**).

As Jesus comes to the end of a sermon in which He has said some difficult things, He drives home the necessity of obeying what He has taught. . .

Jesus here shows three reasons why **obedience to Him as Lord is not optional**: first, because it is the true test of professing Christ (**6:46**); second, because it is the foundation that will withstand the tests of time and eternity (**6:47-48**); and, third, because those who do not obey Christ face sudden and final destruction (**6:49**).

TEXT: Luke 7:1-10

TITLE: AMAZING FAITH – HOW SWEET THE PICTURE

BIG IDEA:

THE GREAT FAITH OF THE HUMBLE GENTILE CENTURION FOCUSED ON THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS TO JUST SPEAK THE SAVING WORD

INTRODUCTION:

When we come to Jesus as little children in humility and complete dependence, we see the simplicity of trusting Him to deliver us. Here you have a very powerful man who understood authority and submission as well as his own sinfulness in the presence of a holy God. He knew his own unworthiness and yet he also had confidence in the love and compassion of Jesus. So he reached out to make this plea for salvation on behalf of his dying and beloved slave. His great faith was commended by Jesus because He did not even require Jesus to be physically present to still believe that His Word alone was powerful enough to effect the required miracle of healing.

This passage offers up a series of **3 Testimonies** to important spiritual realities that relate both to this physical healing as well as to our spiritual salvation.

(:1) TRANSITION – SCENE SWITCHES BACK TO CAPERNAUM = MINISTRY HQ

“When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.”

I. (:2-5) TESTIMONY TO THE WORTHINESS OF THE CENTURION AND HIS DYING SLAVE

A. (:2-3) The Worthiness of the Dying Slave Motivates the Petition for Healing

1. (:2) The Plight of the Worthy Slave

“And a certain centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.”

Matthew's gospel categorizes the disease as paralysis.

Lenski: In times of peace the Romans quartered no troops in Capernaum. This officer was in the pay of Herod Antipas, whose troops were made up of foreigners of various nationalities. In the narrative, too, this man appears as a Gentile. A centurion commanded a hundred men or less.

Tremendous faith to have the expectation of healing when the person was at the point of death.

2. (:3) The Petition to Heal the Slave

“And when he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.”

Great love evidenced by the centurion

MacArthur: Now normally the Jewish elders wouldn't respond to a request by a Roman soldier of the conquering army, the occupation army. But these elders are asked to be his representatives, his intercessors, his advocates, his intermediaries to go to Jesus because the soldier doesn't feel

worthy. So he knows more about Jesus than that Jesus is a healer. He knows himself to be a sinner and he has received the information that Jesus is not and therefore it is that sense of shame and unworthiness that restrains him from going himself.

B. (:4-5) The Worthiness of the Centurion Commended to Jesus as the Basis for Granting the Petition

1. (:4) Rationale for Granting the Request = Worthiness of the Centurion

“And when they had come to Jesus, they earnestly entreated Him, saying, ‘He is worthy for You to grant this to him;’”

2. (:5) Reasons Supporting This Rationale – 2 mentioned specifically

a. (:5a) Favorable Disposition Towards the Jewish Nation

“for he loves our nation,”

b. (:5b) Facilitation of Jewish Worship by Building Their Synagogue

“and it was he who built us our synagogue.”

Great Generosity evidenced by the centurion

Application: What Do Others Testify About You?

II. (:6-8) TESTIMONY TO THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

A. (:6-7) Recognition of the Power and Authority of Jesus

1. (:6-7a) Centurion Testifies to His Own Unworthiness Compared to Jesus

“Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, ‘Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; 7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You.’”

Great Humility evidenced by the centurion

Donald Miller: Humility and a sense of unworthiness led him to send friends to Jesus to tell him that he need not bother coming to his house. If Jesus would only speak the word of healing, his servant would recover.

MacArthur: Now some have suggested he didn't want Jesus to come into his house because he knew Jewish prohibition because they had a prohibition about ever going into a Gentile house. You can read about that in Acts 10, Acts 11. That wasn't it. This is not some kind of ceremonial issue with him. This is personal. There was just an overwhelming sense of shame. He was a true penitent. He was truly a broken and a contrite heart whom the Lord will not despise. He had a beatitude attitude.

Steven Cole: These accounts can be harmonized by recognizing that Matthew and Luke had different purposes in writing. Matthew wrote primarily for a Jewish audience, to explain why the Jews rejected the gospel and why it was open to the Gentiles. To make his point, as he often does, Matthew condenses the narrative. It would be extraneous to his purpose to go into the detail about the centurion approaching Jesus through messengers. Besides, it is true to say that what a man does through his agents, he does himself. We see this in the story itself: *“he built our*

synagogue” (7:5). They do not mean that he personally did the work, but rather that he built it through workers. Thus Matthew eliminates unnecessary details to show that this Gentile centurion had faith in Jesus.

But Luke’s purpose was different. He was writing to a Gentile audience, most of whom had not seen Jesus. For him, the greater detail about this centurion who believed in Jesus, although he did not see Him, was quite to the point, so he included it. The two accounts do not contradict each other.

2. (:7b) Centurion Recognizes the Power and Authority of Jesus to Speak a Miracle Without Even Being Present

“but just say the word, and my servant will be healed.”

Great Faith evidenced by the centurion

Lenski: Others thought that Jesus would have to touch the sufferers before he could heal them, but this man was sure that Jesus needs to speak only *“a word.”*

Steven Cole: How do we grow in humility? True humility stems from seeing my insufficiency and Christ’s all-sufficiency. The centurion’s servant was about to die (7:2). He was helpless to deal with this irreversible illness and imminent death. What a picture of the human race, impotent to deal with the ravages of sin and its ultimate result, spiritual death! The centurion saw his own insufficiency to deal with the problem, but he also saw Christ’s all-sufficiency.

B. (:8) Appreciation of the Response to Authority

1. Experience Personally With Authority

“For I, too, am a man under authority, with soldiers under me;”

Great Submission evidenced by the centurion

2. Efficacious Nature of Authority – It Commands Instant Obedience

*“and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes;
and to another, 'Come!' and he comes;
and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it.”*

Lenski: The argument is from the less to the greater. If even a man who is under authority is instantly obeyed by those under him, how much more will Jesus be obeyed, who has all powers and all agencies under his command!

Application: What Do You Testify About Jesus?

III. (:9-10) TESTIMONY TO THE GREAT FAITH OF THIS GENTILE CENTURION

A. (:9) Jesus Proclaims the Special Greatness of This Gentile’s Faith

Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the multitude that was following Him, ‘I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.’”

What type of man amazes Jesus?

MacArthur: Wouldn't I like to be a man who amazed Jesus, whose love, whose generosity, whose mercy, whose devotion, whose love of the truth, whose love of the people of God, whose love of God, whose humility, whose penitence and whose great faith and whose submission to the power and authority of Christ would amaze Him. You don't want to settle for anything less.

Morris: Twice only is Jesus recorded as marveling at people, here on account of faith and in Nazareth because of unbelief (**Mk. 6:6**).

Lenski: Only twice did Jesus praise faith as being great, here and in the case of the Canaanite woman. This makes his doing so the more noteworthy.

B. (:10) Jesus Performs the Healing

“And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.”

Application: What Does Jesus Testify About You?

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Trace the theme of “worthiness” in this passage. Who is worthy or not and Why? How do you evaluate your “worthiness”?
- 2) How can you grow in love and compassion for others?
- 3) Does your concept of the Lordship and authority of Jesus cause you to obey Him immediately and completely?
- 4) Where have you witnessed “great faith” that would amaze you? What was so great about it?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: This commander was a loving man:

- 1) He loved his slave.
- 2) He loved his subjects.
- 3) He loved submission.

He did not love himself. He was humble. Even though he was a man of authority and position, he did not let that go to his head.

J. Ligon Duncan: his man is clearly a good man, a kind man. The Jewish elders around him respect him. He seems to clearly love this servant of his who is sick unto death, and he is ready to call for a master healer to come and to spare his life. And not only that, this centurion, while he has been stationed in Israel, becomes deeply impressed with the religion of Israel and with the God that the Jews worship and with the morality of their conduct, and he has gotten to the point where he has actually devoted a large proportion of his income to the building of a synagogue.

And so when he hears of this Jewish prophet, Jesus, who has the power to heal, he speaks to the elders of that synagogue that he had helped to build and he says, “Look, I’m a Gentile and I’m a Roman centurion, would you friends, you Jewish friends, go speak to this Jewish prophet and see if He would consent to come and help my servant who’s dying?” And these men clearly love and esteem him and so they go to Jesus.

MacArthur: Connection of this story to the preceding Sermon on the Mount –

And He’s going to give them this sermon which essentially sorts out for them who is a real disciple, who is real. And the characteristics of the real disciples we have already learned. Do you remember verses 20 to 26? The emphasis there is that **a true disciple is penitent**. A true disciple is recognizing spiritual poverty. A true disciple is hungry for a righteousness he knows he doesn’t have. A true disciple, verse 21, is a weeper, sorrowful, sad over sin.

Then we also learned that a true disciple, while hating sin, particularly in himself, is a lover. He hates sin but he loves others and we know in verse 27 he loves his enemies. This is supernatural. This isn’t true on the natural level. This isn’t true of unconverted people. He is a **lover of even his enemies**.

We further learn in verse 30 that he is **a giver**, that he is marked by generosity and generosity to people who will take what he gives and give nothing back. So he has a supernatural view of sin. He sees it the way God sees it. He has a supernatural love, even for his enemies. And he has a supernatural generosity so that verse 35 says he loves his enemies, he does good, he lends, expects nothing in return and he definitely is a son of the Most High.

Furthermore, verse 36, **he’s merciful**. He has compassion. He has gentleness. This is evidence of the work of God in his heart, the transforming work of God in his heart. Now beyond that he **follows the right teacher**, the true teacher. He doesn’t follow blind guides. He doesn’t follow barren teachers. He follows the Lord, verse 36, and he **calls Him Lord but he does what He says** and therefore he builds his house on the rock. That’s essentially the sermon. And we’ve gone through that in great detail but that’s the **description he gives of a true disciple**.

And then immediately, Luke says, Jesus encounters the living illustration of that. That’s what we’ll call the context, or the content setting. The chronological setting, it was right after the sermon. The content setting, he illustrates the very same truth of the sermon. It’s a perfect example.

Steven Cole: An Effective Servant

Although the centurion was in the military, which is not known as a seedbed for piety, he had **great faith**. It is interesting that every centurion mentioned in the New Testament is presented in a favorable light. This man shows us that we can serve Christ in any “secular” job. The centurion lived in Capernaum, which Jesus later castigated for its lack of faith (**Luke 10:15**), but he was not affected by their unbelief. This shows us that we can be godly people in the midst of an evil, unbelieving world. Wherever you are and whatever you do, this centurion shows you how to be an effective servant of Christ. He possesses three qualifications that every servant of Jesus Christ must seek to develop in his or her life:

An effective servant of Christ needs an exalted view of Jesus, a lowly view of himself, and a caring view of others.

TEXT: Luke 7:11-17

TITLE: DEALING WITH HEARTACHE

BIG IDEA:

NO HEARTACHE IS TOO HOPELESS FOR THE COMPASSIONATE GRACE OF JESUS -- WHO ALONE HAS THE POWER OVER EVEN DEATH

INTRODUCTION:

J. C. Ryle: Let us never forget this great truth. The world around us is full of sorrow. Sickness, and pain, and infirmity, and poverty, and labor, and trouble, abound on every side. From one end of the world to the other, the history of families is full of lamentation, and weeping, and mourning, and woe. And whence does it all come? Sin is the fountain and root to which all must be traced. There would neither have been tears, nor cares, nor illness, nor deaths, nor funerals in the earth, if there had been no sin. We must bear this state of things patiently. We cannot alter it. We may thank God that there is a remedy in the Gospel, and that this life is not all. But in the meantime, let us lay the blame at the right door. Let us lay the blame on sin.

Steven Cole: Christ's Hope and Power for a Hurting World

Nineteenth century British preacher Joseph Parker said, "Preach to the suffering, and you will never lack a congregation. There is a broken heart in every pew."

In such a world, there is a desperate need for a message of true hope to overcome the despair and of real power to overcome our weakness. Sometimes we feel like the guy who saw some light at the end of the tunnel, but then he realized that it was a train coming at him. That is false hope! We need true hope.

The gospel of Jesus Christ offers that true hope and real power to this hurting world.

The life-giving word of Christ is a message of hope and power in a world of despair and weakness.

(:11) PROLOGUE – DIVINELY ORDAINED SETTING

A. When – Had just healed someone who was almost dead

"And it came about soon afterwards,"

B. Where = the Place of Divine Appointment / Divine Purpose

"that He went to a city called Nain;"

Small town SE of Nazareth; name means "*beautiful*" – something beautiful transpired here

Geldenhuys: a place to the south of Capernaum and about two miles to the west of Endor. It was situated at a high elevation against the slopes of the Little Hermon and still exists today as a small village called Nein. Tombs in the rock have been found before the eastern gate of the village along the road leading to Capernaum.

MacArthur: Nain is about twenty miles from Capernaum. It would be a full day's walk to walk twenty miles. It was south of Capernaum. It was about six miles southwest of Nazareth so that Capernaum, Nazareth and Nain, kind of in a triangle. It was three miles west of a town called Endor. You remember the witch of Endor. It was a small and very nondescript and insignificant town. By the way, it still exists today with the same name. Two hundred people live there. It was on the slope of some mountains called Little Hermon, near the valley of Jezreel on a hill called Moreh. The other side of that hill had a little town called Shunam where Elijah went to the Shunammite lady. So it was just a little town, nondescript, insignificant. And what's going on here is that Jesus determines to go to Nain and to drag this huge entourage with Him for this day's journey.

C. With Whom – Huge Following

1. Disciples

“and His disciples were going along with Him,”

Steven Cole: Note how Luke paints the scene: Two large crowds converge. The one crowd was grieving and hopeless. Hired professional mourners would have been wailing loudly. The bereaved mother, wearing torn clothes, would have been walking, probably upon the arms of comforters, in front of the open stretcher bearing the shrouded corpse. It was a hopeless scene. Enter the second crowd, coming from the opposite direction, following Jesus, the Messiah, who was performing great miracles. The lively chatter and the bright faces would have shown that this crowd had hope. What a sharp contrast between these two crowds! Wherever the Lord Jesus is absent, there is despair in the face of death. Wherever He is present, there is hope.

2. Large Multitude

“accompanied by a large multitude.”

I. (:12) SAD FUNERAL PROCESSION FOR THE WIDOW'S ONLY SON

A. Hopelessness of the Dead Man

“Now as He approached the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out,”

No self-improvement possible here; this man was completely dead; his life was over; about to be buried; This was a funeral procession; probably professional mourners had been hired to help with the lamenting and the weeping and wailing. They were leaving the city to approach the burial grounds. The man was clearly dead.

MacArthur: Small town like this wouldn't have a wall because there wouldn't be anything to protect, nobody is going to come in and siege Nain. It's just a small little town. But they had a gate because the gate symbolized that they had a city. And the gate was at the head of the main street and it was the place where they socialized and where the elders of the city sat and adjudicated on the issues and so it had a gate, sort of a symbolic gate, just sort of identifying the town. Sometimes when you're driving through a country, in a rural area, you'll come to a small town and they'll have some stone pillars on the side with the name of the town. That's not some wall of protection, that's just a point of identification. Something like that.

Lenski: The situation that Jesus encountered is sketched effectively so as to let us feel the full pathos of the scene. Jesus, the Prince of life, here meets death, carrying away his helpless prey. Looked at thus, the scene becomes dramatic in a supreme way.

J. Ligon Duncan: In those days, the way a funeral procession worked was, the bereaved person walked in front of the funeral bier, and the bier was actually not much more than a wide plank of wood. There was no closed coffin. It was an open coffin. The body of a deceased person was laid out on that plank of wood, already embalmed to be taken to whatever grave there was to be entombed. And this woman is walking in front of the funeral bier of her son and her son's wrapped body is on top of that open plank of wood. And she's weeping, and Jesus walks up to her and says, "*Do not weep.*"

This would be a cruel word if you could not do anything to alleviate the grief.

B. Anguish of the Mother

"the only son of his mother, and she was a widow;"

She had lost her husband previously and now had lost her only son. She would be bereft of financial resources and possibly reduced to the status of a beggar. This man was very special and precious to her.

C. Grief of the Crowd

"and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her."

This was a large funeral; the family was well known and probably well-liked; the people felt the pain of this poor widow who was now bereft of her only son.

II. (:13-15) COMPASSIONATE RESTORATION OF LIFE BY JESUS

A. (:13) Jesus Intervenes – His Motivation

1. Heart of Compassion

"And when the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her,"

Some miracles motivated by faith; this one by love and compassion.

First usage by Luke of this name "*the Lord*"

Lenski: It always designates him in his deity as our Messiah-Ruler in whom we trust, whom we obey, who is the source of our salvation, and whom we worship.

MacArthur: And then, divine purpose and divine providence blends into divine compassion.

And you see something in Jesus that is true of God, **verse 13**, "*When Jesus the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her.*" That's just amazing. The verb is *splagchnizomai*. It's a funny word. It has to do with feeling something in your gut, you know, you feel emotion and it churns your stomach. It makes your heart beat rapidly. It makes your heart stop sometimes, if you feel something strongly enough, some kind of fear. And that's how the Jews described affection, feeling, compassion. This is God. One thing is very clear is the distinction of the God of Israel, the true and living God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Creator, Redeemer God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true and living God, is a God of compassion, right? And that against the background of all other deities in the whole history of religion, none of which is compassionate, loving, gracious, forgiving, kind, merciful, tender-hearted. There are no Savior-gods in other religions. There are no gods of love, and tenderness and compassion. This

isn't even a spiritual issue here. This isn't even about redemption. This is about just plain sympathy with human sadness.

Steven Cole: If we want to be effective witnesses for Christ, then we must ask Him to deepen our compassion for the lost. It has truly been said that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. When we show people the compassion of Christ, it often opens their hearts to hear the truth of the gospel. . .

God's unmerited favor gives us hope. This woman did nothing to merit this miracle. Unlike the centurion in the miracle just preceding (7:4), no one said to Jesus, "This woman is worthy for you to grant this to her." She did not even ask the Lord to do it. There is no trace of faith or expectation on her part. And there was nothing in the dead young man to merit this miracle. Jesus didn't say, "What a good looking corpse! I've never seen such a fine corpse! I'm going to raise him from the dead." I don't care how nicely you dress them up, corpses do not have any merit. This miracle came totally from Christ's great compassion and love. It was all of grace.

2. Word of Consolation

"and said to her, 'Do not weep.'"

Must have been strange to receive this command before witnessing the actual miracle itself. (cf. Jesus telling His disciples to "Fear not" before calming the seas.) But it all transpired so quickly that there was no separation between the command the miracle.

It requires the power of God to make this a word of consolation rather than an empty attempt at encouragement

B. (:14) Jesus Initiates – His Interaction

1. Confronts Death

a. Approaches

"And He came up"

b. Touches

"and touched the coffin;"

MacArthur: A ceremonially defiling act, normally. Jesus graphically illustrated how impervious He was to such defilements. When He touched the coffin, its defilement did not taint Him; rather, His power immediately dispelled the presence of all death and defilement. This was the first of 3 times Jesus raised people from the dead (cf. 8:49-56; Jn 11:20-44). **Verse 22** implies that Christ also raised others who are not specifically mentioned.

J. Ligon Duncan: there is no greater ritual impurity in Israel than to touch a corpse or to touch a thing that a corpse has touched. It does not mean one day of ritual uncleanness. It means seven days of ritual uncleanness and a very elaborate purification ceremony to attend with it. Anything that a corpse touched was declared unclean. If you came into contact with anything that a corpse touched, and then came into contact with another person, they became unclean as well as you. There was no defilement more dramatic than contact with the dead in the ceremonial law of Israel. And here is Jesus, reaching up His hand to touch the funeral bier.

- c. Stops the Procession
“and the bearers came to a halt.”

- 2. Commands Life
“And He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, arise!’”

C. (:15) Jesus Imparts – His Restoration

- 1. Restoration of Life
“And the dead man sat up, and began to speak.”

Leon Morris: There is nothing elaborate. Jesus simply spoke the word and the miracle took place.

- 2. Restoration of Relationship
“And Jesus gave him back to his mother.”

Steven Cole: There was an emotional reunion of mother and son. Her tears of grief and sorrow were changed to tears of joy. The fellowship that had ended with his death was restored by his life. The help and support that her son had formerly given was now reinstated. It must have given the Lord Jesus great joy to present this young man alive to his mother.

III. (:16) INCOMPLETE RECOGNITION OF WHO JESUS IS

A. Enough Impact to Inspire Fear

“And fear gripped them all,”

B. Enough Impact to Relate This Event to the Power of God

“and they began glorifying God, saying,”

- 1. Recognition of Jesus as a Great Prophet
“A great prophet has arisen among us!”

Remember it had been over 400 years since God had visited His people with a prophet.

MacArthur: Here's what they said, *“A great prophet has arisen in us,”* *en* in the Greek. A great prophet has arisen in us? Was Jesus a great prophet? Yes, the greatest prophet that ever lived. Is that true? Yes, but is that not understating the reality? That's what the Moslems say. That's what the Mormons say. That's what the Jehovah's Witnesses say. That's what almost everybody would say. “Hey, he was a great preacher.” A great preacher, not the prophet of **Deuteronomy 18:15 to 18**, prophesied by Moses to be the Messiah. He was *“a prophet who rose up from within us.”* No. He is the Son of God who came down from above us. It's that underestimating that is so deadly. They knew God visited, but they didn't understand that Jesus was God and so they missed the time of their visitation and were judged by God. Sad, a great prophet; it's an **incomplete confession.**

- 2. Recognition of Jesus as Somehow Connecting the Jews to Their God
“and, ‘God has visited His people!’”

Is it easier to forgive sins or to restore health to the lame? How about raising the dead!

Bruce Hurt: literally means to look upon, to go to see, to examine closely, to inspect, to examine the state of affairs of something, to look after or to oversee. The idea of visiting is more than just making a social call. As **Hiebert** writes "In classical Greek, it was commonly used of visiting the sick, whether by a doctor or a friend.' In Jewish usage, it commonly denoted to visit with the aim of caring for and supplying the needs of those visited (**Job 2:11; Jer. 23:2; Ezek. 34:11; Zech. 11:16; Mt. 25:36, 43**). The term implies concern and personal contact with the needy; it involves more than a matter of charity by proxy."

Visited conveys the sense that God has come to help his people.

Donald Miller: Two Old Testament prophets had restored dead sons to their mothers (**I Kings 17:17-24; II Kings 4:18-37**). Now God was acting again through a prophet.

The crowd did not grasp the full identity of Jesus at this time.

(:17) EPILOGUE – SPREADING REPUTATION OF JESUS

*“And this report concerning Him went out all over Judea,
and in all the surrounding district.”*

You could not keep a lid on the reporting of this miracle.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do you believe that Jesus wants to intervene in your life to deal with your heartaches and sorrows?
- 2) How can you develop more of a heart of compassion for the heartaches and sorrows of others?
- 3) What relationships have been improved or restored in your personal situation because of the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- 4) What type of incomplete confessions of Christ do you find in the world around you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuis: In this story the Saviour’s sympathy with the sorrowing and His absolute divine power over the invisible spirit-world are gloriously revealed. We see Him here as the loving Comforter, the Victor over death, and the Reuniter of separated dear ones. What He did here for the widowed mother and son He will one day do for all the faithful in a perfect and final form. He will bring full comfort, He will raise all His people in incorruptibility, and will reunite us, in the heavenly realm, with our loved ones who have died in Him.

Anyabwile: Jesus is not merely Lord over the living. He is also Lord over the dead! He has authority to reverse the power of death and to give life again.

MacArthur: With that split second that He said that, life surged into the corpse in that split second, just like with the daughter of Jairus, just like with Lazarus, came right out of the grave. This is created power. This is God. In John 5, it's important that there is a recognition of John 5:25 to 29. Just listen to this. *"Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming, an hour is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live."* Hmm.

"There's an hour coming in which," verse 28 says, *"all who are in the tombs will hear His voice and come forth, those who did good deeds to a resurrection of life, and those who committed evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment, for as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself."* So God the Father has the ability to give life. God the Son has been given the responsibility to give life.

Someday in the final end of the age, He will give life to the whole world. Every person who has ever lived and died in this world, He will resurrect; some to the resurrection of life in heaven, some to the resurrection of damnation in hell. He will — has the power obviously to do that — raise every single person who has ever lived from the dead. This is a very simple task, this is just one. Then it will be millions upon billions. And He will do it the same way. "Arise," and out they will come, from the sea and from the land and the graves, the Scripture says, they will come. They will come to the resurrection of life into heavenly glory, or they will come to the Great White Throne and the resurrection of damnation to eternal hell. Jesus has been given the power to raise all the dead of all the ages which He will do in the future. Pretty simple task for Him to raise this one young man. He, by the way, has the keys of hell and death. Isn't that **Revelation 1:18**? He is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and Last.

Rod Mattoon: "A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Cemetery."

In this portion of Scripture, we read of a funeral procession that did not end at the grave. No, it was interrupted. In fact, it would have been a mortician's nightmare because what normally was settled, the death of the person, was not settled at all. The funeral was not completed. What was usually final, was not finalized, but started over again. It was a funny thing that happened on the way to the cemetery. What was dead, all of the sudden was alive. This is what happens, however, when Jesus gets involved in impossible, hopeless situations. He resurrects and revives, bringing life to that which is dead or dying. When Jesus comes on the scene, funny things tend to happen.

- Impossible things are made possible.
- Hopelessness is replaced with hope.
- Tears are dried by joy.
- Problems are replaced with solutions.
- Sorrow gives way to serenity.
- Emptiness is evicted to the tenant of satisfaction.
- The presence of God and His peace plummets the panic that tugs at our heart.
- **Luke 1:37**—For with God nothing shall be impossible.

TEXT: Luke 7:18-35

TITLE: THE MIRACLES OF JESUS SAY EVERYTHING THAT NEED TO BE SAID

BIG IDEA:

THE MIRACLES PERFORMED BY JESUS:

- CONFIRM HIS IDENTITY AS PROMISED MESSIAH
- CALM THE DOUBTS OF COMMENDED DISCIPLES (LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST)
- CALL OUT THE DUPLICITY OF HIS UNREASONABLE CRITICS

INTRODUCTION:

Don't underestimate the value of the miracles performed by Jesus. He certainly did not. These miracles have been documented by the eyewitness accounts of the Gospel writers so that we can rely on them today to confirm the identity of Jesus as the long-promised and long-expected Messiah – the unique Son of God who would perform God's ordained program of suffering on the cross for our sins in order to bring in the glory of His kingdom on earth. Jesus was announced as the sacrificial Lamb of God and the King of Glory by the prophetic ministry of His forerunner John the Baptist. And Jesus was opposed at every turn by the criticism of the unreasonable Jewish religious leaders who rejected the call to repentance and faith because of their blindness and pride and self-righteousness. Eventually "*wisdom will be justified by her children.*"

MacArthur: Doubt is a struggle to believe. It is a struggle to believe. It is something that prevents me from fully believing. It can be momentary. It can be prolonged. It can be permanent. . . Every true expression of doubt in the four gospels relates to believers. Doubt is something that is part of being a believer. So we again go back to what the man said. "*Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.*" And you can identify with that and so can I. There have been times in all of our lives when in the midst of our believing we struggled with doubts. Some of you are going through that even now. Doubt is presented as a believer's problem.

(:18) PROLOGUE

"And the disciples of John reported to him about all these things."

I. (:19-23) CONFIRMATION REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AS THE MESSIAH – HIS MIRACLES CONFIRM HIS MESSIAHSHIP

A. (:19-20) Confirmation Requested by John the Baptist – Take Your Doubts to Jesus

"And summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'"

"And when the men had come to Him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'"

B. (:21-23) Confirmation Provided by the Ministry of the Messiah

1. (:21) Record of His Healing Ministry

“At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He granted sight to many who were blind.”

2. (:22) Response of Jesus References His Overall Ministry

“And He answered and said to them, ‘Go and report to John what you have seen and heard:

*the blind receive sight,
the lame walk,
the lepers are cleansed,
and the deaf hear,
the dead are raised up,
the poor have the gospel preached to them.”*

Note that Jesus did not make any impassioned defense of His Messiahship. He did not offer deep theological arguments regarding His identity. He simply pointed to the historical facts of his miracles as fulfillment of all that God had promised in the OT about the Expected One.

Geldenhuys: By mentioning all this, Jesus wants to remind John of **Isaiah xxxv. 5-6** and **lxi. 1 ff.**, where all the works which He is constantly doing are mentioned as the blessings to be given to the people in the Messianic time. Thus by His acts Jesus proves that He is indeed the Promised One.

Spurgeon: Our old proverb says that actions speak louder than words, so an answer in his actions would be more eloquent with these inquirers than even an answer in our Lord’s own words. He bade them look at the evidences of his Messiahship which he gave them by his miraculous cures, and then he said to them, *“Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard.”* It would be well if our lives were such that, if any enquired what we were, we should only have to say that they might judge us by what they had seen and heard in our common everyday life and conversation.

3. (:23) Reward for Loyalty

“And blessed is he who keeps from stumbling over Me.”

Lenski: John is not to let the absence of certain works bling him to the glorious presence of the works that are now in full progress. Let him be satisfied with these and trust that in due time the others will follow just as these are now being done.

Application: (Directed to John the Baptist) – Remain Loyal to Jesus as the Promised Messiah

II. (:24-28) COMMENDATION REGARDING THE GREATNESS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST – HIS DOUBTS DON’T COMPROMISE HIS GREATNESS

A. (:24-26) Commending John by Use of Rhetorical Questions

*“And when the messengers of John had left,
He began to speak to the multitudes about John,”*

1. (:24b) Metaphor of a Reed Blowing in the Wind – Instead, Man of Conviction

*“What did you go out into the wilderness to look at?
A reed shaken by the wind?”*

2. (:25) Metaphor of a Man of Luxury – Instead, Man of Callouses
“But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces.”

Leon Morris: The very fact that John had lived a hard life on the simplest of fare in the roughest of places ruled out all such suggestions.

Lenski: carries the thought of the swayed reed a step farther. A man who yields to popular opinion, who bends to the will and the word of the influential and the mighty, will be rewarded by them, given a high place and the finest of garments. The adjective “*soft*” (i.e., to the touch) conveys the idea of the finest and the most costly material. It is exactly the proper word and brings out the strong contrast to the rough, harsh, cheapest kind of material in the coat of camel’s hair that was worn by John.

3. (:26) Comparison to a Typical Prophet – Instead, More than a Prophet
“But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.”

John had been granted the privilege of preparing God’s people to receive the Messiah = a very unique ministry

J. Ligon Duncan: This is not John's finest hour. And you know what Jesus turns around and does to this multitude? He turns around and He brags on John. Let me tell you about my cousin John, my servant John. There has never been a man that walked the face of this earth greater than my cousin, my friend, my servant, my forerunner, John. And the crowd cries out, God is just! Yes, that is the John that we know, that is the John that we respect! For Jesus to make that kind of a judgment is right because John is a great man. He is a man of integrity, he's fearless, he's bold, he tells us what we need to hear not what we want to hear, he opposes tyrants. This man clearly is God's man and what Jesus has said about him is right.

B. (:27-28) Commending John by Explicit Testimony

1. (:27) Testimony Regarding His Divine Mission

“This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You.'”

2. (:28) Testimony Regarding His Distinctiveness

“I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

Leon Morris: Jesus’ coming marked a watershed. He came to inaugurate the kingdom. And the least in that kingdom is greater than the greatest of men. This is a statement of historical fact. John belonged to the time of promise. The least in the kingdom is greater, not because of any personal qualities he may have, but because he belongs to the time of fulfilment. Jesus is not minimizing the importance of John. He is putting membership of the kingdom into its proper perspective.

Lenski: blessed with greater revelation

MacArthur: John was greater than the OT prophets because he actually saw with his eyes and personally participated in the fulfillment of what they only prophesied (Mt 11:10, 13; cf. 1Pe 1:10, 11). But all believers after the cross are greater still, because they participate in the full understanding and experience of something John merely foresaw in shadowy form—the actual atoning work of Christ.

Application: (Directed to the multitudes) -- Respond to the Ministry of John the Baptist = Repent from Sin and Trust in Jesus to Become His Genuine Disciple

III. (:29-35) CONTRAST BETWEEN THOSE WHO ACCEPTED OR REJECTED THE MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST AND OF JESUS – CRITICS HIDE BEHIND UNREASONABLE SMOKESCREENS

A. (:29-30) John's Baptism Proves to be a Watershed Between:

1. (:29) Those Accepting God's Kingdom Program = Common People

“And when all the people and the tax-gatherers heard this, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.”

2. (:30) Those Rejecting God's Kingdom Program = Jewish Religious Leaders

“But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.”

They rejected God's free offer of salvation via repentance and faith; become unreasonable critics

J. Ligon Duncan: They hadn't repented. They hadn't seen that they were the problem; they hadn't seen that it was their sin that needed to be judged. It wasn't the dirty Gentiles that needed to be judged, it was them. And so they hated what Jesus and John had to say because it embarrassed them and it humiliated them. They had a different plan for covering their sin. They were going to pretend like everyone else was the problem and they were going to cover up their sin and that was their plan for dealing with their sin. And so they didn't like it when Jesus and John put their finger on their hearts.

B. (:31-34) Critics Will Be Critics – Impossible to Please Them

1. (:31-32) Never Satisfied

“To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?”

“They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another; and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'”

Steven Cole: Jesus uses a parable to expose their root problem. Those who had rejected both John and Jesus were like children playing games in the market place. Jesus' use of children for His illustration was a rebuke in itself, in that He is implying that these men who thought of themselves as too sophisticated for John's crude style were, in reality, so immature that a children's game refuted them. The picture is of one group of children saying, “Let's play wedding and dance.” But their friends say, “No, we don't want to play something happy.” So,

the first group says, “All right, then let’s play funeral. We’ll play a dirge and be sad.” But the friends refuse to play this game as well. In other words, you can’t please them no matter what you do, because they don’t want to play unless they make up the game and the rules.

2. (:33-34) Always Finding Fault – With Both John the Baptist and Jesus – Despite Their Contrasting Styles

“For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, ‘He has a demon!’”

“The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man, and a drunkard, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners!’”

MacArthur: And again I say to you, folks, in the end it's not the style. They rejected John, with a bizarre kind of separated ministry, and they rejected Jesus with a very normal day-to-day ministry in the lives of people. They hated them both. They rejected them both. Style had nothing to do with it, they hated the truth. It’s never the style. It's always the substance. Like spoiled children who didn't want to play, these spiritual brats found a way to justify their rejection. The form of ministry is never the issue, it's the truth. I'll tell you, the pure true gospel in the mouth of the most bizarre person or the most beautiful person is still equally powerful. But there always are those brats who won't weep with John and they won't laugh with Jesus. They hate the message. Jesus said, "That's what this generation is like. You can't win. John's style doesn't get them. Mine, they will not play, they will not sing with us."

C. (:35) Wisdom Will Be Vindicated – Unreasonable Critics Will Be Unmasked

“Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

Donald Miller: God’s wisdom is vindicated in the fact that there were those who heard both John and Jesus, and were responding to the in breaking of the Kingdom according to their light at that moment.

Leon Morris: They will see the wisdom of God in both John and Jesus. They will not walk in the critical ways of men who can never be pleased.

J. C. Ryle: The idea which our Lord desired to impress upon us appears to be, that though the vast majority of the Jews were hardened and unreasonable, there were some who were not,—and that though multitudes saw no wisdom in the ministry of John the Baptist and Himself, there were a chosen few who did. Those few were the “children of wisdom.” Those few, by their lives and obedience, declared their full conviction that God’s ways of dealing with the Jews were wise and right, and that John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus were both worthy of all honor. In short, they “justified” God’s wisdom, and so proved themselves truly wise.

Application: (Directed to the multitudes) – Accept God’s Revelation and Respond in Obedience Without Disputing

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What has stirred up doubts for you regarding your Christian faith? Intellectual issues? Moral

temptations? Trials and difficulties of life?

2) How can we be described as greater than John the Baptist? In what sense?

3) In what sense are the criticisms levelled against Christianity smokescreens for deeper issues?

4) In what sense can your life and testimony vindicate the wisdom of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: Are You Sure About Jesus?

Are you sure about Jesus? Do you really believe He is who He says He is? Do you really believe you can base the whole hope of your life on Him and He will not let you down? I'm not asking you if you're a skeptic. John wasn't a skeptic. He was a believer, but things had happened to him, and experiences had come into his life, that caused even his faith to tremble, and he wasn't so sure. He wasn't so sure about Jesus. Are you sure about Jesus, or has something happened in your world to make you wonder? . . .

John is in prison. He has spent his whole vocation calling Israel to repentance, calling Israel back to the Lord and preparing the way for the Messiah. What is the thanks he has gotten? What is the reward that the Lord has given him? - but to clap him in a cell, wrongly imprisoned by the wickedest man in the land, a man who he has bravely been calling into account when nobody else had the guts to do it. And very frankly he's shaken up about it. And the man that so boldly said, "This is the Lamb of God who's come to take away the sins of the world. This is the One who will restore righteousness in Israel and flood the earth with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The Man that he had said that about, he's not so sure of that right now, not because he's a skeptic, but because he can't figure out what God's doing in his life because of the experience that he's now encountering.

Steven Cole: Dealing with Doubt

To deal with our doubts, we must submit our hearts to God's revelation about Jesus Christ and hold to it in spite of our difficult circumstances.

Not only was John going through a difficult trial that would shortly result in his martyrdom, he also was dealing with *disappointed expectations*. John came thundering about God's impending judgment on sinners. He was bold enough to rebuke even King Herod for his immorality. But Herod was still having his drunken parties, still living in immorality with his brother's wife, while John was in prison. Also, John knew that Isaiah prophesied that Messiah would proclaim freedom to the prisoners and bring in the day of vengeance of our God (**Isa. 61:1, 2**). And yet, John wasn't exactly free from prison and God's vengeance had not been poured out on the likes of Herod. Besides, the Jews, especially the religious leaders, weren't flocking to submit to Jesus as their Messiah. So John's expectations about Jesus were disappointed.

MacArthur: Causes for Doubt in the case of John the Baptist and in the life of a believer:

- 1) Personal Tragedy
- 2) Popular Influences

- 3) Incomplete Revelation
- 4) Wrong Expectation

MacArthur: This is a tremendously important passage because this is Jesus' own assessment of His generation. And what does He say? He says they're basically brats. They're like spoiled children who can't be satisfied, who refuse to be satisfied. And all of this was the influence of the religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, who were self-righteous. And because they were self-righteous they thought they had by their keeping of the law and the traditions entered into a state of pleasing God, and therefore they were not sinful, they were not headed for judgment, they didn't need to repent and they certainly didn't need to be baptized with some Gentile baptism. John's baptism, you remember, was simply the baptism that was used for Gentiles coming into Judaism applied to Jews. So if you went for John's baptism, you were in effect saying, I'm so sinful I'm no better than a Gentile. That was a pretty big leap for people who had such resentment and animosity toward Gentiles. And the religious leaders weren't about to confess that they were no better than Gentiles. They assumed that they had achieved righteousness by their works and their law keeping.

They also not only loved their own righteousness but they hated grace. They hated mercy. They were so twisted that they hated forgiveness. And it bothered them that God would forgive wretched sinners. If you need an old illustration of that, remember Jonah. He'd rather be dead than see God forgive Ninevites. They hated the message of sin and they hated the message of grace. They were self-righteous, didn't need to worry about sin. And they were righteous on their own and didn't need grace, and it was ludicrous to imagine that God could overlook the wretched sins of the outcasts.

J. C. Ryle: Our Lord's reply to John's disciples, contains a great practical lesson, which we shall do well to remember. It teaches us that the right way to test the value of Churches and ministers, is to examine the works they do for God, and the fruits they bring forth. Would we know whether a Church is true and trust-worthy?—Would we know whether a minister is really called of God, and sound in the faith?—We must apply the old rule of Scripture, "*Ye shall know them by their fruits.*" As Christ would be known by His works and doctrine, so must true Churches of Christ, and true ministers of Christ. When the dead in sin are not quickened, and the blind are not restored to sight, and the poor have no glad tidings proclaimed to them, we may generally suspect that Christ's presence is wanting. Where He is, He will be seen and heard. Where He is, there will not only be profession, forms, ceremonies, and a show of religion. There will be actual, visible work in hearts and lives.

TEXT: Luke 7:36 – 8:3

TITLE: *RXTRAORDINARY FORGIVENESS . . . EXTRAVAGANT LOVE*

BIG IDEA:

FORGIVEN SINNERS DISPLAY EXTRAVAGANT LOVE THAT THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS REJECT

INTRODUCTION:

How should we respond to our Savior in light of the extraordinary forgiveness we have received solely by His grace? The more we understand our sinfulness, the deeper should be our appreciation for His forgiveness and grace. Here we have a simple incident involving one notorious sinner who responded to the Savior with an extravagant display of love and gratitude that did not shrink back from making a public spectacle of herself. We also have the contrasting reaction of the self-righteous Pharisee who cannot imagine even associating with such a disgraced sinner – much less allowing her access in his house to have such intimate contact as the washing of Jesus’ feet with her tears and the drying of those tears with her unbound hair. Then she has the audacity to anoint the feet of Jesus with an expensive vial of perfume. What a spectacle!

Donald Miller: This story is a vivid illustration of the dual response mentioned in the preceding section. Simon is one of those who “*rejected the purpose of God for themselves*” (vs. 30), while the sinful woman is one of the “*children*” who vindicate God’s wisdom in his method of working (vs. 35).

Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost; those who knew they were sick and needed healing; those who knew they needed a Savior.

MacArthur: on this occasion, in an act of irony, He reaches out to demonstrate His power to forgive sins to a hypocritical, self-righteous Pharisee by using the very person that the Pharisee despised the most, the low-life, reprobate, wretched, immoral prostitute whose transformation was very clear and inarguable. This He uses as evidence of His power to transform even the Pharisee.

I. (7:36-39) THE PLOT = WHAT HAPPENED AT THE DINNER?

A. (:36) The Setting – Dinner at Simon’s House = Self-Righteous Pharisee

“Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him. And He entered the Pharisee’s house, and reclined at the table.”

What was the motivation of Simon for this invitation? Not faith or love since he did not even extend to him the common courtesies afforded honored guests. Maybe just curiosity.

B. (:37) The Surprise Intruder – Disgraced Prostitute Bringing an Alabaster Vial of Perfume

“And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,”

MacArthur: when it came to the feminine side, “*sinner*” was a synonym for a prostitute, a woman who chose to be a professional adulteress, immoral, filthy, impure, perverse and living a flagrantly sinful life at a public level.

C. (:38) The Story Line Played Out = Extravagant Display of Love and Gratitude

“and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet, and anointing them with the perfume.”

D. (:39) The Scornful Reaction on the Part of the Host Pharisee

“Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.’”

II. (7:40-50) THE PRINCIPLE = THE POINT JESUS WANTS TO DRIVE HOME

A. (:40-43) Object Lesson – The Greater the Forgiveness . . . the Greater the Love

1. (:40) The Lesson is Aimed at Simon

“And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ And he replied, ‘Say it, Teacher.’”

Great Love comes from Great Forgiveness – the principle is clear

Steven Cole: This story is not a variation of the incident that took place in the home of a Simon the leper, where Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus just prior to His arrest. Simon was a common name. This Simon was a Pharisee, which means that outwardly he was a good, upright, religious man. He attempted to keep the Law of Moses. He tithed his income. He fasted regularly. He prayed at least three times every day. He never missed in his attendance at the synagogue. He was a decent man who was respected as a religious leader in the community.

2. (:41-42) The Lesson Illustrates the Principle

“A certain moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. Which of them therefore will love him more?”

3. (:43) The Lesson is Clear

“Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have judged correctly.’”

Billy Dempsey: We need a reminder of what Jesus has forgiven us of and freed us from. We need a reminder that the Gospel, the Gospel saves sinners and Jesus came to save broken souls like us. We love Him more, we love Him more as we see more clearly what we were, as we see more clearly what sin had done to us. The more we know Him, I’m convinced, the more clearly we know ourselves, including the brokenness we still live with, the more we love Him.

B. (:44-46) Application – The Prostitute Showed Jesus More Consideration Than the Host

“And turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house;’”

1. (:44) Washing of the Feet

*“you gave Me no water for My feet,
but she has wet My feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.”*

2. (:45) Showering with Kisses

*“You gave Me no kiss;
but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.”*

3. (:46) Anointing with Expensive Perfume

*“You did not anoint My head with oil,
but she anointed My feet with perfume.”*

C. (:47-48) Connection Between Forgiveness and Love (Gratitude)

1. (:47) Demonstration of the Principle

*“For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven,
for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”*

Donald Miller: faith which accepts God’s unmerited forgiveness in Christ issues in a love for him of which the highest human loves are but a pale reflection.

Leon Morris: Jesus is not saying that the woman’s actions had earned forgiveness, nor even that her love had merited it. . . He is saying that her love is proof that she had already been forgiven. It was her response to God’s grace.

Spurgeon: Too many think lightly of sin, and therefore think lightly of the Savior. He who has stood before his God, convicted and condemned, with the rope about his neck, is the man to weep for joy when he is pardoned, to hate the evil which has been forgiven him, and to live to the honor of the Redeemer by whose blood he has been cleansed

2. (:48) Declaration That Her Sins Have Been Forgiven

“And He said to her, ‘Your sins have been forgiven.’”

Geldenhuys: From the whole context of the story . . . it is clear that the woman had already accepted Him as Redeemer (probably not long before, whether as one among the multitudes who had listened to His teaching, or as one whom He had addressed personally). . . Although her sins had already been forgiven, she was nevertheless still regarded by others as a notorious sinner. For this reason Jesus now openly declares that her sins are forgiven.

D. (:49-50) Connection Between Faith and Forgiveness of Sins and Peace

1. (:49) Forgiveness Raises Key Question Regarding the Identity of Jesus

*“And those who were reclining at the table with Him began to say to themselves,
‘Who is this man who even forgives sins?’”*

2. (:50) Faith Leads to Peace

“And He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’”

MacArthur: It is that profuse love for Christ that is the single greatest proof visible to people of the power of the gospel. An ungrateful, loveless Christian undercuts the testimony of the gospel.

Let us put on display our gratitude, our lavish love to our Christ and the world will take note that our sins have truly been forgiven.

(8:1-3) EPILOGUE – SUPPORT FOR THE ITINERANT PREACHING MINISTRY OF JESUS

A. (8:1a) Itinerant Preaching Ministry of Jesus

“And it came about soon afterwards, that He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God;”

B. (8:1b-3) Inclusive Ministry Support From a Wide Range of Disciples

1. (8:1b) Twelve Apostles = Dedicated Inner Circle

“and the twelve were with Him,”

2. (8:2-3a) Many Women

a. Healed Women

“and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses:”

“Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,”

b. Prominent Women

“and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward,”

“and Susanna,”

Leon Morris: The rabbis refused to teach women and generally assigned them a very inferior place.

Anyabwile: The Christian church would never have gotten off the ground were it not for women. Churches around the world would have closed their doors generations ago if it were not for women. Luke affirms these women by naming them for us. If our Lord valued and included women in his ministry, then every church should include them in every way the Lord and his Word permits. In every way women are called and gifted to serve, we want to see them encouraged and flourishing in their service in accord with the Word of God so that the Word of God might be spread among us.

3. (8:3b) Many Others – Generously Supporting the Ministry

“and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What does intensity of devotion to Jesus Christ look like in my life?

2) How can we avoid being inhibited in our relationship with Christ based on the fear of what

others will think of us?

3) Do you have a growing realization of the depths of your own sinfulness the more you mature as a believer?

4) What role should conviction of sin and our emotions play in our response to the gospel?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: Now put yourself in the place of the woman. She lives in that city, and she knows what Pharisees are like. Religious men. Often self-righteous. They make a big distinction between themselves and “sinners.” They always reject “sinners” as unworthy. But Jesus is in the Pharisee’s home, in her city, where she can reach him. What courage must it have taken for her to enter this Pharisee’s home? What hope must have been in her heart when she gathered her most expensive possession, an alabaster flask of ointment? What brokenness must have rushed up in her heart and mind as she stood behind Jesus “weeping” (v. 38)? She knew she was a sinner better than anyone else did. There behind the Lord, at his feet, she knelt in a pool of her own tears.

J. Ligon Duncan: Do you know that some rabbis in Jesus’ time told husbands that they had the right to divorce their wives if their wives ever let their hair down in front of another man? Do you understand that this woman doesn't see anybody else in this room? She does not care what anybody thinks about her! She doesn't care what they know about her; she doesn't care what she once was, because this Man knew her heart and saw her sin and saw her need and He forgave her. And all she wants to do is thank Him and praise Him and express her gratitude and her love. And she doesn't know that there's anybody else in this room. She doesn't care what Simon thinks about her. She doesn't care what the other guests think about her. All she cares about is Jesus, so she's there wiping His feet off with her own hair.

David Strain: Simon’s Perspective

What kind of prophet has no real idea of what’s going on here? Jesus isn’t disturbed at all by this! He ought to be scandalized! He ought to shrink back from the touch of this filthy, unclean woman! And who does she think she is, barging her way into my home like this?” He really doesn’t think much of Jesus; he certainly doesn’t think much of this woman at all. The one person he does think much of is Simon. She’s a sinner and Jesus is a fraud, but Simon, you know, Simon, at least in his own eyes, Simon is neither fraud nor sinner. He’s respectable, religious, above reproach. Better, certainly, than the charlatan he may now be regretting ever having invited to be guest of honor in his home. And surely far better than this wretched woman who doesn’t even have enough sense to respect the socially acceptable norms of behavior.

Steven Cole: How to Love Jesus Fervently

To love Jesus fervently, realize your great debt and your utter inability to repay it and trust totally in God’s grace to forgive it.

1) The Pharisee -- Simon’s relationship to Jesus could be described as formal, distant and cool. He invited Jesus to his home for dinner, probably thinking that the theological discussion would be interesting. This young Teacher was creating quite a stir, and it would be intriguing to interact

with Him. But Simon had no sense of personal need. He projected an air of having it together. After all, he was a Pharisee. For him, Jesus didn't offer anything eternally vital. Scholars debate whether Simon's withholding of water to wash Jesus' feet, of the greeting kiss, and of the oil to anoint His head was rude or not. But certainly Simon's reception of Jesus was much more reserved than he would have shown to the Chief Priest if he had come to dinner. Simon wanted to reflect a certain coolness and distance. He didn't want his friends to think that he had gone overboard for Jesus or anything like that. . .

2) The Prostitute -- Jesus was about to showcase a prostitute as an example for a Pharisee to follow! The fact was, Simon had *not really* seen that woman. He had not seen that she had something he needed, namely, a loving, thankful heart toward the Savior. It took a lot of courage for this woman to seek out Jesus in this gathering that probably included many Pharisees. She knew that she would have to endure stares, whispers, and muffled laughter as the men nudged one another. But she wanted openly to express her love for Jesus, and she was willing to endure public humiliation to do it. . .

3) The Prophet -- Jesus is the third main character of the drama. One of Luke's main reasons for relating this story is to get us to reflect on the question, "Who is this man, Jesus?" The question came to Simon's mind as he squirmed while watching this notorious woman kiss Jesus' feet. He thought, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner" (7:39). Luke uses splendid irony by showing that Jesus could read Simon's secret thoughts, even though Simon doubted that He was a prophet!

The dinner guests also raise the question of Jesus' identity: "Who is this man who even forgives sins?" (7:49). It's not the first time in Luke that this question has been asked. Jesus demonstrated His authority to forgive sins by raising the paralytic from his stretcher (5:21, 24). Here, He ignores the murmuring of the religious crowd, assures this sinful woman of her forgiveness and sends her away in peace. You can only rightly forgive sins if they were committed against you. Luke wants us to consider that this man is not only a prophet, He is the one whose Law this sinful woman had broken. As God in human flesh, He could rightly forgive sins.

Mattoon: Alabaster jars of perfume were so valuable in the first century they were often purchased as investments. This box may have been extremely expensive, as costly as one year's wages. These boxes were made from a stone found near Alabastron in Egypt, so the Greeks gave them the name of the city and called them alabastron or "Alabaster." This name was given to the stone of which they were made. Alabaster was ideal for holding perfumes and fragrant oils. The quality of the stone helped preserve the oils. The alabaster that was used³⁸ to hold these perfumes was like a whitish, soft marble that was easily carved and shaped. The containers usually had a long neck and wide bottom. Many women wore smaller vials that were hung around their delicate necks and rested on their chest. This is how they carried their perfume when they needed to freshen up. If they started to stink from sweat or if their breath smelled, they had oils they could use to touch their tongue or spread on their skin. Clove oil or peppermint oil, for example, is a great breath or body freshener. Oils were used for medicine and to anoint the body after bathing. This helped to protect their bodies from the brazen winds and arid conditions of the desert. They would also put the oil on their clothing to give them a pleasant smell. Many of the perfumes were made of olive oil and spices that had been boiled and blended together. While the water was boiling, the spices were added. Common spices used that you would recognize were myrrh, frankincense, and cinnamon. Many other ingredients were used in different combinations. After the ingredients were blended, they were transferred to suitable containers. To preserve the

special scents of the ointment, alabaster jars with long necks were sealed at the time the ointment was prepared and then broken just before use (**Mark 14:3**). They usually contained about a half a pint of oil.

Joseph Stowell: Can it be that we can become so good that we don't even recognize Jesus as He really is and rejoice in His love and mercy for the worst of the lost?

As one author noted, Simon was typical of a whole group of "good" people. Describing Simon, he wrote:

[Simon is] humorless, prudish, constrained in his affections, incapable of enjoying himself, repressed, inhibited, pouting and censorious.

There are hundreds of people like that today: respectable, conventional, good people. They look down their noses at the permissive society. They curl their lip at the decay in moral standards. They think they're good but they are not; they're simply dull. They think they're being moral, but they are not; they're simply feeling sanctimonious.

What an important warning to those of us who value righteousness and truth. Humility, compassion, love, and righteous tolerance mark true followers. We can never forget that we are debtors to grace who, in the presence of Jesus, know we still have a long way to go.

Pray for the humility to know that you have not yet arrived (Strength for the Journey).

William MacDonald: Dry-Eyed Christianity

I think of the sinful woman who washed the Savior's feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment (**Lu. 7:38**). Although living on the other side of the Cross, she was more attuned emotionally than I with all my superior knowledge and privilege.

Why am I such a block of ice? Is it that I have been brought up in a culture where it is considered unmanly to weep? If so, then I wish I had never known that culture. It is not a disgrace to weep in the shadow of Calvary; the disgrace lies in not weeping.

Borrowing Jeremiah's words, I must henceforth pray, "*Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night*" (**Jer. 9:1**); weep, that is, over the sufferings and death which my sins brought on the sinless Savior. And I take as my own the immortal words of **Isaac Watts**: "Well might I hide my blushing face, while His dear cross appears; Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt my eyes to tears."

TEXT: Luke 8:4-15

TITLE: PARABLE OF THE SOILS

BIG IDEA:

**RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL DEPENDS ON YOUR HEART CONDITION --
UNDERSTANDING EVANGELISM STARTS WITH UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR
DIFFERENT TYPES OF HEART RESPONSES TO THE SOWING OF THE GOSPEL**

INTRODUCTION:

This passage is not about the sower – who is not expressly identified here; it is not about what method or style the sower uses or what type of personality or powers of persuasion the sower uses ... It is a given that the sower is sowing the seed

This passage is not even about the seed – which is the Word of God – it is assumed that the seed is genuine and pure and unadulterated and effective. This is not about adapting our message or refining it to be more palatable ...

This passage is all about the difference in soils. We need to first examine how it is that we receive and respond to the Word of God. Then we need to make sure we can pass this Evangelism 101 course in terms of how the gospel message impacts ourselves and then others.

I. (:4) TEACHING LOGISTICS

A. (:4a) Teaching Setting

“And when a great multitude were coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him,”

Jesus was attracting large crowds of people; they were a mixed bag in terms of the preparation of their heart to receive the good news of the kingdom of God

B. (:4b) Teaching Method = Parable

“He spoke by way of a parable.”

Two contrasting goals: revealing truth and concealing truth – enigmatic presentation

But what is a parable?

MacArthur: Any kind of analogy, any kind of illustration, any kind of comparison fits into the broad category of a parable.

Constable: Parables are illustrations that teach truth by comparisons (Gr. *parabole*, lit. "something thrown alongside," similitudes). Some are long stories, but others are short similes, metaphors, analogies, or proverbial sayings (cf. 2:19-20, 21, 22; 3:24-25, 27). The popular definition that a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, is essentially accurate as far as it goes. The use of parables for teaching was a common rabbinic device that Jesus adopted and used with great skill. . . . Matthew recorded Jesus giving two groups of parables on this occasion:

four to the multitudes (Matt. 13:3b-35), and four to the disciples (Matt. 13:36-52). Mark recorded only Jesus' parables to the multitudes.

Wiersbe: A parable begins innocently as *a picture* that arrests our attention and arouses our interest. But as we study the picture, it becomes *a mirror* in which we suddenly see ourselves. If we continue to look by faith, the mirror becomes *a window* through which we see God and His truth. How we respond to that truth will determine what further truth God will teach us."

II. (:5-8) DETAILS OF THE PARABLE – 4 TYPES OF SOIL AND THE RESULTS

(:5a) Preamble

"The sower went out to sow his seed;"

Importance of this fundamental parable -- need to understand the main point here

Function of the sower is to sow – viewed here as sowing directly (rather than through intermediaries)

Indiscriminate sowing – not like a farmer at all – but with the purpose in mind of producing a **fruitful crop**

Broadcast method of sowing -- not planting individual seeds ... but walking down paths in a field and casting seed everywhere

A. (:5b) Seed on the Road

"and as he sowed, some fell beside the road; and it was trampled under foot, and the birds of the air ate it up."

Jeff Miller: A first-century path alongside—or through—a field was composed of dirt that was well-worn and firmly-packed from high volumes of foot traffic, virtually impenetrable to scattered seed.

We can throw some grass seed on our lawn and see some of the same activity – where the seed lies on ground that has not been prepared and dug up ... the birds come along and say "Thank you very much for the easy meal"

B. (:6) Seed on Rocky Ground

"And other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture."

Lots of rocky ground in Palestine

MacArthur: What we're talking about here is limestone bedrock below the level of the plow. The plow goes in but below that there's limestone bedrock. That stuff exists all through the land of Israel. It is...in fact, the rabbis used to say that when God dumped the rocks on the earth, He made a mistake and dumped all of them on Israel. It is a very, very rocky place and much of that rock lies below the surface, below the plow and what happens is, the seed goes in, it finds the soft soil, it starts to get life, the ground is warm, there's moisture and water there and it starts to grow, the roots can't go down because they hit bedrock and so whatever nutrients are there, whatever elements of life are there shoot the plant upward. And that's why it says it immediately sprang up.

Emphasis here = No root

C. (:7) Seed Among Thorns

“And other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it, and choked it out.”

Emphasis here = No fruit

D. (:8a) Seed on Good Soil

“And other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.”

The distinctive nature of this soil is that it is the only one described as “good” because it is the only one that yields lasting fruit

(:8b) Postscript

“As He said these things, He would call out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”

How do the 3 unfruitful types of soil represent the 3 great enemies of the Christian:

Wiersbe: Each of the three fruitless hearts is influenced by a different enemy: the hard heart—the devil himself snatches the seed; the shallow heart—the flesh counterfeits religious feelings; the crowded heart—the things of the world smother the growth and prevent a harvest. These are the three great enemies of the Christian: **the world, the flesh, and the devil (Eph. 2:1-3).**”

1 John 2:15-17 *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”*

Wiersbe: This parable shows that Jesus was not impressed by the great crowds that followed Him. He knew that most of the people did not really “hear” the Word and receive it in their hearts. He gave this story to encourage the disciples in their future ministry, and to encourage us today. When you consider how much teaching, preaching, and witnessing goes on in the course of a month or a year, you wonder why there is such a small harvest. The fault does not lie with the sower or the seed. The problem is with the soil. The human heart will not submit to God, repent and receive the Word, and be saved....Faith is not a matter of IQ or education; it is a matter of humbly preparing the heart to receive God's truth (**James 1:19-21**). The wise and prudent are blind to truths that are easy for the babes to understand (**Matt. 11:20-26**).

III. (:9-10) ASIDE – PARABLES 101 – INTRODUCTION TO PARABLES

A. (:9) Perplexity About Parables: Why Use Parables? / What Do They Mean?

“And His disciples began questioning Him as to what this parable might be.”

Sounds like the bulk of the crowd dispersed with no understanding of the meaning of this parable
Distinction made here between the general followers of Jesus and the specific 12 Apostles

B. (:10) Purpose of Parables

“And He said, ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,

but to the rest it is in parables, in order that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”

Def. of a **mystery** = something not previously revealed in the OT but now made known by God both revealing and granting understanding of the truth

Jewish understanding and expectation of the kingdom of God was not complete; there was a mystery aspect to it – certainly this whole church age in which the emphasis is on sowing the seed to all men everywhere – to create a church with no distinction between Jew and Gentile – was a mystery to OT Jews

Look at the clear distinction Jesus makes between 2 very different groups of people:

- **The disciples** who have been given a gift of understanding God’s truth ... and by implication who receive the gift of forgiveness of sins
- **Those who are outside** – to whom the truth is hidden in judgment; who will not experience forgiveness of sins

That’s why it should not be surprising that of the 4 types of soil mentioned ... only 1 concerns those who are saved = the only group that bears fruit

D. Miller: The “*secrets of the kingdom*” (vs. 10) are secrets not because they are not announced, but because those who hear them often refuse to listen. Christianity is an open, a confessed faith. One must, therefore, take heed that he hears aright, for this makes him capable of hearing more, and thus of becoming a better witness.

IV. (:11-15) INTERPRETATION OF THE PARABLE – 4 TYPES OF SOIL AND THE RESULTS

(:11) Consistent Thread = Sowing the Seed

“Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.”

The sower is **actively sowing the word** – that is a given – STOP right here; is this a given for us individually ... for us as a church ... is this what characterizes the bulk of our activities ... is everything else just there to support our main ministry in life = to fulfill the Great Commission??? Huge problem ... but not the thrust of this parable

Not talking about **HOW the sower sows the word** – should we use tracts .. open air preaching ... friendship evangelism ... large stadium type crusades ... etc. – should we use different types of music .. what about drama and plays ...

Everybody hears the Word – not dealing with the issue of what about the heathen in Africa who have never heard the gospel

Differing responses to the Word is the issue – based on different dispositions of the heart

Stedman: The Word of God is sown by means of preaching or teaching or reading or studying or witnessing, or in some other way. The Word is dropped into hearts like seeds into soil. That Word is the life-giving element which can change the whole situation and bring enrichment and harvest into a life. Therefore the moment of the sowing of the Word is a magic hour. It is a time when the opportunity to be changed is present.

The inherent power of the Word of God:

James 1:21 *“in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls”*

1 Pet. 1:23 *“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God”*

A. (:12) Seed on the Road – Hardened Hearts vs. Spiritual Life

“And those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved.”

Satan is alive and active; a genuine threat and enemy of the reception of the word of God
Scribes and Pharisees fall into this category – the religious self-righteous who are blind leaders of the blind

This category is impossible to penetrate at all with the impact of the gospel message
They feel they have their act together; they don't sense any need for salvation; don't view themselves as lost and in need of a Savior

Jeff Miller: This soil represents a hard heart that doesn't permit the Word of God to penetrate its surface. These individuals are in control of their own lives; they have all of the answers. They are unteachable, and the Word of God falls upon their deaf ears.

B. (:13) Seed on Rocky Ground – Shallow Hearts vs Spiritual Perseverance

“And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.”

Not talking about some category of “carnal Christians” who just don't reach full maturity

Same as **John 15** – professing believers – but the fruitless branches have no life and are gathered and thrown into the fire and burned

Superficial Christianity has no roots and no persevering endurance; they never understood the costs of discipleship

that superficial, only temporarily soft, self-centered, self-indulgent, self-seeking heart.
Don't use **emotion** to try to manipulate folks into a decision for Christ – you must understand this parable of the soils

Don't just assume that every profession of faith is authentic; don't be surprised when you see apostasy – people falling away who previously professed faith

Importance of spiritual perseverance

If your concept of the gospel is that Jesus came to take away all of your problems and give you smooth sailing through life ... then you will fall away when trials or hardship or persecution impact you.

Particularly relevant warning to those believers in Jesus' day who were facing persecution for their new faith

Deffinbaugh: These folks respond positively to the word because they think that it is a kind of "prosperity gospel," a gospel which promises only good times, blessing, happiness, and bliss. The quickness of the response is an indication of their lack of depth, or their lack of perception as to what the gospel really means. And, let me quickly add, this is not due to our Lord's misrepresentation of the gospel. It is the result of selective hearing, of hearing only the good and pleasant things, rather than hearing of the costs involved in discipleship, of which our Lord often spoke.

C. (:14) Seed Among Thorns – Distracted (Preoccupied) Hearts vs Spiritual Devotion

"And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

Not willing to pay the price of discipleship

MacArthur: This is a **double minded person** whose repentance is not complete.

This is the person who wants salvation, wants Christ, wants the Kingdom but wants the world and wants riches and wants things. Pretty obvious. This is the double minded. He wants to serve God and money and Jesus said, "You can't serve God and money." This is the rich young ruler, remember him in Luke...in Matthew 19? Comes to Jesus, "What do I have to do to enter the Kingdom?" And He says, "Give up all your money because that's obviously the idol that rules your heart." And he was not willing to do that. And he was also not willing to admit his own sinfulness. He wanted to hang on to the illusion of his own pride and his own riches.

Literally when it says at the beginning of verse 19, "*worries of the world,*" it is literally the distractions of the age...the distractions of the age. Whatever they are, whatever occupies the age...this is the preoccupied heart. This is the heart that unfortunately loves the world and all the things that are in the world, according to 1 John 2, and therefore the love of God is not in him. This is the heart that is the enemy of God, James 4:4, because it loves the world. This is the kind of heart that says, as Jesus points out in Luke chapter 9, "Yeah, I'm going to follow You, Lord, I'm going to follow You but I can't follow You now, you know, I've got to go home and wait till I get my inheritance from my father so I have some money. Well I can't follow You now, I've got to go home and say goodbye to everybody so I can raise some money to take with me." And Jesus says, "No, no, no, if you look back you're not fit for the Kingdom."

These are those who are under the terrible temptation of the love of money becoming the root of all kinds of evil, 1 Timothy chapter 6. These are people consumed with the stuff of the world.

D. (:15) Seed on Good Soil – Fruitful Hearts

"And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance."

3 Present Participles – ongoing activity characterizing their interaction with the Word:

- Hear
- Hold it fast / Accept / Retain
- Bear fruit / Persevere

Van Parunak: Location: the good ground, free from the characteristics of the other three.

- 1) Unlike the wayside, it is plowed up.
- 2) Unlike the stony ground, it is deep.
- 3) Unlike the thorny ground, it does not favor weeds.

Hendriksen: The importance of spiritual fruitbearing, as the mark of the true believer, is stressed even in the Old Testament (**Ps. 1:1-3; 92:14; 104:13**). This line of thought is continued in the gospels (**Matt. 3:10; 7:17-20; 12:33-35; Luke 3:8; John ch. 15**) and in the rest of the New Testament (**Acts 2:38; 16:41; Rom. 7:4; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 4:17; Col. 1:6; Heb. 12:11; 13:15; James 3:17,18**).

Different amounts of fruit

What is your Goal in life? Should be to be fruitful to the maximum extent possible

Back in those days a **healthy crop yield would have been tenfold** ... so this amount of fruitfulness is astonishing

MacArthur: That's not natural. Good soil is not natural. Hard soil is natural. Just leave the ground and that's what it will be. Rocky soil, that's natural, leaving it the way it is. Weedy soil, that's natural that's the way it is. Something has to happen to this soil. To make it good soil, the stone has to be broken up. The hard ground has to be broken up. The weeds have to be taken out. Who can do that? Only God can do that. He alone can do that. **Deuteronomy 30 verse 6**, "*The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart that you may live.*" **Proverbs 20 and verse 9** says, "*Who can say I have made my heart clean, pure from sin?*" Nobody can do that on his own.

CONCLUSION:

Jodi Harper Application: Our county government has an office that tests soil. You can dig up a few handfuls of dirt from your yard and send it to them. They will put it under their microscope and see what it contains. In a few weeks, they will send you a report of how good your soil is for growing things. You will find out if there are good nutrients in your yard, or if you need to add something to make the soil just right.

May we not be found to be hard-hearted and impenetrable; or shallow; or distracted and preoccupied when it comes to obedience to God's Word.

May the Lord grant that we are **fruitful** in our response to the Word of God.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of storytelling do we find effective in presenting the gospel message?
- 2) Can you label some individuals to whom you have witnessed as falling into one of these 4

categories?

3) How does this passage encourage you to witness?

4) Why do you think our present day theology seems to avoid focusing on the area of the necessity for perseverance?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Hampton Keathley IV:

What is a parable? A parable is a fictitious or made up story designed to teach a lesson through comparison. When you hear the story, you can relate it to your own life. It is like an illustration for the points in a sermon. It conveys its message of truth through analogy, through comparison or contrast. All of you have heard of Aesop's fables. After you tell a child a fable, you point out the moral of the story. A parable is like a fable in that it also has a moral or message behind the story. But parables are true to life. Parables are for adults. Animals and trees don't talk. The power of a parable comes from the fact that you recognize that "that's the way it is in real life." Parables are great because they tell a story that is easy to remember.....**Parables** are told so that only those who really care will come to know the truth. Not so much because they understand the parable, but because they care enough to ask what it means after the story is finished and hang around long enough to have it explained to them. The others don't really care and leave. Remember, the disciples didn't understand the parables, but they asked what Jesus meant after the crowds left. They had a soft and open heart. Understanding is an issue of the heart. Those who have a hard heart, also have closed eyes and closed ears and they don't understand.

Anyabwile: A heart made of good soil provides the only antidote to the world, the flesh, and the devil. **Verse 15** describes such hearts. We win the spiritual war of hearing when we hold on to the word like a soldier trained never to lose or surrender his weapon. We do that if our hearts are honest and good; in other words, if we receive the Word of God for what it truly is – the very Word of God. We don't receive it to justify ourselves. We don't cut out the difficult parts. We don't pick and choose what we will believe. We receive it all with a good heart – with an intention to do good and to believe what is taught. We win the war for the Word when we look to bear fruit with patience (**Jas 1:2-4**). We're not trying to rush into maturity or skip the things that produce growth. We just steadily read, believe, and apply the Bible, and let patience have its perfect work in our lives.

J. Ligon Duncan: How are you hearing the Word of God? Jesus says that those who hear the Word of God right, they are ones who recognize that what is being spoken to them in the Gospel of the kingdom in the Word of God is more precious than anything this world can give them. And it will always transform their lives because they will value it more than they value anything else in this world.

Steven Cole: **Our response to God's Word should be genuine, not superficial.**

If you have been a Christian for a while, you have ridden the roller coaster of great joy in seeing someone make a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, followed by awful disappointment as the same person later fell away from the faith. For a while he seemed to be dramatically changed. He

got involved in the church. He was zealous for the things of God. But then a difficult trial hit. Perhaps he had a conflict with someone in the church. Or he had a personal health problem or he lost a loved one. His zeal cooled off and gradually he stopped coming to church. Every effort to restore him failed. Today he is back in the world.

Others don't fall away altogether, but their early enthusiasm wanes. They settle into a routine that includes going to church as long as there isn't something "better" to do for the weekend. But God is not central in their lives. They are more focused on their things and on having a good time in life. They profess to be Christians, but they have no burden for the lost and no desire to serve God. They are living basically for self and for pleasure. But they are not living in light of eternity.

How do you explain such people? Some would say that they have lost their salvation, but that clearly contradicts the many clear passages that teach that those whom God saves, He keeps for eternity. Others say that these folks are saved, but they are "carnal." They can go through life living in this carnal or worldly state and they will still go to heaven, but they won't have many rewards waiting for them. But this popular but false teaching contradicts **Hebrews 12**, which says that if a person is truly God's child, then God will discipline him. If a person lacks such discipline, he is not a true child of God at all.

In the familiar parable of the sower, we see that even Jesus saw people respond superficially to His message. The parable serves both as an encouragement to His followers and a warning to His hearers. The encouragement to His followers is that when we see people respond superficially to the gospel and later fall away, we should not be discouraged in that even Jesus had the same response. The problem was certainly not in His preaching, but in the audience's hearing. The warning to those who hear the parable, of course, is to take it to heart so that we avoid a superficial faith. Whatever the current state of our hearts, we can appeal to God to grant us a new heart so that we will hold fast to Him and bear fruit with perseverance. Clearly, Jesus was not teaching some sort of fatalism, that the kinds of soils are fixed forever. By God's grace, a person can change.

TEXT: Luke 8:16-21

TITLE: APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOILS

BIG IDEA:

BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LISTEN AND RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD

INTRODUCTION:

How does this parable relate to the parable of the soils we just covered?

This parable seems to tie directly to the parable of the soils just above.

Deals with our response to God's revelation; looking at **human responsibility** instead of divine sovereignty.

One could have gotten the wrong impression from Jesus' teaching regarding His use of parables that God's intent was mainly to hide or conceal truth.

Geldenhuys: So by these words the Lord completely forbids the thought that He speaks in parables in order that the Gospel message should remain hidden. On the contrary, His final purpose even with this veiled form of preaching is to let the light of the Gospel shine – for the illumination of His followers and thereafter through them also for that of others.

I. (:16-18) PARABLE OF THE LAMP – BE CAREFUL HOW YOU LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD = KEY TO GAINING ADDITIONAL SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

A. (:16-17) God Ultimately Desires Illumination Rather Than Concealment

1. (:16) Basic Function of a Lamp = Illumination

“Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light.”

Who would think of buying a light and then hiding it so it cannot perform its intended function?

Who or what does the lamp represent here?

Wessel: The lamp represents Jesus who “comes,” and the definite article “the” serves to identify him. . . . the present hiddenness of Jesus will not always be . . . God intends that one day Jesus will be manifested in all his glory, at the Parousia. But who Jesus really is, is now hidden.

James Edwards: In the OT, a lamp is not infrequently a metaphor for God (**2 Sam 22:29**) or the Davidic Messiah (**2 Kgs 8:19; Ps 132:17**) or the Torah (Ps 119:105). Not only does Mark distinguish the lamp by making it the acting subject, but he refers to it with the definite article, *the* lamp. Finally, reference to the lamp coming is more suitable of a person than an object, and has indeed been used of Jesus earlier (**1:7; 3:20**). These particulars signal that this is no ordinary lamp. The image points to Jesus as the implied agent, for whom the lamp is a metaphor. Jesus is the lamp of God who has come to bring light and revelation (**John 1:5, 8:12**).

Jesus came as the Light of the world –

Is. 60:1-3

John 1:4ff

John 8:12 *“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

We are called to live as *children of light* – **Ephes. 5:8**

Application: “this little light of mine; I’m going to let it shine”

2. (:17) Ultimate Goal of God = Revelation and Illumination

“For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light.”

Revealed in due time

Much was hidden in OT times that Jesus came to reveal = the mysteries of the kingdom of God; much still remains hidden that will be revealed when He comes in His full glory to physically reign over the earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem

God is not ultimately in the business of hiding truth – He is interested in making truth known; in bringing everything to the light

B. (:18) Degree of Attentiveness Determines Degree of Spiritual Insight

1. Responsibility Falls on the Hearer

“Therefore take care how you listen;”

Jesus is not just talking about understanding the words He says ... but **obeying** all of His commands.

Application:

James 1:22 *Prove to be doers of the word and not hearers only ...*

We need to hear with hearts and minds and wills inclined towards obedience

This is our responsibility – nobody else can do this for us; not putting the blame on God if we don’t respond with fertile hearts ... if we have hearts of stone or rocky hearts or thorny hearts ... puts the blame squarely on us – **we should be attentive to God’s Word**

2. Degree of Spiritual Insight Compounds -- Both in Positive and Negative Sense

“for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

Principle of compounding interest

TO THE EXTENT THAT YOU LISTEN WELL YOU WILL BE BLESSED WITH ADDITIONAL SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

What are some of our modern day sayings that communicate this same principle

Van Parunak: Like the "measure" saying, this is probably a commonplace saying or proverb, originating in an economic context. Our modern-day equivalent is "The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer," or, "It takes money to make money."

Donald Miller: **Verse 18** lays down the universal law that the man who has will get more; and that the man who has not will lose what he has. If a man is physically fit and keeps himself so, his body will be ready for ever greater efforts; if he lets himself go flabby, he will lose even the abilities he has. The more a student learns, the more he can learn; but if he refuses to go on learning, he will lose the knowledge he has. This is just another way of saying that there is no standing still in life. All the time we are either going forward or going back. The seeker will always find; but the man who stops seeking will lose even what he has.

II. (:19-21) INCIDENT WITH HIS FAMILY -- BE CAREFUL HOW YOU RESPOND TO THE WORD OF GOD = KEY TO INCLUSION IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

A. (:19) Family Situation

*“And His mother and brothers came to Him,
and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.”*

Geldenhuys: Here again it is clear that Luke compiled his Gospel in a logical and aesthetic sequence and not primarily in strict chronological order. From Matthew and Mark it appears that this occurrence was linked up with the Beelzebub address which Luke reports later on in **xi. 14-28**. But because this occurrence (**verses 19-21**) is a fitting conclusion to **verses 1-18**, he records it here.

B. (:20-21) Spiritual Lesson

1. (:20) Family Issue Reported

*“And it was reported to Him,
‘Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.’”*

[Aside – this passage has relevance to the Roman Catholic claim to the perpetual virginity of Mary]

Geldenhuys: They were afraid that He was overtaxing Himself completely through His constant exertion in word and deeds; so they desired to remove Him, practically by force, to their home, away from the thronging multitudes.

2. (:21) Family Identity Marked by Obedience to the Word of God

“But He answered and said to them, ‘My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.’”

Our duty to perform the will of God must take precedence over everything

Lenski: To do the Word is to believe it, to trust it in our hearts, to obey all that it tells us, to hope all that it promises us.

Steven Cole: He uses the story to show that the key to a relationship with Jesus is not birth or other natural privileges, but obedience to God's Word. Those who obey Him are truly Jesus' family. Jesus was not repudiating family ties or obligations, but He was setting priorities.

Allegiance to God's Word must be first, even more important than family. Jesus is most intimate with those who hear and obey His Word. As He told His disciples, "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him*" (**John 14:21**). If you want Jesus to disclose Himself to you, you must hear His word with a view to obedience. He calls such ones His mother and His brothers! The wonderful privilege of being close to Jesus is open to anyone who walks in obedience to Him!

J Vernon McGee: Christ is declaring a new relationship in this passage. He was not denying His family relationship but was getting ready to declare one infinitely deeper, higher, and more permanent, transcending by far any blood relationship. This brings a believer mighty close to Him.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What qualities do you think make someone a good listener in general? A good listener of the Word of God?
- 2) What in your life is obscuring your witness to Jesus Christ so that your light is not shining as brightly as it should?
- 3) What circumstances in your life have caused the Word of God to seem like a closed book to you?
- 4) In what disciplines does the expression "*Use it or Lose it*" especially apply?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: Water the dry places of your heart with the Scriptures, and the desert will bloom with truth. The more you water, the more you flower. The more you flower, the more you wter. Feed on God's written Word.

Plummer: Whoever gives a welcome to the word and appropriates it becomes worthy and capable of receiving more. But by not appropriating truth when we recognize it, we lose our hold of it, and have less power of recognizing it I the future.

Steven Cole: I think that Jesus is clarifying **verse 10** so that the twelve do not mistake His point. Jesus' teaching is the light that is put on the lampstand. His words are not given for the primary purpose of concealing God's truth, but for revealing it. But, the same light that reveals truth also exposes sin. Because of this two-fold function of the light of God's truth, no one can respond neutrally to Jesus' teaching. Either we respond obediently and draw closer to God or we ignore it and deceive ourselves. What we think we have will one day be taken from us. . .

To read the Word without applying it doesn't do us any good. The Word was not given to fill our heads with interesting facts, but to change our hearts into conformity to Jesus Christ.

MacArthur: Frankly, good listeners make good company. Good listeners make good friends. Good listeners make good learners. And good listeners then make good teachers. Good listeners make good counselors. On the other hand, poor listeners who only want to hear themselves talk and even while forced to listen are only planning what they're going to say as soon as you take a breath are usually cheated out of the best relationships in life. Just from a human standpoint, learning how to listen is important. It determines an awful lot about our relationships to others. Far more important, however, than how we listen to others is how we listen to the Lord. How good are we at listening to God? What kind of listeners are we? If we're to beware about how we listen, if we're to take care about how we listen as Jesus said, then how are we to understand the kind of listening that the Lord would have us to exercise?

The kind of listener you are, the kind of hearer you are will tell you your spiritual condition. . .

Most archeology digs around the world will surface lamps. All societies had to use some kind of fire to produce light and generally speaking they used oil and a wick and lit that to provide light in...in the homes. And that's exactly what we find in the archeology digs of the land of Israel, terra cotta lamps. They were like a little flat pitcher, a saucer type, maybe kind of covered over a little bit on the top with either a wick floating in them or inserted through a hole so that the smoke could ascend. They were often very open. There was a handle so they could be moved around and they were put on lamp stands, some kind of table just like you put a table in your house on a lamp table to elevate the light because you don't want it on the ground. They did the same thing. Sometimes it would be a shelf on the wall, wherever. The idea was light the lamp and put it up high so it can give light to the house and everybody that's there. . .

true listeners hear evangelistically [shine the light to others], authentically [not hypocritically] and fruitfully. . .

TEXT: Luke 8:22-56

TITLE: ABSOLUTE POWER AND AUTHORITY

BIG IDEA:

WHATEVER THE CRISIS, FAITH IN THE PERSON AND POWER AND AUTHORITY OF JESUS IS THE ANSWER

INTRODUCTION:

Maybe you are facing some crisis in life today. Maybe you know someone who is under intense pressure. These 4 quick stories presented in a row by Luke are intended to cover all of life's possible dangers and threats. No matter what we might face, we need to be confident in the Power and Authority of Jesus to deliver and protect us according to His good purposes.

D. Miller: Luke has earlier illustrated Jesus' Lordship over all the realms here presented (4:31 – 5:26; 7:11-17). Here these play a special role. The earlier part of this chapter has dealt with teaching about right hearing. The events here illustrate right hearing. In three of them, **faith** is mentioned as the right responses (vss. 25, 48, 50). To hear Jesus' word aright is to connect it with his Person, and to believe it because one believes him. The response of the Gerasene people is an example of how not to hear (vs. 37).

J. Ligon Duncan: You need to know that the life you are living now is a life filled with tribulations and those tribulations are not the exception, they are the rule. Each of these miracles that are recorded in Luke in this section deal with trials and tribulations that plague the human experience and they remind us that those tribulations are not the exception, they are the rule. . . the purpose in every trial of every Christian who has ever lived is that you might know the Living God.

I. (:22-25) POWER OVER NATURE

A. (:22-23) Crisis Situation – Danger of Drowning

1. (:22) Ordinary Boat Trip

“Now it came about on one of those days, that He and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, ‘Let us go over to the other side of the lake.’ And they launched out.”

Jesus is the one who had commanded them to take this boat trip to the other side of the lake. They got into the boat and launched out at His direction. Seemed sensible course of action to all at the time.

2. (:23) Fierce Storm Puts Them in Danger

“But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended upon the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.”

Jesus in a state of exhaustion. Had no problem sleeping – even in the midst of such a fierce storm.

Water was coming into the boat.

Reality of the danger – they did not imagine or invent this crisis. This was a legitimate crisis.

Steven Cole: STORMS OFTEN EXPOSE HOW WE ARE NOT TRUSTING IN THE LORD. We all can fake it in calm waters. We can impress others with how together we seem to be. And, the disciples could cope with normal storms quite well. They had been in storms on this lake many other times. They were experts at handling their boat in rough waters. At first they probably thought, “No problem, we can handle it.” But this storm brought them to the end of themselves and showed them how they were trusting in themselves. Often, a crisis shows us a side of ourselves we were blind to. The Lord uses it to reveal new areas where we need to learn to trust Him. We all must come to know our weakness so that we will rely on the Lord’s strength. Storms often show us things that we don’t see in calmer times:

B. (:24) Confrontation – Disciples vs. Master

1. Terrified Disciples

*“And they came to Him and woke Him up, saying,
‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’”*

We are quick to jump to negative conclusions; not as quick to assume that the Lord has everything under control and that He is watching over us for our good.

Steven Cole: So what should we do if we trust in the Lord, but the boat sinks? The miracle doesn’t come.

The answer is, “We trust in the Lord Jesus as we go under. We go down singing the doxology.” John Hus was burned at the stake for his faith, but he went out singing. Nicholas Ridley and Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake together. As the fires were lit, Latimer cried out, “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light such a candle by God’s grace in England as I trust shall never be put out!” Hudson Taylor lost his beloved wife Maria as they both sought to take the gospel to inland China. But he stood at her grave and sang, “Jesus, I am resting, resting, in the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart.”

2. Totally In Charge Master

*“And being aroused, He rebuked the wind and the surging waves,
and they stopped, and it became calm.”*

Instant miracle – the Creator just spoke the word of command and nature obeyed.

Morris: Jesus rebuked the wind (cf. **Ps. 106:9**). His verb may imply that there was an evil force behind the storm.

Jesus brings about peace and calm in the roughest of the seas of life.

C. (:25) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Trust the One Who Has All Power Over Nature

1. Probing Question

“And He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’”

Jesus was right to expect greater faith on the part of His disciples. Why should they imagine that Jesus would allow them to just drown as if He did not deeply care for them or was not powerful enough to protect them?

Jesus was not limited in His care for them despite the circumstance that at present He was sleeping.

J. Ligon Duncan: Where is your faith when the unexpected, the shocking diagnosis comes? *Where is your faith?* How do you react? What do you think? *Where is your faith* when a family issue that's entirely unexpected, in fact you've lived with it for years, royals with heats until it bubbles over with boiling? And though you've lived with it for so long you're overwhelmed and you wonder to yourself, "Lord, what in the world are You doing in my life? I don't want this. I've never wanted this. Why is this here? What is going on? What is the message? Is there going to be any relief?" *Where is your faith?* Or maybe it's right now in this economy and you're saying, "Lord, I'm an honest worker. I'm a hard worker. I even work smart every once in a while, but everything I do right now is going wrong and I don't see a way out and I don't know what You're doing to me." *Where is your faith?* To these and a thousand other questions that are in the hearts of the people sitting before me this morning, Jesus has a question for you — "*Where is your faith?*" - because in this passage, in this miracle, in this circumstance, He is teaching His disciples something very, very important about two things. First about Himself, second about how they're supposed to live the Christian life in just the kinds of situations I've just described, and in so many more that I haven't because this is a passage that is designed at its culminating point both to show us who Jesus really is and also to teach us how to live the Christian life in the midst of the trials and tribulations that populate our lives. . .

Now understand what Jesus is not doing. He is not rebuking them for being frightened in the midst of a life threatening situation. These men could have died. It would have been very easy for this boat to capsize and for them to sink to the bottom. But what Jesus is asking them to consider is if they have adequately understood who is it who is with them on the boat and if they have factored that reality into their life threatening situation and if they have put their faith in Him adequately for the living of the Christian life. "*Where is your faith?* Is it in Me? If it is, I'm right here. I didn't go anywhere. I was right there with you. *Where is your faith?*"

2. Power and Authority of Christ to Calm the Storms of Life Should be the Focus

"And they were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, 'Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?'"

It always gets back to **Who Jesus really is**. That is where our focus needs to be.

II. (:26-39) POWER OVER DEMONS

A. (:26-29) Crisis Situation – Distress of the Demon Possessed Man

1. (:26-27) Description of the Weird Behavior of the Demon Possessed Man

"And they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee. And when He had come out onto the land, He was met by a certain man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs."

Brian Bell: alliterative title and outline of **Lk 8:26-39 - Cleansed, Clothed and Commissioned**

- Cleansed - Lk 8:26-34
- Clothed - Lk 8:35-37
- Commissioned - Lk 8:38-39

C. S. Lewis: There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist and magician with the same delight.

2. (:28) Description of the Fear of the Demon When Confronted by Jesus

“And seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, ‘What do I have to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.’”

3. (:29) Description of the Danger Posed by the Demon

“For He had been commanding the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard; and yet he would burst his fetters and be driven by the demon into the desert.”

B. (:30-33) Confrontation – Jesus Grants the Entreaty of the Demons

1. (:30) Identification of the Demons

“And Jesus asked him, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion’; for many demons had entered him.”

2. (:31) Entreaty of the Demons

“And they were entreating Him not to command them to depart into the abyss.”

Morris: This is a place of confinement for spirits, even Satan (**Rev. 20:1ff.**).

3. (:32-33) Permission Granted by Jesus

“Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the demons entreated Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission. And the demons came out from the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake, and were drowned.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Many of you have seen, maybe fewer of you have read, a book by the famous British philosopher and skeptic, Bertrand Russell. It's entitled, *Why I Am Not A Christian*. Now it's not a very profound book. I could have come up with better arguments against Christianity than Bertrand Russell, but in the course of this book in one of the chapters, he says it is this story that led him to the conclusion that Jesus was neither the best nor the most virtuous of men. It deeply disturbed Bertrand Russell that Jesus allowed a herd of two thousand pigs to be destroyed. And he said that a good and virtuous man could not have allowed something like that to happen and therefore, Jesus was not the best and most virtuous of men and therefore Christianity was disproven. Well this is a taste of the profound arguments that you will find in that book. But it struck me as interesting that Bertrand Russell had the exact same reaction to this miracle that the people of the Gerasenes had. They had the exact same reaction to Jesus that Bertrand Russell would manifest two thousand years later. . .

So you not only see the power of Christ over Satan in this passage in the miracle that He performs in casting these demons out of this man, but you also see Jesus' compassion towards sinners. . .

This story is a technicolor picture of Luke 8:18, and my friends, there don't have to be demons around for us to be facing the same challenge. Are we with a man, liberated, who trusted Jesus, who begged to be with Jesus and sought to be a disciple at His feet? Or are we with those who love what we want and what we have more than we love the Word of life from the only One who can give life?

C. (:34-39) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Testify to the One Who Has Power Over the Strongest Demons

1. (:34-36) Report of the Exorcism Resulting in Complete Healing

“And when the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country. And the people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened. And those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.”

2. (:37) Rejection of Jesus by the Gerasene People Leading to His Departure

“And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to depart from them; for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat, and returned.”

Morris: Their fear may have been a superstitious reaction to the supernatural power that had so evidently been in operation. It may also have been associated with the material loss involved in the destruction of the pigs. If so, they saw Jesus as a disturbing person, more interested in saving men than in material prosperity. It was more comfortable to ask Him to go.

Anyabwile: Whatever you do, do not reject God's word. That's what the people do after Jesus heals the man with the many demons. Do you remember that in **verses 34-39**? They **see** the miracle. They **see** the man clothed and sane after he'd been running around naked and crazed for years. They **hear** how it had been done (v. 36). But they **do not receive** Christ or his word. Instead, they “*asked him to leave*” (v. 37).

3. (:38-39) Released Testimony to the Power of Jesus Over the Forces of Satan by the Healed Man

“But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, ‘Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.’ And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.”

Steven Cole:

1) *To what extent am I experiencing the transforming power of Christ?* What is there in my life that is explainable only by the spiritual power of Jesus Christ? It may not be as instantaneous and dramatic as the changes in Legion. But even so, there ought to be some obvious changes due to my experience with Jesus Christ.

2) *To what extent am I proclaiming the transforming power of Christ?*

There are two very normal parts to proclaiming the message that every one of us can do:

- a. Exhibit a Transformed Life
- b. Return Home and Describe What Great Things God Has Done For You.

- How do you go? You go with obedience and zeal.
- To whom do you go? Go to your house.
- What do you say? Tell them your story and the gospel of God's grace.
 - *Explain the gospel*
 - *Emphasize grace*

J. C. Ryle: Our Lord Jesus Christ's dominion over the devil should be a cheering thought to all true Christians. Without it, indeed, we might well despair of salvation. To feel that we have ever near us an invisible spiritual enemy, laboring night and day to compass our destruction, would be enough to crush out every hope, if we did not know a Friend and Protector. Blessed be God! The Gospel reveals such a One. The Lord Jesus is stronger than that "strong man armed," who is ever warring against our souls. The Lord Jesus is able to deliver us from the devil. He proved his power over him frequently when upon earth. He triumphed over him gloriously on the cross. He will never let him pluck any of His sheep out of His hand. He will one day bruise him under our feet, and bind him in the prison of hell. (**Rom. 16:20; Rev. 20:1, 2.**) Happy are they who hear Christ's voice and follow Him! Satan may vex them, but he cannot really hurt them! He may bruise their heel, but he cannot destroy their souls. They shall be "more than conquerors" through Him who loved them. (**Rom. 8:37.**)

III. (:40-48) POWER OVER SICKNESS

A. (:40-44) 2 Crisis Situations --

1. (:40-42a) First Crisis = Jairus' Daughter

"And as Jesus returned, the multitude welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him. And behold, there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus' feet, and began to entreat Him to come to his house; for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying."

MacArthur: He stepped off the boat and there they were and that's the way it was pretty much every day. And it tells us of His accessibility. He was unlike many religious leaders. He didn't seclude Himself in some ivory tower, protected from people. His entire ministry was spent in public with the people in the streets, in the fields, in their homes, in the synagogues, on the road, by the sea, in the boats, wherever it was. Only occasionally did He retreat to isolate Himself for the purpose of giving further insight and instruction to those who believed in Him. Even on some occasion He got away just for the replenishment, the rest, the need to restore His energy. And sometimes He got away all by Himself because He needed time alone with His Father. But always when the morning came, He was back and the crowd was waiting. That was all right because it was to them He had come. It was to them He had to prove who He was. It was to them He had to preach the message that God would forgive their sins if they would cry out in humility for that forgiveness. And even though the crowd hounded Him, and even though the crowd dogged Him and even though the crowd crushed Him and even though the crowd endangered Him and even though sometimes the crowd tried to kill Him, He was accessible to them. So when He came back, they were all there.

2. (:42b-44) Second Crisis = Woman With Hemorrhage

"But as He went, the multitudes were pressing against Him. And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up

behind Him, and touched the fringe of His cloak; and immediately her hemorrhage stopped.”

MacArthur: Jesus was very used to being interrupted. I mean, He'd be preaching a sermon and all of a sudden the roof would come apart and down would come somebody in a bed. Right? We learned that already in the Luke...the gospel of Luke. I mean, He was used to being interrupted. Everybody who wanted something interrupted Him. Interruptibility was a virtue of Jesus. It's amazing, no matter what He was doing, He literally would turn to help. He's preaching in the 12th chapter of Luke, He's preaching and it says in verse 13, "Someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.'" Whoa! Can you imagine some guy standing up in the middle of my sermon and say, "Hey, pastor, tell my brother to give me half of the money I'm owed." What? He was interrupted all the time. I don't know if I could handle that. But Jesus never had a problem with His train of thought, you understand that? So don't be standing up and saying things when I'm trying to concentrate. But Jesus was interruptible.

B. (:45-47) Confrontation – Between Jesus and the Woman with the Hemorrhage

“And Jesus said, ‘Who is the one who touched Me?’ And while they were all denying it, Peter said, ‘Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You.’ But Jesus said, ‘Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.’ And when the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed.”

Geldenhuys: If her cure had taken place without the Saviour making it known publicly, she would have had the utmost difficulty in removing from the inhabitants of the town the prejudice and scorn that she had met with for years. For this reason the Saviour, who knew her in all her need and sorrows, and understood her circumstances, makes her appear before the whole multitude to testify publicly that she has been healed.

C. (:48) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Trust in the One Who Has Power Over Sickness to Cleanse You From All Defilement

“And He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.’”

Steven Cole: Because Jesus is the sufficient Savior, you can know that He has adequate power to cleanse your sin. Because He is the sympathetic Savior, He will treat you with gentleness and understanding. You can know for sure that if you come to Him in faith, He will instantly forgive all of your sins, because He has promised it. You will be cleansed of all defilement if you lay hold of Jesus by faith.

IV. (:49-56) POWER OVER DEATH

A. (:49) Critical Situation – Jairus’ Daughter Reported as Dead

“While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, ‘Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.’”

Already introduced in vs. 40-42 before the interruption; now after the delay we receive the most disturbing news possible

B. (:50) Confrontation – Between Jesus and Jairus – Faith Replaces Fear With Hope

“But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, ‘Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she shall be made well.’”

Steven Cole: In fearful situations we must overcome hindrances to faith.

When Jairus came to Jesus, he believed that Jesus could heal his daughter. But there were several hindrances or hurdles that Jairus had to overcome. I’ve already mentioned the hindrance of *public opinion*. What would the rabbis and others think of this synagogue ruler bowing before Jesus? There was also the hindrance of his own *pride and reputation*, which he would have felt the need to protect.

He also had to overcome the hindrance of *interruptions*, as this woman interrupted Jesus on His way to Jairus’ house. Jairus must have thought, “Why did this woman have to touch Jesus now, of all times? Let her touch Him tomorrow! My daughter is dying! Every second matters!”

Then his worst fears were realized as his friends came to tell him that his daughter had already died. That’s another hindrance to faith: *Well-meaning, but misguided doomsayers* who discourage us from clinging to the only source of hope. What they say may be true—Jairus’ daughter was dead. But they never add the mighty power of Jesus into their calculations. With Him there is hope even when human hope is lost!

C. (:51-56) Critical Lesson to be Learned – Trust in the One Who Has Power Over Death

1. (:51) Limiting the Participants

“And when He had come to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl's father and mother.”

2. (:52) Shutting Down the Grief

“Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, ‘Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep.’”

MacArthur: Of all the fears and all the phobias and all the elements of dread in human life, the ultimate fear is the fear of death. Death is the most certain fact of life. People naturally have an intense dread of death and do everything they can to push it as far away as possible. If you are looking for a religion and a religious leader, you would be wise to find one who has power over that great enemy, power over death. The tombs of the world's religious leaders are occupied with one exception, and that is the tomb of the Lord Jesus Christ which has been empty since three days after He was placed there. The ultimate distinguishing mark of Jesus Christ, the ultimate proof that He is God, the true Messiah and Savior of the world, is His power over death, which power was demonstrated not only in His own resurrection with unmistakable, inarguable finality, but a power which was demonstrated in His ability to raise others from the dead.

3. (:53-54) Commanding Life

“And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died. He, however, took her by the hand and called, ‘Child, arise!’”

4. (:55) Restoring Her to Full Functioning

“And her spirit returned, and she rose immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.”

MacArthur: Here is the great power of Jesus, just astonishing power to create life. And here at the same time is the tender touch of Jesus. And here at the same time is the instruction of Jesus about the normalcy of life. This is the magnificent reality of Jesus' miracles. There's nothing bizarre, fantastic, over the top, out of the ordinary in what is being done here. This is just the power of Jesus expressed with the most dramatic supernatural results to produce the most normal kind of life. Just as His great creative power began it all in the original creation, He has power to raise dead people.

5. (:56) Limiting the Report

*“And her parents were amazed;
but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.”*

CONCLUSION:

But what if Jesus does not choose to deliver us from our crisis situation in the manner in which we are requesting? Despite the fact that we know that He cares for us; and we know that He has all power and authority.

Then our testimony must be that of Jeremy Camp: *I Still Believe!*

“I still believe in Your faithfulness
I still believe in Your truth
I still believe in Your holy word
even when I don't see, **I still believe!**”

Hebrews 11:1 *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

G. Campbell Morgan: The great Bible teacher, G. Campbell Morgan, lost his firstborn daughter. Forty years later, preaching on the story of Jairus, he said,

I can hardly speak of this matter without becoming personal and reminiscent, remembering a time forty years ago when my own first lassie lay at the point of death, dying. I called for Him then, and He came, and surely said to our troubled hearts, “Fear not, believe only.” He did not say, “She shall be made whole.” She was not made whole on the earthly plane. She passed away into the life beyond. He did say to her, “Talitha, cumi,” “little lamb, arise”; but in her case, that did not mean, stay on the earth level. It meant that He needed her, and He took her to be with Himself. She has been with Him for all those years, as we measure time here, and I have missed her every day; but His word, “Believe only,” has been the strength of the passing years. (Jill Morgan, *A Man of the Word* [Baker], pp. 82-83.)

Paul expresses our guaranteed victory in Jesus Christ in these terms in **Romans 8:31-39**

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 But in all these things **we overwhelmingly conquer** through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What storms of life have you seen Jesus calm in your circumstances?
- 2) To what extent are you experiencing and testifying to the transforming power of Jesus Christ in your life?
- 3) Are we tempted to think we are troubling Jesus with prayer requests that He would not care about?
- 4) How can we continue to reach out to people who are pushing Jesus away and rejecting His truth claims?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: *"When she touched Him, immediately she was clean and immediately he was healed."* You see what Luke is saying to the skeptics of his day? He (Jesus) did not become unclean; she became clean. He will one day go outside the camp for her, but He was not made unclean by coming in contact with her. She was made clean because she put her faith in Him. That's why He says to her, *"Daughter, your faith has made you well."* He's not saying that somehow faith magically did something for her. He's saying that faith in Him was the instrument, the means, the conduit, of the blessing of His healing grace. He is the one who made her well. God's grace and mercy and love and power made her well, but it was her faith by which she grasped it.

Steven Cole: FAITH NEED NOT BE PERFECT TO BE EFFECTIVE.

This woman's faith was probably tinged with a bit of superstition. She thought that there was some magic power conveyed by touching Jesus' garments. Her faith was self-centered. She came to Him only for the cure she wanted, and she would have been content to go away with nothing more. Her faith was quite ignorant. She didn't know much theology. But the Lord took her weak, misguided faith, healed her on that basis, and sought to develop and strengthen it from there.

How much faith does it take to be cleansed from your sins? Thankfully, not much! Salvation depends on the strength of the Savior more than on the strength of our faith. When Jesus told her that her faith had saved her, He meant to clarify that it was not magic or superstition, but rather faith that was the means of God's blessings coming to her through Christ. Faith is merely the

channel, weak though it is, through which God works. But it is Christ, the object of our faith, not our faith itself, which cleanses us. . .

Don't be put off by those around you. Many in the crowd touched Jesus that day and weren't healed, but this woman didn't let that stop her. Don't fear that your weak faith is not enough. Jesus will accept it and work to strengthen it. Don't think about anything except that your sin has defiled you and that you desperately need what only Jesus offers, complete cleansing from your sin. Fear only that He will pass by this morning on His way to healing others and you will not touch Him and be saved. Weak faith is enough to lay hold of His mercy, but indifference or hesitation can result in the ruin of your soul. If you lay hold of Jesus by faith, you will hear His assuring words, "*Your faith has made you well; go in peace.*"

MacArthur: Our Lord Jesus showed His power to conquer the forces of nature in this very chapter. He stopped the wind and the water. He showed His power over demons, casting several thousand demons out of a maniac. He showed His power over disease, healing the woman with the hemorrhage which had lasted for twelve years. And now as we look back at the same text, we're going to see His power over death. All of that Luke provides for us in this one section from **verse 22** to the end of the chapter, thus telling us without question Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world, God in human flesh, the one who has power over nature, power over demons, power over disease, and power over death, the One who can bring the promised kingdom, conquering sin, conquering death and conquering Satan, conquering hell. Satan is the one who brought death into the world in his temptation, killing the whole human race, making them all subject to the bondage of death for all their life. They lived then the whole of life in the fear of the unavoidable, inevitable reality of death. Jesus came to destroy that. Jesus came to give us eternal life, to take the sting out of death, Paul tells us.

Hendriksen: gives a summary of all three accounts of this demonic encounter by Jesus - In each of the three Gospels certain details are added:

Matthew, in addition to mentioning two men instead of one, states that they were so violent that travel on their road had become unsafe; that they expressed fear that Jesus had come to torture them "before the appointed time"; and that the herd was feeding "at some distance away" from the point where the confrontation between Jesus and the demoniacs took place.

Luke adds that the demon-possessed man was "from the city"—had apparently lived there—; that for a long time he had been running around naked; that the demons caused their presence to be felt by spurts ("seized him many a time"); and that the man had been kept under guard, and driven into the deserts by the demons. He also reports that the demons begged Jesus not to send them "into the abyss," and that the liberated man was sitting "at the feet of Jesus" and subsequently proclaimed "throughout the whole city" what the Lord had done for him.

Mark vividly describes how all previous attempts to keep the demoniac under control and to subdue him had failed; that he was screaming night and day and cutting himself with stones; that the spokesman of the demons wanted Jesus to swear that he would not torment him; that the herd consisted of about two thousand pigs; and that everybody was amazed about the cured man's report concerning the great things God had done for him. Finally, the question of Jesus, "What is your name," and the answer to that question; as well as the request of the cured and grateful man to be allowed to accompany Jesus on the latter's further travels, and his reply, are reported only by Mark and Luke.

TEXT: Luke 9:1-17

TITLE: WHO IS ADEQUATE FOR THESE THINGS?

BIG IDEA:
THE ALL-SUFFICIENT KING EQUIPS INADEQUATE DISCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

INTRODUCTION:

On the job training can be so much more valuable than just classroom training. Jesus is the master at equipping men for ministry. These events occur at the halfway mark of His earthly ministry. Up to this point it has been all about the teaching and healing ministry performed solely by Jesus. Now Jesus is introducing the principle of multiplication. The disciples need to work through what it means to be invested with the power and authority delegated to them by Jesus and also what it means to come to grips with their own sense of ministry inadequacy. At the end of the day, Jesus demonstrates that He can supply all of our needs and can satisfy us completely if we would just trust Him fully. He ministers with inexhaustible energy and unlimited compassion despite the burden of multitudes of desperately needy people pressing upon Him.

Steven Cole: Do you ever feel overwhelmed with all that needs to be done in serving the Lord? We are needy people serving Christ in a needy world. . . I feel overwhelmed with the immensity of the task and with my own inadequacy. How can I possibly meet the needs of this church, let alone the massive needs of this hurting world? Even the apostle Paul exclaimed, “*Who is adequate for these things?*” (2 Cor. 2:16).

I. (:1-6) APOSTLES SENT OUT ON A MISSIONS TRIP – PREACHING AND HEALING

A. (:1-2) Commissioning for the Missions Trip

1. (:1) Delegated Power and Authority Over Demons and Diseases

“And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons, and to heal diseases.”

It is one thing to be a powerful leader who can accomplish great things. It is on another level altogether to be able to equip and commission and enable your followers to perform the identical ministry functions.

This is part of the training process as Jesus prepares them to be ministry pioneers as He will soon depart.

2. (:2) Ministry Focus = Preaching and Healing

“And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God, and to perform healing.”

These are the 2 critical areas they needed to master

MacArthur: So what happened was He sent them out for their **internship**. They went out two by two to preach the gospel, to do these miracles to attest to the validity of their message. Short-

term, they came back, they reported, Jesus gathered them around and used their experience to further instruct them, to further teach them, as He worked through their intern experiences to continue the equipping process. Finally...They would do some of these short-term missions, but finally, the final stage would be their final sending at the time of the Great Commission before Jesus ascended into heaven, when He sent them into all the world to preach the gospel. And they were obedient and the book of Acts says they turned the world upside down, and you and I are all fruit of their ministry. Not only were they the first wave of preachers who preached the gospel and therefore they generated the second wave and every wave after that, but the apostles and their close associates were responsible for writing the New Testament to which, of course, all who believe are in debt. . .

These men had listened for eighteen months, now they were ready to speak what they had heard. They preached what Jesus preached. They went out. They preached about sin and about repentance and about grace and mercy from God, and the forgiveness of sin, that God would give the broken-hearted penitent sinner. And they preached that Jesus was the promised Messiah. And it wouldn't be long before He would give His life for their sins and He would therefore ratify the covenant that provides salvation. . .

The profile of a messenger, this is it: preaches salvation, manifests compassion, maintains trust, demonstrates compassion, exercises discernment.

B. (:3-5) Logistical Instructions for the Missions Trip

1. (:3) Faith Approach for Support

“And He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece.’”

The need was urgent; they were to make no special preparations for this trip. They would need to trust God for every day provisions. Teaching them the lesson of absolute dependence.

Lenski: These orders are not intended to inflict hardship on the disciples but to relieve them of all worry regarding their bodily needs. He who sends them out will himself attend to all these things.

J. Ligon Duncan: I suspect that Jesus is especially concerned that His disciples not look like beggars and charlatans looking to get from people rather than give to people something. People who would look like they were looking to get something out of the people that they were ministering to rather than to proclaim something to those people. **Why?**

Because if your message is — God is all-satisfying and that He gives a kingdom that gives the only satisfaction that there is and it is a satisfaction which surpasses anything this world can give, and you are caught up in getting things from the people of this age, you contradict your message.

2. (:4) Contentment Approach for Hospitality

“And whatever house you enter, stay there, and take your leave from there.”

D. Miller: They were to be content with their lot, not moving about from house to house to seek better entertainment.

3. (:5) Judgmental Approach for Rejection

“And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”

Geldenhuys: by this action they will indicate that they break all ties with them, and show in this decisive and irrevocable manner that they do not wish to have even a dust-speck from their streets upon them. This grave action will then serve as a last and urgent call to repentance.

C. (:6) Execution of the Missions Trip

“And departing, they began going about among the villages, preaching the gospel, and healing everywhere.”

II. (:7-9) ASIDE: PERPLEXITY OF HEROD REGARDING IDENTITY OF JESUS

A. (:7-8) Confusion

1. (:7a) Hearing Reports of the Ministry Activity

“Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening;”

2. (:7b-8) Differing Opinions Regarding the Identity of Jesus

“and he was greatly perplexed,”

a. John the Baptist

“because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead,”

b. Elijah

“and by some that Elijah had appeared,”

c. Resurrected Prophet

“and by others, that one of the prophets of old had risen again.”

Anyabwile: The crowd’s theories have three things in common:

- All the responses are religious theories. They’re certain Jesus is a prophet of some sort.
- All their theories are supernatural. Each of these suggestions requires either a resurrection or a miraculous return of Elijah, who was raptured to be with God and was prophesied to return before the Messiah.
- Each theory is wrong. Crowds rarely answer important questions correctly. Crowds are almost always divided and wrong. Do not put your confidence in the opinions of crowds for anything.

B. (:9) Curiosity

“And Herod said, ‘I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?’ And he kept trying to see Him.”

III. (:10-11) AFTERMATH OF THE MISSIONS TRIP

A. (:10a) Missions Report

“And when the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done.”

Apparently they were able to minister effectively

B. (:10b) Missions Break

“And taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida.”

D. Miller: to escape Herod, who was now seeking to see him. Bethsaida was outside Herod’s territory. It could not be that Jesus should “*perish away from Jerusalem*” (13:33). Hence, he must avoid falling into Herod’s hands as John had, and thus meeting his fate prematurely.

C. (:11) Missions Continuation

1. Crowds Attracted to Jesus

“But the multitudes were aware of this and followed Him;”

2. Continuing to Preach and Heal

“and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.”

IV. (:12-17) FEEDING OF THE 5,000

A. (:12-14a) Commissioning for the Feeding

1. (:12) Apostles Feel the Burden of the Need

“And the day began to decline, and the twelve came and said to Him, ‘Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.’”

MacArthur: Had they already forgotten the power that they had? They had just come back from their mission of several weeks, casting out demons, raising dead people, healing sick people, preaching the gospel. Had they forgotten the power that they had? Power that had been demonstrated over nature because it was the same power Jesus had? Had they forgotten that? Had they forgotten **2 Kings 4:42 to 44**, where in an Old Testament situation God granted similar kind of power? "A man came from Baal-shalishah, brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of corn in his sack, and he said, 'Give them to the people that they may eat.' And his attendants said, 'What shall I set this before a hundred men?' But he said, 'Give them to the people that they may eat for thus says the Lord, they shall eat and have some left over.' So he set it before them and they ate and had some left over, according to the Word of the Lord." Didn't they know about that incident in 2 Kings where God multiplied food? Or maybe they didn't remember the story about the...the widow in Elijah's day, where the oil never was gone even though it was poured out and the barrel of grain was never diminished even though it was used.

2. (:13-14a) Jesus Lays the Responsibility on the Apostles

“But He said to them, ‘You give them something to eat!’”

Jesus wants His ambassadors to have great expectations for what He can provide if we only will trust in Him completely

3. (:14a) Apostles Plead Their Lack of Resources

“And they said, ‘We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people.’ (For there were about five thousand men.)”

Steven Cole: Christ will give us His adequacy to meet the needs of people if we yield our inadequacy to Him.

B. (:14b-16) Logistical Instructions

1. (:14b-15) Organization

“And He said to His disciples, ‘Have them recline to eat in groups of about fifty each.’ And they did so, and had them all recline.”

2. (:16) Multiplying the Available Resources

“And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the multitude.”

Lenski: What a picture – these thousands arranged ready to dine, and only a handful of food to set before them.

Steven Cole: The manner in which Jesus performed this miracle is significant. He could have called down manna from heaven. Commentators point out that this miracle took place in the wilderness and that the 5,000, seated in companies, recalls Israel camped by tribes in the wilderness under Moses. Calling down manna would have fit the situation. It would have been easier on the twelve. It would have been more efficient. But He didn't do it that way.

Or, the Lord could have spoken the word and a loaf of bread would have miraculously appeared in each person's hand. Everyone would have been more awed at Jesus' power than they were with the quiet way this miracle was done. It would have been much more efficient and impressive than having the disciples distribute the bread and fish to this large crowd, which must have taken a long time.

Or Jesus could have called angels who could have taken the bread from His hand and flown directly to each group and given them the food. People would have been amazed. They would have talked about it for the rest of their lives. It would have been stupendous!

But how did Jesus do it? He used the disciples to distribute the bread and fish to the people. I'm convinced that the Lord did the miracle that way to teach the disciples that His method for meeting the needs of a lost world is through people. Christ meets the needs of people through people. But note carefully the kind of people He uses: *Inadequate people!*

C. (:17) Execution of the Feeding Miracle – Jesus Supplies and Satisfies All Our Needs

“And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.”

This is the only miracle recorded in all 4 gospels – speaks to its importance to the apostles.

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus is more than enough.

MacArthur: The precision of our Lord is staggering. He creates and He creates to the last morsel, exactly what it takes to feed every single person, then have twelve baskets left to feed

twelve apostles. And there's nothing left over. Generosity, yes. Precision, staggering, absolutely staggering. He's generous but He's precise. He gives, but He doesn't waste. He has demonstrated His deity in an unmistakable way. Nobody can do this but God. He is the Messiah of God. He is the Son of God. He is the Lord. The crowd that had experienced this, you'd think they'd fall on their faces, you'd think they'd say, "Lord, feed our souls the way You fed our bodies. Lord, take us to the glories of Your kingdom. Heal our spirits the way You healed our...our physical ailments. Lord, we worship You, we bow before You, bring Your kingdom to our hearts."

CONCLUSION:

Steven Cole: When I was a boy, I used to watch “*The Lone Ranger*” on TV. At the end of each episode, after the Lone Ranger had saved the victims from some villain, he would mount his horse, Silver. The rescued victim would ask Tonto, who always managed to be standing nearby, “Who is that masked man?” Tonto would reply, “Don’t you know? That’s the Lone Ranger.” Silver would stand on his hind legs, the Lone Ranger would wave and cry, “Hi ho, Silver, away!” To the tune of the “William Tell Overture,” he would ride off into the sunset and get ready for the next episode when he would rescue someone else in need.

Through our witness, people should be able to answer the question, “**Who is this Man Jesus?**” They should know, “He is the Lord God in human flesh, who offered Himself in the place of sinners. Whoever trusts in Him is reconciled to God and receives eternal life as His free gift.” God has entrusted to us the great task of carrying on the work of Jesus. As Peter instructs us, “*Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; ...*” (1 Pet. 3:15). Jesus is the Savior and Lord, coming to judge the world and reign as King! Let’s boldly proclaim it.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How did Jesus structure this internship experience for the Apostles? How did this serve as a transition point in the ministry of Jesus?
- 2) What made the situation so perplexing for Herod and how did he seek to get answers to his questions?
- 3) In what situations have we attempted to give Jesus direction as to how He should be working and accomplishing His kingdom goals?
- 4) What role did Jesus have the Apostles play in this feeding miracle?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Two things lay behind Jesus' sending out of the Twelve. For one thing, the time of his own ministry was short. One could not stir up the multitudes as Jesus had done without soon running afoul of the authorities. John's experience had shown that. In order, therefore, to make his announcement of the Kingdom as widespread as possible in the shortest time, Jesus commissioned and empowered his Apostles to go forth in his name. The second reason for their commission was that they should begin preparation for the work they must take over after Jesus' death. Some experience of work in his name during his lifetime was necessary before they could carry on alone following the Resurrection.

The instructions given were not for their permanent work, for only for this hurried mission.. .

J. Ligon Duncan: Who is it in the Old Testament that calls and gives and sends? It's God. God alone calls Israel out of Egypt and gives to Israel promises and sends Israel into Egypt. God alone called Abram out of a pagan, idol worshipping family in Ur of the Chaldeans and gave to him enormous privileges and promises and sent him into the land of promise. And so Luke is telling you that Jesus calls "the twelve" and what's that supposed to remind you but the people of God being constituted by Jesus. He calls them and gives them and sends them. This is God in the flesh. The King is here. Jesus is the King.

Herod was worried that Jesus was a threat to his kingdom. Well, Jesus was not a threat to Herod's kingdom in the way that Herod feared that Jesus was a threat to his kingdom, but He was a greater threat to Herod's kingdom than Herod knew, because Herod's kingdom was entirely of this passing age, and Jesus the King was here to proclaim a kingdom that is not of this world. That doesn't mean that Jesus' kingdom is irrelevant to this world, you understand, but it means that it is not derived from anything that this world can give and it is utterly sovereign over everything in this world. And if we cling to this passing age and its kingdom, we will be bereft of the kingdom that will not end. And so Jesus was a great threat to Herod than Herod knew. But Luke is first of all telling us that Jesus is the King.

Steven Cole: In our day, there are segments of the church that argue that we are to emphasize divine healing along with the gospel. The late John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement, claimed that the "*greater works*" that Jesus predicted that His followers would do after receiving the Holy Spirit (**John 14:12**) include signs and wonders. If we are not regularly seeing God use us to perform miracles, then we are not proclaiming the gospel as we ought.

What shall we say to this? First, God is just as able to perform miracles through His servants today as He always has been. We must be careful not to limit God's power because of our unbelief (**Mark 6:5, 6**). But, having said that, we must also be careful to understand the place of miracles in God's working. While there are miracles reported throughout the Bible, they mainly occur in clusters around the time of the exodus, during the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, and during the time of Christ and the apostles. The purpose of those increased miracles was to authenticate the word of God or His messengers during critical times in the history of His people. But once the purpose for the miracles had been accomplished, the miracles decreased in frequency.

For example, the Book of Hebrews was written to a second-generation church of mostly Jewish Christians who were tempted to go back to Judaism. The author is trying to convince them of the

superiority of Jesus. In **Hebrews 2:3-4**, he states, “*How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.*” He is saying that the truth of the gospel was authenticated by these miracles performed by those who had been with Jesus, namely, the apostles.

But—here’s the point—if signs and wonders were still common in the church, why didn’t he appeal to their current experience? It would have been a much stronger argument to appeal to their common experience of miracles as a proof of Christianity than to appeal to miracles they had not even seen. Or, if the Hebrews were not experiencing such miracles, but should have been, he would have exhorted them to believe God for such things in their midst. But apparently such miracles had generally ceased. His appeal was to the authenticating nature of such signs as performed by the apostles and reported to these people as evidence of the true identity of Jesus as both Lord and Christ.

Another reason I do not believe that we should be emphasizing signs and wonders when we proclaim the gospel is that both Jesus and Paul censured those who sought for such things. The Jews saw Jesus multiply the loaves and fishes and yet they challenged Him to perform more signs (John 6:2, 26, 30). But they would not submit to Him or believe in Him. Paul said, “*The Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (**1 Cor. 1:22-24**).

The real issue of the gospel is sin, righteousness, and judgment (**John 16:8**). People can gawk at miracles, but if they are not convicted about their sin and need for a Savior, they will not be saved from God’s judgment. The miracles that Christ and the apostles performed authenticate Jesus as the promised Savior. While we can pray that God would graciously heal a person of some disease, and He may do it miraculously, our emphasis should be on the person’s need of a Savior from sin. Jesus is the powerful Lord who can save every person who believes in Him.

Donald Miller: Luke connects this miracle [Feeding of the 5,000] directly with the disciples’ confession of Jesus’ Messiahship. . . What is the relationship?

The Jews thought of the coming of the Messiah under the picture of a Messianic banquet. Jesus himself spoke of sitting “*at table in the kingdom of God*” (**13:29**). When another mentioned the blessedness of eating bread in the Kingdom of God, Jesus told the parable of the “*great banquet*” (**14:15-24**). One of the Old Testament passages about the Servant of the Lord spoke of the “*day of salvation*” as a time when God’s people should “*not hunger*” (**Isa. 49:8, 10**; see also **Rev. 7:16**). The feeding of the five thousand, then, is an enacted parable announcing the arrival of the Messianic Age. They had already been fed at the hands of Messiah. They had had a foretaste of the coming Messianic banquet. The people, however, were concerned only with the stilling of their hunger, and did not read the deep meaning of this (see **John 6:26-27**). The coming confession of the disciples (**Luke 9:20**) suggests that they had seen in the miracle a **sign** of a deeper reality.

Steven Cole: WE MUST YIELD WHAT WE HAVE, NOT WHAT WE DON’T HAVE. That sounds obvious, doesn’t it? But so often we make up excuses about what we don’t have and we fail to offer to Jesus what we do have. “If I just had more money, I’d give regularly to the

church!” “If I just had the gift of evangelism, I’d witness more!” “If I just had the ability that others have, I’d serve the Lord.” “If I just ...”! But Jesus didn’t use all the bread in Bethsaida, which the disciples *didn’t* have. He used the five loaves and two fish that they *did* have. Jesus doesn’t ask you to give Him what you *don’t* have. He asks you to give Him what you *do* have.

A country preacher went to a farmer in his church and asked, “If you had two farms, would you be willing to give one farm to God?” “Yes,” replied the farmer. “I only wish I were in a position to do it.” The preacher persisted, “If you had \$20,000, would you give \$10,000 to the Lord’s work?” The farmer replied, “Yes, I’d love to have that kind of money! I’d gladly give \$10,000 to the Lord’s work.” Then the preacher sprung his trap: “If you had two pigs, would you give one to the Lord’s work?” The farmer blurted out, “That’s not fair! You know I’ve got two pigs!”

The Lord doesn’t use what you don’t have. He uses the inadequate things you have when you yield them to Him.

Steven Cole: D. L. Moody was a man whom God greatly used. Thousands of people both in America and in England met the Savior through his tireless labors. But humanly speaking, Moody was a very inadequate man. One of nine children, his father died when he was four. He had little formal education. All his life his grammar was atrocious. What little religious education he received as a child was in a Unitarian church. At 17, he left home to work in a Boston shoe store. There, a Sunday School teacher called on him and presented the claims of Christ. In the back of that store, Moody trusted the Savior.

He applied to join a church, but they turned him down and kept him waiting ten months because he was so ignorant of the Bible. He moved to Chicago where, after work, he began to go out into the slums and gather the poor children to bring to Sunday School. A businessman who knew Moody before he became famous told of the first time that he saw him. Moody had gotten permission to hold a meeting in a little shanty that a saloonkeeper had abandoned. The businessman came in a little late and saw this heavyset man holding a small black boy in his arms. By the light of a few candles he was trying to read to him the story of the prodigal son. He couldn’t make out many of the words and had to skip them. The businessman thought, “If the Lord can use such an instrument as that for His honor and glory, it will certainly astonish me!”

After the meeting was over, Moody told the man, “I have only one talent; I have no education, but I love the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to do something for Him. Pray for me.” Henry Varley, a good friend of Moody’s in the early days of his work, once said to Moody, “It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him.” Moody thought about that and said, “By God’s grace, I will be that man.”

God may not call you to preach to thousands, as Moody did. But if you’ve tasted His mercy, He does call you to serve Him in some way. He wants to use you to give the Bread of Life to those who are hungry. The requirement is that you see how inadequate you are to do anything for Him. Then, yield your inadequacy to Him to use as He pleases. He will use you to help meet the needs of a hurting world. And He will give you a basket full of leftovers for yourself besides!

TEXT: Luke 9:18-22

TITLE: THE ONLY QUESTION THAT MATTERS

BIG IDEA:

JESUS CHALLENGES EVERYONE TO KNOW HIS TRUE IDENTITY AND TO RESPOND TO HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION

INTRODUCTION:

At this stage in the training of the twelve, it is time for their final exam. There is really only one question that matters – but it matters to the extent that it determines your eternal destiny. What is your confession regarding the identity of Jesus Christ? We will see that the multitudes have differing opinions – and their speculations are highly favorable – but they fall short of truly understanding the supreme identity of Jesus. Peter serves as a spokesman for the entire group as he often does and verbalizes the correct answer – but still needs additional teaching to flesh out the implications of Jesus being the Messiah of God.

Donald Miller: Jesus had not openly declared himself as Messiah. The demons had witnessed to him (**4:41; 8:28**), and he had claimed that in himself the signs of the Messianic Age were fulfilled (**7:22**). His words, too, as we have seen, were indirect testimonies to his Messianic significance. But, true to his decision at the Temptation (**4:1-13**), he had taken no measures to proclaim himself openly, either by word or by force. Knowledge of his true nature must rest on faith, and faith alone. Hence, Jesus draws from the disciples their confession, rather than putting it into their mouth.

Wiersbe: People had better know who He is, because what we think about Jesus determines our eternal destiny (**John 8:24; 1 John 4:1-3**). It is impossible to be wrong about Jesus and right with God.

I. (:18-19) CONFUSION OF THE MULTITUDES REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS = HUMAN OPINION

A. (:18) Key Question – What is the Word on the Street?

“And it came about that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, ‘Who do the multitudes say that I am?’”

Constable: Luke omitted several incidents here that the other evangelists included (**Matt. 14:22-16:12; Mark 6:45-8:26; John 6:16-66**). By doing so, he tied the questions of Herod and the multitude about Jesus' identity with Peter's answer to that question. This selection of material helps the reader see that the question of Jesus' identity was very important to Luke. (**Luke 9**)

Craddock: Mark locates Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, but the last geographical reference cited in Luke is Bethsaida (**9:10**). Luke seems uninterested in geography here. His concern is to locate this event in the prayer life of Jesus

Sermonwriter.com: The crowds have been important in this Gospel. The crowds went to be baptized by John (**3:7**). The crowds looked for Jesus (**4:42**), gathered to hear him and to be cured (**5:15**), and pressed in on him (**8:42**). Jesus taught the crowds (**5:3**), questioned them (**7:24**).

Now Jesus asks who these crowds think that he is.

B. (:19) Speculative Answers

1. Resurrected John the Baptist

“And they answered and said, ‘John the Baptist,’”

Jesus preached a similar message of repentance

2. Return of Elijah

“and others say Elijah;”

Jesus was a miracle worker of the highest order

3. Resurrected Prophet

“but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.”

J. Ligon Duncan: To say that Jesus is John the Baptist or Elijah or a prophet or the one who has taught us to love or who fought for righteousness and justice and morality in society is not to do Him justice. They’re meant to be compliments you understand, but they don’t live up to who He is.

II. (:20) CONFESSION OF PETER REGARDING THE IDENTITY OF JESUS = DIVINE REVELATION

A. Key Question

“And He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’”

B. Correct Answer

“And Peter answered and said, ‘The Christ of God.’”

Sermonwriter.com: The Jewish people had, for centuries, looked for the Messiah—a deliverer. They anticipated that this Messiah would be a king of the type of King David, a mighty warrior who would liberate Israel from oppression (personified in Jesus’ day by Roman soldiers occupying Israel) and restore the nation’s former glory. When Peter says that Jesus is *“The Christ of God,”* this is surely what he expects.

Hendriksen: Since the question had been put to all, that is, to The Twelve, and none objected to the answer, we may safely assume that here, as well as in the parallel passages (**Matt. 16:16; Mark 8:29**), Peter was the spokesman for all. He often acted in this capacity (**Matt. 15:15, 16; 19:27, 28; 26:35, 40, 41; Mark 1:36; Luke 8:45; 9:32, 33; 12:41; 18:28; John 6:67-69; Acts 1:15; 2:14, 37, 38; 5:29**)....The importance of this momentous confession can hardly be exaggerated. It implies that The Twelve here acknowledge Jesus to be no less than the long-awaited One, God’s Anointed, the Messiah. What the confession does not imply, however, is that The Twelve, or even Peter himself, understood in what sense Jesus was the Christ. It would take these men a very long time to learn this

III. (:21-22) CAUTION AND CLARIFICATION REGARDING MESSIANIC MISSION

A. (:21) Surprising Caution

“But He warned them, and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,”

Lenski: One great task had been accomplished: the disciples had been brought to a full realization of the **divine person** of Jesus as Peter had just voiced this conviction for the Twelve. Another task had to be completed: the disciples and to be made to realize the **redemptive work** that Jesus was about to conclude.

B. (:22) Shocking Clarification – Redemptive Aspect of Messianic Mission

“saying,”

1. Suffering

“The Son of Man must suffer many things,”

2. Rejection

“and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes,”

Morris: The one article in the expression points to the fact that the three formed a single group in the Sanhedrin.

MacArthur: That's a stunner of all stunners, killed by the religious establishment of the people He came to. What a blow to messianic hopes. They had just reached the pinnacle of affirmation that He's the Messiah, and now they're told don't tell anybody about it, this is judicial, don't tell anybody around here about this. The plan is not that we become king now; the plan is death, death at the hands of Jewish leaders. But that's because as **Mark 10:45** says, "*The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many,*" came to be "*made sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*" He came to bear the curse for us. He came to bear in His own body our sins on the cross. And then, **verse 22** says, "*be raised up on the third day.*"

3. Crucifixion

“and be killed,”

4. Resurrection

“and be raised up on the third day.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Try asking others around you “Who they think Jesus is”– What did you find out?
- 2) Why was this question posed by Jesus in the context of his praying to His Heavenly Father?
- 3) What surprises and shocks you the most about what you discover about Jesus Christ?
- 4) Why didn't Jesus want the apostles to broadcast this confessional testimony and publicize His Messianic reign?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Like a bombshell exploding in their midst, Jesus for the first time announced that he must suffer, and on the third day be raised (vs. 22). He was Messiah, as they had confessed, but he must now reinterpret their conceptions of Messiahship. The Messiah was to fulfill his mission by suffering. He was to reign by the power of sacrificial love. He was to be authenticated as Messiah by God through a resurrection after death. In his announcement of suffering Jesus therefore changed their word “Messiah” into “Son of man,” a term which did not have all the mistaken political implications of the word “Messiah” (vs. 22). All this the disciples could not at this time understand. More than once Jesus told them, but it was meaningless (9:44-45; 17:25; 18:31-34). Only after his death, and after God’s vindication of him in the Resurrection, could he explain it to them in all its fullness of meaning (**24:25-27, 44-49**). Then, after God had proclaimed him Messiah in the true sense, they were to placard it publicly to the ends of the earth (**Acts 2:14-36**). Until then they were to be silent.

Geldenhuys: The final result of our preaching and work should always be that people are brought to the personal confession that Jesus is the Christ of God – the Messiah who is our Prophet, Priest and King, our Savior and Teacher, who has procured redemption for us and who now intercedes for us and rules our lives. All this is included in the fact that He is the Christ, the Lord’s Anointed.

Steven Cole: The question has an objectively correct answer. I mean, only one answer is correct. It is not, “Jesus, however you conceive Him to be.” Jesus didn’t say, “Great answer, Peter! Do any of the rest of you have any different thoughts? Yes, Judas, how do you feel about Me?” Some say, “For me, Jesus is always accepting and loving.” But Jesus isn’t whatever you want Him to be. How you feel about Jesus doesn’t change who He is. There is a single correct answer to the question that is not based on feelings or personal opinions, but on objective revealed truth.

This is important to affirm because we live in a day when people think that spiritual truth is not objectively true. Rather, they see it as personally true. They do not view spiritual truth in terms of propositional revelation (doctrine), where God has spoken to us in the Bible in language we can understand. Nor do they see spiritual truth in terms of verifiable history, centered in the historical Jesus of Nazareth, whose teaching, miracles, death and bodily resurrection are reported in the New Testament by eyewitnesses.

Rather, our postmodern world views spiritual truth in terms of each person’s experience of it. As such, it is not verifiable. If it’s true for you, then it’s true. If your spiritual experience is different from mine, one is not right and the other wrong, even if they contradict one another. They can both be true, according to the current view of truth, because spiritual truth is determined by personal experience, not by objective, verifiable means.

This faulty view of spiritual truth is a central tenet of the unity movement that is urging Catholics and evangelical Protestants to drop their doctrinal differences and come together for worship and witness. Doctrine is viewed as divisive. Love for Jesus and for one another is all that matters. . .

The disciples had to stand against three strong currents to affirm their conviction that Jesus is the Christ. First was **the Roman government**, which didn’t care if Christians worshiped Jesus as

long as they also affirmed Caesar as Lord. But the disciples insisted, “No, Jesus is the *only* Lord!” That narrow view cost many of them their lives. If you take your stand with the disciples in proclaiming Jesus as the only way to God, you will have to go against the pagan culture of our day. People don’t mind if you hold your personal beliefs in Jesus, just so that you don’t contend that He is the *only* way! That’s too narrow and dogmatic. I saw a bumper sticker that said, “If you’re against abortion, don’t have one.” The idea is, “You can have your personal views of morality, but don’t tell me that my behavior is wrong. If you want to believe in Jesus, that’s your privilege, but don’t judge me for my beliefs!”

The disciples also had to go against the opinions of **the Jewish religious crowd**, which had varying notions of who Jesus might be. Some heard His powerful preaching against sin and thought of John the Baptist. Others saw Jesus’ miracles and were reminded of the powerful prophet, Elijah. Others thought He might be another of the prophets. All of these were perhaps flattering, but inadequate, ideas of who Jesus really was. The disciples had to stand apart from the Jewish religious crowd to affirm Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

In a similar manner, you may have to go against **the Christian crowd** of our day. Many who call themselves Christians have ideas about Jesus which fall far short of affirming Him as Lord and Christ. Some see Jesus as the all-tolerant, loving One, who never speaks against anyone’s sin. They seek to get their denominations to affirm sins such as homosexuality and abortion. Others use Jesus to endorse their worldly views of feminism or politics. Still others mix Jesus with some brand of pop psychology. You have to stand against these popular views of Jesus to confess Him truly as Lord and Christ.

The third, and most formidable, group the disciples had to oppose was **the Jewish religious leaders (9:22)**. The disciples were not formally educated in the Hebrew Scriptures; these men were. The disciples had no public influence; these men were the recognized leaders in Israel. They were the interpreters of Moses, the guardians of the Jewish law. Who did this bunch of uneducated fishermen think they were to go against the common judgment of this august body of scholars?

MacArthur: You see, that is the issue in evangelism. You have to bring people to the reality of who Jesus Christ is. I was reading the last couple of days the latest issue of Ligoniers Table Talks, a wonderful series of articles in there called, "**The Myth of Influence**," "The Myth of Influence." Listen, evangelical Christianity is...is...has been seduced and made drunk on the concept of influence. Somehow we're going to influence the culture. Somehow if we can tweak our churches and bring in, you know, rock music and contemporary kind of lingo and...and be cool and chic and all of that, we sort of influence...that's a myth. You hear people say, "Well, you know, such and such a prominent movie person came to Christ, think of what an influence they could have, such and such an athlete came to Christ, what an influence they could have." That is a myth. Nobody was ever saved by anybody's influence. The power of the church in the world is not its influence. The power of the church in the world is its gospel. It's its gospel. It's the specificity of the gospel that saves; not some kind of imaginary influence. I don't have any influence. Now I'm not saying you shouldn't live a righteous life to undergird your testimony, but what do you mean influence? We're not trying to influence people. We're trying to convert people. We're not trying to sort of sneak up on them and try to make them feel good and see if we can't influence them in the right direction. It is a myth. What saves is the gospel; and the gospel alone. And it's confrontive. It's not an influence, it's a command. It is a myth to think that because I'm somebody famous or well-known or because I'm slick or

clever, or because I package my little presentation in lingo and terminology that's kind of at the core of contemporary vernacular that somehow this influences people. You know what gets people saved? Not that kind of influence. What gets people saved is a recognition of who Jesus Christ is and an honest evaluation of their condition and the need for the Savior. What we need is not more people trying to influence society. We need more people preaching the gospel. It's confrontation, not influence. Now that's the kind...That is an influence, but it's a confrontive kind not an oblique kind.

TEXT: Luke 9:23-27

TITLE: THE TOTAL COMMITMENT INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP

BIG IDEA:
THE CALL TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP DEMANDS A COMPLETE REORIENTATION OF ONE'S LIFE

INTRODUCTION:

There are many false views of Christian discipleship. One camp promotes the concept of **Easy Believism** where the demands of discipleship are reserved for those Christians who want to advance to an elite level of the faith. But here Jesus is presenting these discipleship demands in the context of an evangelistic invitation. There is nothing “Easy” about the call that Jesus issues here. Instead He is demanding a complete reorientation of one’s life – to reject a self-centered life and to embrace the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

I. (:23-24) ESSENCE OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

A. (:23) Following Jesus

1. Voluntary Pursuit

“And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me,’”

This call to discipleship is issued to all people as part of the evangelistic invitation, not just some invitation to Christians to join a special elite class. If you want to be a Christian, this is what following Jesus will mean.

2. Total Commitment – Described in 3 Disciplines

a. Self-Denial = Repudiating a Self-Centered Life

“let him deny himself,”

Not denial of self in any ascetic sense; but denial of self-interest and self-pursuit and self-exaltation

J. Ligon Duncan: Calvin said “it's the sum of the Christian life.” Can you imagine that? That you can sum up the Christian life in these two words — deny yourself. Deny yourself — the sum of the Christian life.

Now my friends, that's counter cultural. I think that's the closest thing possible to psychological heresy in this self-indulgent age to say, “Deny yourself,” to call upon people to embrace self-denial. And for that very reason I think we need to pause and give ear to what Jesus is saying. . .

It means to renounce anything that challenges or trumps our allegiance to the kingdom of God. It means to renounce anything that challenges or trumps our allegiance to the kingdom of God. We are to renounce our yearning to possess things if they trump our allegiance to the kingdom of God. We are to renounce our desire for power if it challenges or trumps our allegiance to the kingdom of God. We're to renounce the favor of men if it costs us loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to renounce human glory if it vies with or diminishes the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and we are to seek first the kingdom. We are to deny ourselves.

- b. Cross Bearing = Daily Death to Self
“and take up his cross daily,”

William Barclay: voluntarily to lift to one’s shoulders the instrument of this own execution, and to follow Christ to the death. Paul put it clearly: *“I have been crucified with Christ”* (Gal. 2;20). This is a “daily” process, a progressive and continuous crucifixion of one’s natural self-centeredness (vs. 23). This involves sharing the humiliation of Christ, that we may also share his glory when his Kingdom comes in its fullness (vs. 26).

Geldenhuys: The “cross” is not the ordinary, human troubles and sorrows such as disappointments, disease, death, poverty and the like, but the things which have to be suffered, endured and lost in the service of Christ – vituperation, persecution, self-sacrifice, suffering, even unto death, as a result of true faith in and obedience to Him.

Ray Pritchard: the cross represents three things: It’s a sign of suffering, a sign of rejection by the world, and a sign of obedience to God. What is “your” cross? Your cross is accepting God’s will for your life and doing it cheerfully. Your cross will always include suffering, always lead to rejection by the world, and always involve obedience to God.

- c. Following Jesus = Obeying the Lordship of Jesus
“and follow Me.”

John Piper: In other words, treasure me more than your own comfort and your own safety. The opposite of self-denial is the idol of self-gratification, and the opposite of cross-bearing is the idol of self-preservation.....if you would save your life, you must lose it, and if you would follow Jesus, you must take up your cross daily. The great tragedy of much contemporary Christianity is that the cross is safely relegated to the distant past. And practically what it means is that Jesus was soaked in blood so that I can soak in a Jacuzzi. And the bigger the tub, the more we honor the cross—so goes the prosperity gospel.

B. (:24) Forsaking Self Interest

1, Futility of Self Interest

“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it,”

2. Value of Genuine Discipleship

“but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

Geldenhuys: Everyone who tries selfishly to secure for himself pleasure and happiness in life will in fact doom his life to failure – he will never find real joy or full life. He commits spiritual suicide. But he who lays his life upon the altar in the service of Christ, who strives for His honour and for the extension of His kingdom, while keeping self in the background, will spontaneously find true joy and life – here and hereafter.

II. (:25-26) EMPTINESS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD

A. (:25) Empty Gain = Eternal Loss

“For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?”

B. (:26) Eternal Shame / Missing Out on Glory

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”

MacArthur: I.e. unbelievers; cf. **Mt 10:33; Ro 9:33; 10:11; 2 Ti 2:12.**

III. (:27) EXPECTATION OF THE NEARNESS OF KINGDOM DAYS

“But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

William Barclay: The meaning of **verse 27** is impossible to determine with any finality. It has been variously referred to the Transfiguration, the Resurrection and Ascension, Pentecost, the spread of Christianity, the growth of Christian theology, the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the Second Coming.

Geldenhuys: His View = the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Jewish national existence in Palestine in A.D. 70 (about forty years after Jesus’ words were uttered). In an unparalleled manner God revealed His kingly dominion over the unbelieving Jewish nation in that execution of judgment. By these means He showed once and for all that the Old Dispensation had passed away and that the New dispensation had indeed begun, that the ceremonial temple-religion had completed its preparatory task and that the old chosen people had to make room for the new people, the true Israel, the members (Jewish and Gentile) of the church of Christ. That event revealed the kingdom of God and His dominion in the history of man in an incomparable manner.

Darrell Bock sees an interpretation of **Lk 9:27** as an allusion to both His **transfiguration** and **the coming of the Spirit** writing that "In the midst of this warning Jesus offers a promise: some will not see death until they see the kingdom of God. Contextually this is a reference to the preview of glory some of the disciples get in the transfiguration, an event recorded in **Lk 9:28–36**. Seen in light of Luke’s development in the book, the arrival of the kingdom also is made visible in Jesus’ current ministry (**Lk 11:20; 17:20–21**). In fact, the benefits of promise are distributed in Acts 2 (**Lk 24:49 with Acts 2:30–36**). So Jesus has in view both the preview of total glory and the initial arrival of promise as a result of his ministry. Those disciples who were present at the transfiguration, as well as those who shared in Pentecost, shared in the sneak preview of the kingdom’s arrival before they “*saw death.*”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How different does this message sound from evangelistic messages of today?
- 2) Can you choose to embrace Jesus as Savior and yet not choose to follow Him as His disciple?
- 3) What has denying self and taking up the cross looked like in your Christian experience?
- 4) Are we looking forward with anticipation to the coming glory that Jesus will usher in?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: What then is the reward for accepting the cross? In the Christian life, first comes the cross, then comes the crown. The reward is a crown, a kingdom. This kingdom is a share in God's glory (v. 26). The kingdom of God is a kingdom of glory. Our blessed hope is the glorious appearing of our Savior from heaven. When that happens, we will see his glory and be transformed into his glory (2 Cor. 3:18). For all the self-denial and suffering of the cross in this life, those who follow Jesus will receive unending glory and joy in the life to come. Don't be ashamed; look to his glorious coming. This is what makes it wise to die daily in order to live forever. This is why it makes sense to forsake the world in order to gain glory.

For our encouragement and hope, Jesus allowed some to see that glory even before he or they died. That's why in **verse 28** Luke flashes forward eight days. He joins the transfiguration to the promise of **verse 27** because the transfiguration is a foretaste of the glory that is to come.

J. Ligon Duncan: The Lord Jesus Christ tells us that selfishness causes the soul to contract but love makes it expand and enriches it and fills it to overflowing with assurance and peace and joy. That's why **Jim Elliot** could quote the old Puritan saying, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." That is the Christian algebra of self-denial. You see in the end, it's not denial of self equals loss of satisfaction and so we grin and bear it for Jesus. It's denial of self does bring real and often lifelong lasting depravation, which then becomes an eternity filled with satisfaction that we could not imagine. And sometimes even that satisfaction bleeds back into this age so that we enjoy foretaste of that glory which fills up every void which has been left in our life by the self-denial.

Steven Cole: Thirty years ago, the teaching that Christians should love themselves and have proper self-esteem was virtually unheard of in evangelical circles. One of the first books to popularize the concept was **James Dobson's** *Hide or Seek* [Revell, 1974], subtitled "Self-Esteem for the Child." He began that book with the story of Lee Harvey Oswald, who shot President Kennedy. Oswald had been put down, ridiculed, and unloved all his life. The one thing he could do well was shoot a rifle. Dobson implies that if Oswald had just had the proper self-esteem, he would not have committed his infamous crime. Dobson goes on to state his thesis:

... whenever the keys to self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, ... then widespread "mental illness," neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur. Personal worth is not something human beings are free to take or leave. We must have it and when it is unattainable, everybody suffers (pp. 12-13, italics and quotation marks in original).

Dobson opened the door and the doctrine of self-esteem has flooded into the church. It is like the thistle, which is not native to our forests, but has spread everywhere since it was introduced. You cannot pick up a popular Christian best-seller or tune into a Christian talk show without finding this teaching. . .

I have grown increasingly concerned that because of the pervasiveness of this false teaching, there are many who think that they're following Jesus, when actually they are only following self. They have been taught that the Christian faith and even Christian ministry are the avenues

toward self-fulfillment. They've been told that Jesus will help you learn to love yourself, when in fact Jesus taught nothing of the kind. Rather, He clearly taught that . . .

If you're living for self, you're not following Jesus. . .

Let me clear up another common misconception, namely, that discipleship is an option for the super-committed, but it is not mandatory for all believers. In other words, if you're a masochist who likes hardship, deprivation, sacrifice, and perhaps even martyrdom, you can sign up for the discipleship track. You may be required to go to another culture and live in difficult or even dangerous conditions. You will probably be required to live at a poverty level, while your fellow Christians back home live in relative luxury. But, your reward in heaven will be greater. That's the discipleship track, and we all hope that a few dedicated young people will go that route.

The other track, for the rest of us "normal" people, is the more sensible plan. You can pursue your dreams for success and personal fulfillment, live in increasing levels of luxury, and generally enjoy the good life in the fellowship of a good evangelical church. Every once in a while you need to drop something in the offering plate. But don't worry about sacrifice, cross-bearing, or self-denial. Remember, we're under grace, and all that sacrifice stuff is just for those on the discipleship track.

I contend that Jesus taught that there is only one track for those who believe in Him, namely, the discipleship track. While we're all at differing levels of growth in the process of following Jesus, if you're not His disciple, you are not a Christian. Every believer is called to be completely yielded to Jesus as Lord and completely dedicated to furthering His kingdom in accordance with the various gifts He has entrusted to you. If self is at the center of your life and you're just using Jesus to fulfill self, you are not a Christian. Christians follow Jesus, which is diametrically opposed to living for self.

In **Luke 9:23**, Jesus sets forth three requirements for following Him:

1. To follow Jesus requires repudiating a self-centered life. . .
2. To follow Jesus requires daily death to self. . .
3. To follow Jesus requires ongoing submission to Jesus as Lord. . .

Adrian Rogers: Somebody asked **Tozer**, "**What does it mean to take up your cross?**" and Tozer told a story of an old man, and here's what he said. "One time, a young man came to an old saint who taught the deeper life, the crucified life, and said, 'Father, what does it mean to be crucified?' The old man thought for a moment and said, 'Well, to be crucified means three things.'" Now, listen to this, folks. Here's what it means to take up a cross. "First, the man who is crucified is facing only one direction." That's good. When you're crucified, you're only facing one direction. "The old man scratched his scraggly head and said, 'One thing more, son, about the man on the cross. He is not going back. He has said his final goodbyes. Thirdly, he said, the man on the cross has no further plans of his own.'" Did you get that? He's facing one direction. He's not going back. He said goodbye. And he has no further plans of his own.

TEXT: Luke 9:28-36

TITLE: TESTIMONY OF THE FATHER AT THE TRANSFIGURATION

BIG IDEA:

THE TRANSFIGURATION PROVIDES VISUAL AND AUDIBLE TESTIMONY TO BOTH THE IDENTITY OF JESUS AND THE NECESSITY OF HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION

INTRODUCTION:

Our studies in Luke have concentrated on the Identity and Mission of Jesus as the Promised Messiah. But as both of these have come more into focus, the disciples have stumbled over the suffering and redemptive phase being a necessary prerequisite to reigning in glory. Here God the Father provides a brief foretaste of the coming kingdom by unmasking the glory of His Son while showing His interaction with both Moses and Elijah in a context focused on the upcoming suffering and rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. These redemptive events must precede His resurrection and ascension back to the Father from whence He can return to usher in His glorious kingdom on earth.

J. Ligon Duncan: Is your Jesus big enough? Is the Jesus you worship big enough to overshadow everything else in your life? Luke is saying the real Jesus is, the Jesus revealed in the Scripture — absolutely He is — He's worth living for, He's worth dying for, He's worth denying yourself anything for, but is your Jesus big enough? If He isn't, it's not this Jesus.

Constable: This event is the climax of the "identity of Jesus" motif in all the Synoptics. Here the disciples saw and heard who Jesus really was. Luke's particular emphasis was the sufferings of Jesus that were coming. This comes through in his description of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah (**Lk 9:30-31**) and his interpretation of what the heavenly voice said (**Lk 9:35**). The whole scene recalls God's appearance to Moses on Mt. Sinai (**Exod. 24**), and it anticipates the second coming of Christ. There is a recurrence of the three themes of Jesus' identity (**Lk 9:20**), His passion (**Lk 9:22**), and glory (**Lk 9:26**) from the previous pericope but in reverse order (**Lk 9:29, 30, 35**). These are the main points the reader should identify as significant in Luke's narrative.

I. (:28-31) THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION EVENT ON JESUS = CONFIRMATION REGARDING HIS REDEMPTIVE MISSION

A. (:28) Venue for the Transfiguration Event

1. Timing

“And some eight days after these sayings,”

Other synoptics say 6 days ... but Luke just includes the bookend days on either side rather than just the intervening days.

2. Participants

“it came about that He took along Peter and John and James,”

His devoted inner circle

3. Location

“and went up to the mountain to pray.”

Ties in with the pattern of the priority that Jesus gave to prayer

Steven Cole: To understand the transfiguration, we must see it in its context. Luke has been gradually revealing to us the identity of Jesus Christ. People had different views—He is John the Baptist, Elijah, or one of the prophets come back (9:19). But by divine revelation, Peter acknowledged that Jesus is the Christ of God (9:20; see Matt. 16:17). But immediately after Peter’s confession, Jesus told the disciples of His impending death and resurrection. This jarred them and they did not understand what He was talking about, in spite of His repeated references to it (9:44-45; 18:31-34). They understood Christ as King, but they did not yet understand that He first must suffer and then enter into His glory (24:26).

Jesus also has made it plain that those who follow Him must follow in the way of the cross (9:23-26). Jesus did not come to please Himself, but to do the will of the Father, which supremely included the cross. Those who are His disciples must also deny themselves, take up their cross daily, and follow Him, even if it means persecution or martyrdom. Jesus concluded that discourse with a difficult verse: *“But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God”* (9:27).

B. (:29) Visible Physical Transformation

“And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.”

1. His Face Became Different

MacArthur: What are they seeing? They're not seeing light shining on Jesus. They're seeing the glory of God shining out from Jesus. This is the revelation that you have here, the Shekinah, the same presence that walked in the garden in the cool of the day and talked with Adam and Eve, the same presence that appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai in the glory that shined on his face, the same presence that appeared in the wilderness leading the children of Israel by a pillar of cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night, the same glorious, blazing light that came into the tabernacle and into the temple. This is God, this is the glory of God manifest, not on Jesus as on the face of Moses, but from within Him as evidence that this is God Himself and the glory comes from the inside. The truth of who He is is revealed in the Son's **transfiguration**.

2. His Clothing Became White and Gleaming

Lenski: [Gospel writers] report facts, actual changes that occurred in Jesus himself and not something that was merely subjective, only in the eyes and the minds of the disciples.

Gilbrant: In classical Greek *leukos* describes, among other things, the color of snow, hair, stones, clothing, and dust. Like the opposite color *melas* (“black”), *leukos* assumes a figurative meaning, with the former symbolizing that which is morally evil and the latter symbolizing purity, holiness, and divinity. In classical texts *leukos* is the color of sacrificial animals and priestly clothing. Indeed, Plato suggests that the color white is pleasing to the gods (cf. Liddell-Scott).
Septuagint Usage = The religious practices of the Hebrews indicate that they held white in

similar esteem. In addition to its ordinary literal usages, *leukos* appears in the Septuagint as the color of priestly garments. Figuratively *leukos* symbolizes purification from sin (**Psalm 51:7; Isaiah 1:18**), and a vision of God is dominated by the color *leukos* (**Daniel 7:9**). Apart from the four instances mentioned in the previous paragraph, the New Testament uses *leukos* as the color associated with heaven. Most references are to white clothing, as in the descriptions of the transfiguration of Jesus, the post-Resurrection appearances of angels, or the heavenly citizens in the Book of Revelation. (See, for example, **Matthew 17:2; Matthew 28:3; Acts 1:10; Revelation 3:4,5**.) Even the throne of God is white (**Revelation 20:11**). **Revelation 1:14** portrays the victorious Christ in terms reminiscent of the Ancient of Days in **Daniel 7:9**; both of these scenes are dominated by white.

C. (:30-31) Visitation by Moses and Elijah

1. (:30) Dialogue

“And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah,”

2. (:31) Departure = the Focus

“who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

“departure” – seems to have the resurrection and ascension in mind as well as the crucifixion – cf. **vs. 51**.

Morris: That such a topic was chosen at such a time shows how central the death of Jesus is. The use of the word *exodus* for death is unusual and we should probably discern some Exodus typology. The Exodus had delivered Israel from bondage. Jesus by His “*exodus*” would deliver His people from a far worse bondage.

J. C. Ryle: Moses and Elijah were the King's servants, but Jesus was the King's Son. Moses and Elijah were planets, but Jesus is the sun. They were witnesses, but He is the truth.

II. (:32-33) THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION EVENT ON PETER, JAMES AND JOHN = CONFUSION

A. (:32) Saw the Transfiguration Event Correctly

“Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.”

1. Saw the Glory of Jesus

2. Saw Moses and Elijah

William Barclay: What the Law intended, and what the prophets promised, is now here in its fullness in Jesus

B. (:33) Suggested An Outcome That Was Off Target

“And it came about, as these were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, ‘Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah’ -- not realizing what he was saying.”

MacArthur: Well, Peter didn't realize that this was not the beginning of the kingdom. He didn't realize that this was not the launch point. Sure Elijah was to come at the time of the kingdom, he knew that. That fit. Sure during the kingdom there was going to be a Feast of Tabernacles and they could have one right there in the kingdom to parallel the one at the same time down in Jerusalem. All of the elements of the kingdom that Peter had longed for were there; the glory of Christ was displayed. Why go back? But he doesn't realize what he's saying. The plan is fixed. Before there will ever be a crown, there has to be a what? A cross, doesn't there? The glory will come and it will come in the future, but it's not going to come then and it's not going to come there because there has to be a cross. And the Son of Man must go and die as the prophets said He would. He must be the suffering servant of **Isaiah 53**. He must be wounded for our transgressions. He must be bruised for our iniquities. The judgment of God for us must fall on Him. He must die as the sacrifice for sin. He must be the ultimate and final Lamb, the one whose sacrifice perfects forever those that are sanctified. There can be no crown without a cross. There can be no kingdom without a Calvary. This isn't it, Peter. This is just a preview to firm your faith so that you will always know, no matter what happens, when I die and when I leave this world and when you die, crucified upside down, or in the case of James, martyred, or in the case of John, exiled an old man to Patmos under persecution, as you go through those things and as the rest of the apostles go through their martyrdoms, and most all of them were martyred, of course, they will remember that that is not the end of the story. There is a glorious kingdom beyond this life and the King in that kingdom is going to come again and bring that kingdom to earth. His glory will fill the earth. That will come, but not now, Peter. He says, you don't know what you're saying.

III. (:34-33) THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION EVENT DELIVERED BY GOD THE FATHER = CLARITY – BY WAY OF DIVINE TESTIMONY

A. (:34) Divine Presence

“And while he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.”

Ex. 40:34ff

J. Ligon Duncan: And in the Old Testament what is a cloud so often a symbol of? The presence of God; the presence of God with Israel. Protecting and guiding them in the wilderness was a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. When God spoke to His people He often spoke out of the cloud with thunder and lightning and Jesus pictures His coming again on clouds. It's a symbol of the powerful presence of God and this cloud overshadows the mountain and these men tremble and then a voice speaks.

B. (:35) Divine Testimony

*“And a voice came out of the cloud, saying,
‘This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!’”*

Darrell Bock: Every time I come to this passage a particular American commercial rings in my ears. It has various versions, but one of them is a scene of people sitting in the stands at a tennis match, their heads turning to and fro in unison, following the progress of the tennis ball during the point. Then a man in the stands turns to his friend and says, "My broker works for E. F. Hutton, and E. F. Hutton says..." Suddenly every head stops and everyone leans in to hear the financial advice. The closing line of the ad is "When E. F. Hutton talks, everybody listens."

Testimony of Peter in his epistle: **2 Peter 1:16-18**

“For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ – and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the mountain.”

C. (:36a) Divine Focus

“And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.”

This was just a preview of the coming kingdom; not time for the permanent institution. Let’s focus just on Jesus and on the mission the Father had chosen for Him to complete.

(:36b) EPILOGUE

“And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.”

CONCLUSION: THE IMPACT OF THE TRANSFIGURATION EVENT ON US

- Worship Jesus in His Supremacy as the Beloved Son of God the Father, His Chosen One
- Understand the Relationship Between the Redemptive Mission of Jesus (Which Involves Suffering and Death) and His Return in Glory
- Understand the Transition from the Old Testament Time Period to the New Era Inaugurated by the Coming of Christ to Bring the Kingdom of God to Earth
- Anticipate the Reunion with All Saints When Jesus Returns in Glory
- Listen and Respond to Divine Revelation = Be Genuine Followers of Jesus Christ

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you connect this passage with the previous context in the book of Luke?
- 2) Why was it important for the Heavenly Father to give such a testimony at this point in time?
- 3) How did the disciples recognize the identity of Moses and Elijah?
- 4) Are you living in the present with the expectation of participating in glory?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

William Barclay: the fulfillment of the plan of God is to come through the Cross. Jesus is shown to be God’s eternal Son, not in spite of the Cross, but precisely because of it. The whole plan of God from the beginning was moving forward to this event. Jesus was the lamb “*destined before*

the foundation of the world” (I Peter 1:19-20). The partial deliverance of his people wrought by God at the first Exodus is now to be completed in the new Exodus – the Crucifixion and the Resurrection.

Lenski: The transfiguration and what went with it took place as part of the great foundation of faith. It forms one of the major acts of our salvation. It establishes the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, and it did this not by word alone, or by inference from deeds (miracles), but by withdrawing the veil from his actual divine glory. He who would die and rise again for redemption, who thus walked in lowliness in the fashion of man, let the divine majesty (**II Pet. 1:16**) and glory which belonged to his person and through it also to his human nature and body shine forth for a little while for these witnesses to behold. Heaven sent its great saints to confer familiarly with him. The Father came and sealed the scene with his personal attestation. The time to tell it all was fast approaching. His resurrection would make it all plain.

Steven Cole: We all need a clearer vision of the glory of Christ.

How to see the glory of Christ:

1. TO SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WE MUST SPEND TIME ALONE WITH HIM.
2. TO SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WE MUST SHAKE OFF OUR SPIRITUAL LETHARGY.
3. TO SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WE MUST EXALT HIM ABOVE ALL ELSE.
4. TO SEE THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WE MUST OBEY HIM.

MacArthur: Why Moses and Elijah? Well I thought about this and I thought, well, if I could go back to the Old Testament and think of which two characters most prominent in the Old Testament had unusual demises, or unusual exits out of this world, the first two that come to my mind are Moses and Elijah. Most people, they died and he was buried with his fathers, right? You go through Genesis, he died and he was buried, he died and he was buried. You know, it's kind of a routine thing. It's still going on, obviously, but not Moses and Elijah. Moses had a very unusual death and his body was never found. His body was never found because there was a battle over his body between Satan and Michael and they were fighting over the body of Moses. Satan wanted to do something really bad with the body of Moses. We don't know what because he didn't succeed. They were contending for the body of Moses and it tells us in **Deuteronomy 34:6** that God just took his body and buried it Himself. Nobody knows where. Nobody knows where. So somebody could raise the question: Well what happened to Moses? We're not sure what happened to Moses? Well good news, he's over there on the other side. You may not be able to find his body, you may wonder about where it is and why he disappeared in such a strange way, but the good news is he's over there because here he is appearing on the other side.

And Elijah, Elijah, do you remember what happened to him? He didn't even die. He had a private rapture. He went to heaven in a chariot of fire. That's what it says in **2 Kings 2:11**, he just...God just picked him up in His private chariot. He was in heaven. Never died. So that's the second person who had the sort of strange exodus. And so here is Moses who had a strange exodus and here is Elijah who had a strange exodus and they're talking with Jesus about His exodus. You can just kind of hear the story. Well, Moses said, "Let me tell you about mine." And Elijah says, "Huh, you think it's something to be buried by God, I wasn't even buried. I just went up in this chariot, let me tell you about the chariot, it had this, you know..." And Jesus smiling and saying, "You haven't seen anything yet. Wait till you see Me go." I don't want to trivialize the scene but that's what it says. They were speaking of His departure which He was

about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

Now if there were two Old Testament witnesses that the people of Israel would trust more than any others, it would probably be Moses and Elijah. Moses was the most revered, still is the most revered among the Jews. The greatest leader in Israel's history led them out of captivity. That's why he's their final hero. He was a king in authority, he was a prophet in message, he was a priest in service to God for His people. He gave the Pentateuch, the five books that set down the law. I mean, he was trustworthy. As a witness to the other side, couldn't get better than Moses, and running a close second to Moses would have to be Elijah. Elijah was such a godly person that, like Enoch, the only other person who was so beloved by God that he didn't die, and Moses stands for the law and Elijah stands for the prophets and the Old Testament was always called the law and the prophets. And what was Elijah's distinction? He had fought against idolatry. Moses gave the law, and Elijah guarded it. He was probably the primary guardian of the law of God among the people. First Kings 17 through 19, 2 Kings chapters 1 and 2, he fought for the law, he fought for the honor of God against idolatry. God validated his prophecies with miracles, you remember. Moses, the prominent lawgiver, Elijah, the prominent prophet, they represent the Old Testament. They represent the saints. And there they are standing in the presence of Jesus, having a discussion about Jesus' upcoming exodus. There couldn't be anybody give more assurance to Peter, James and John than Moses and Elijah.

Moody Bible Commentary: How was this a taste of the kingdom (cf. "*kingdom*" in **Lk 9:27**-note)? First, it occurred on earth, where Jesus will reign. Second, Jesus was glorified, as He will be then. Third, all necessary kingdom people are represented: saints in physical bodies (the three disciples), saints who experience death and resurrection (Moses), and saints who will not die but be translated to heaven (Elijah).

TEXT: Luke 9:37-50

TITLE: CORRECTIVE PHASE IN THE TRAINING OF THE 12

BIG IDEA:

JESUS ADDRESSES WRONG PERSPECTIVES ON THE PART OF HIS APOSTLES WITH A SERIES OF 4 CORRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION:

Mountain top spiritual experiences – such as the Transfiguration – are often juxtaposed next to the valleys of spiritual failure and correction. Here we see the Lord continuing His training program for the Twelve by addressing some important wrong perspectives on their part that needed loving correction.

Morris: Luke now brings together four short incidents in which he shows the disciples' lack of faith, their slowness to learn, their pride and their intolerance. It is an impressive sequence and makes a sad conclusion to his Galilean section. The disciples have much to learn.

I. (:37-43a) CORRECTING A SPIRIT OF MINISTRY INADEQUACY – (LACK OF FAITH WHEN CONFRONTED WITH DIFFICULT MINISTRY CHALLENGES) FOCUS ON THE GREATNESS OF GOD

A. (:37-40) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Lack of Faith When Confronted with Difficult Ministry Challenge

1. (:37) Following of the Great Multitude

“And it came about on the next day, that when they had come down from the mountain, a great multitude met Him.”

2. (:38-39) Facts of the Case

a. (:38) The Desperate Emotions

“And behold, a man from the multitude shouted out, saying, ‘Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy,’”

Lenski: Mark states that Jesus asked the scribes why they were disputing with the nine disciples, but that they were cowardly and said nothing; they had been taunting the nine and discrediting them before the multitude because they were not able to heal the boy.

b. (:39) The Displaying Symptoms – Demonic Attack / Destructive Results

1) Seizes him / Screams

“and behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly screams,”

2) Convulses him / Foaming at the mouth

“and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth,”

3) Mauls him / Destructive Results Persists

“and as it mauls him, it scarcely leaves him.”

3. (:40) Failure of the Disciples

“And I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.”

This man had begged the disciples for help and was frustrated; now he begs Jesus Himself for help; intervene in my desperate situation.

The disciples had failed to believe that Jesus had made them sufficient for such ministry and had delegated to them power and authority over such demonic activity. This is all about doubts regarding ministry adequacy.

B. (:41-42) Correction = Jesus Rebukes the Demon and Heals the Boy

1. (:41) Engages the Enemy – In Contrast to Ministry Inadequacy of the Disciples

a. Problem = Lack of Faith and Sin on the Part of the Disciples

And Jesus answered and said, ‘O unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you, and put up with you?’”

Disciples should have been fully trained and equip to handle such ministry challenges by this point; Jesus expresses His exasperation with their dullness

Steven Cole: To be perverted is to go astray from the path of God’s righteous ways as revealed in His Word.

Donald Miller: words of one who is living in a foreign exile, far from his native habitat, and who is longing for the coming of the Kingdom, when his suffering will be over and his victory complete.

Lenski: From his own disciples Jesus had a right to expect something other than what this perverted generation was offering him. The pained lament, which is so fully justified, is followed by prompt action, the father is ordered to bring his son.

b. Public Battle – not backing away from the challenge

“Bring your son here.”

2. (:42a) Emphasis on the Difficulty of This Ministry Challenge

“And while he was still approaching, the demon dashed him to the ground, and threw him into a convulsion.”

3. (:42b) Execution of the Miracle – Authority / Power / Compassion

a. Authority of Jesus

“But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit,”

Goes toe to toe with the powerful enemy in this public setting and utterly defeats the unclean spirit

b. Power of Jesus

“and healed the boy,”

Jesus had been training His disciples to minister from the foundation of His authority and power; but they have been slow to mature and learn the lesson of complete dependence

- c. Compassion of Jesus
“and gave him back to his father.”

C. (:43a) Testimony to the Greatness of God
“And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.”

Look at how the disciples were concerned with establishing their own greatness (vv. 46-48) rather than exalting the greatness of God; no wonder they found themselves powerless in the face of this difficult ministry challenge

II. (:43b-45) CORRECTING A SPIRIT OF FALSE EXPECTATIONS – (EMBRACING THE SUPERFICIAL POPULARITY OFFERED BY THE FICKLE CROWDS)
FOCUS ON THE REJECTION BY MEN ASSOCIATED WITH JESUS’ REDEMPTIVE MISSION

A. (:43b) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Embracing Superficial Popularity
“But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing,”

B. (:44) Correction = Sobering Reality of Rejection Associated with Jesus’ Redemptive Mission
“He said to His disciples, ‘Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.’”

Turns directly to address the disciples in contrast to the crowds who were marveling at the wonders but not seeing them as signs of God’s presence and consistent with Messianic demands for repentance and faith.

C. (:45) Problem = Lack of Discernment

1. Failure to Understand – Why? Concealed from them
“But they did not understand this statement,”
“and it was concealed from them so that they might not perceive it;”

Morris: On the other side of the cross it must have been terribly difficult to grasp the truth that Jesus’ Messiahship meant His death.

2. Failure to Ask for Clarification – Why? Fear
“and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.”

Lenski: They did not want to know what they were afraid to know, and so they did not actually know. . . They were afraid that what Jesus kept dinning into their ears might actually be true, that the Sanhedrin might actually kill him. All their inner being fought against such an idea. This is not so strange when we see the same thing today, men’s minds resist clear evidence and knowledge because they do not want to have it true and dread that anything like that should be true. If it is, indeed, true that they would have to change all their thinking, convictions, and conduct, and that they will not do, no matter what is dinned into their ears. So the disciples had the picture of their Messiah fixed and would not upset and reverse it to comply with “*this utterance*” of Jesus.

III. (:46-48) CORRECTING A SPIRIT OF SELFISH AMBITION – (STRIVING TO BE THE GREATEST)

FOCUS ON RESPECTING THE LEAST SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUALS

A. (:46) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Spirit of Selfish Ambition

“And an argument arose among them as to which of them might be the greatest.”

Donald Miller: Here was self-centered ambition of the worst sort. Did the question arise partly because three of them had been favored on two occasions? (8:51; 9:28). Were the others jealous? Did the three boast of their privileges?

J. Ligon Duncan: If these men could walk with Jesus and still succumb to self preoccupation and pride, don't think that you can't. Don't think that you don't. They were probably arguing about which one of them was closest to Jesus, which one of them was in the position of spiritual prominence in the group, which one of them was going to have certain authority when Jesus' kingdom was brought in in its fullness. We know that those kinds of conversations went on several places in the gospels, don't we? But it reveals to you pride, doesn't it? What does it reveal to you about them? It reveals to you that the disciples themselves had an overestimation of self and an underestimation of God. They took themselves very seriously. They were very ambitious. They may have been religiously ambitious, they may have been spiritually ambitious, they may have been ecclesiastically ambitious, but it was a sinful ambition. It was about advancing self. They had a high view of self and they had a low view of the greatness of God and consequently their pride got the best of them. That's always entailed in pride, isn't it? An overestimation of self and an underestimation of God.

B. (:47-48) Correction = Respect the Least Significant Individuals

1. (:47) Object Lesson = Little Child

“But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,”

Morris: The child stands for the helpless and the unimportant. The test of loving service is that we receive such in the name of Christ. . The really great man is the lowly one. . . In the kingdom men do not compare themselves with one another. True greatness consists in lowly service.

MacArthur: This pride that destroys unity; that shatters relationship, that creates a pecking order, this pride that pollutes because it manifests heart depravity, this has to be dealt with. And the way you deal with it is to start right here. You're nothing and you need to know it. You're absolutely nothing. You have nothing of achievement to commend yourself.

2. (:48) Point of the Lesson

“and said to them, ‘Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for he who is least among you, this is the one who is great.’”

Steven Cole: Pride begins in the heart and must be dealt with on the heart level --

Jesus knew *“what they were thinking in their heart”* (9:47). Pride was at the root of the original sin, where Eve thought that she could be like God if she disobeyed Him and ate the forbidden fruit. It is at the root of almost all sin, because we proudly think that we know better than God

who has given us His commandments. We wrongly think that we know what is best for us, even if it goes against what God has clearly said. So to deal with pride, we must confess our selfish rebellion against God and humble ourselves before Him. If God gave us what we deserve, we would go straight to hell! We must repent of pride and seek His grace.

Also, dealing with pride on the heart level means examining our motives for what we do. Why do I serve Christ? Is it out of love and gratitude to Him, or is it to be recognized by others? What happens if I don't receive the recognition that I think I deserve? Do I get hurt feelings and quit? Do I grow jealous of those who seem to be in the limelight? Or, do I truly rejoice with the success of other servants of the Lord because the name of the Lord is being glorified?

So often we're like Linus in the Peanuts cartoon strip. His sister, Lucy, asks him what he wants to be when he grows up. He replies that he wants to be a humble country doctor. He says that he will live in the city and every day he will get in his sports car and drive to the country where he will heal everyone. In the last frame he says that he will be a world-famous humble little country doctor. So often, in our hearts we want to be world-famous humble servants of Jesus!

Also:

- Pride is fed by competition; humility is fed by cooperation.
- Pride is fed by our association with the "important"; humility is fed by our association with the "lowly."

IV. (:49-50) CORRECTING A SPIRIT OF SECTARIANISM – (LIMITING THE MINISTRY OF THOSE WHO DIFFER) FOCUS ON TOLERANCE

A. (:49) Wrong Perspective of the Disciples = Spirit of Sectarianism

"And John answered and said, 'Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to hinder him because he does not follow along with us.'"

J. Ligon Duncan: I need to tell you that ministers by nature are suspicious, insecure, and jealous people. And when we see other ministers doing better than we're doing we get jealous and we get insecure and we get suspicious. And all of those things are another way of saying that our pride gets the best of us.

B. (:50) Correction = Tolerance

"But Jesus said to him, 'Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you.'"

Geldenhuys: The zeal of the disciples for the honour of their Master in forbidding him to cast out demons in His name was, therefore, a wrongful zeal – probably stimulated by pride and selfishness. So the Saviour teaches them to be more magnanimous and more tolerant.

Steven Cole: I hesitated before I used the word "tolerant," since it is a greatly misused word. It seems to be the supreme virtue in our country right now, and there is a correct sense in which tolerance is a virtue. The word is used wrongly as a means of opening the door to any and every kind of sin. In this wrong sense, we are told that it is arrogant for us to say that any behavior or belief is wrong; all beliefs and behavior are neutrally the same. In this sense of the word, Christians cannot be "tolerant." We must hold firmly to sound doctrine and to biblical standards of morality. But in the correct sense, the word tolerant means treating those who differ from us

with kindness, courtesy, and respect. I am using the word in this sense when I say that we must be tolerant with our fellow servants of Christ.

Personal Illustration: daughter Jenny – coming up with thesis statement for Richmond University annual dialogue (winner got a scholarship award) – “Tolerance is the new modern virtue” – we didn’t win

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we have compassion for the special pressures that a severely handicapped child places on a family?
- 2) How can we strengthen our faith when we have feelings of inadequacy in performing the ministry to which God has called us?
- 3) How does Jesus combat Pride and promote Humility in this passage?
- 4) Do we have the expectation in our life that suffering and cross-bearing must come before our entrance into glory? How does this help us to cope with difficulties?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Richard Baxter: Outlining this section

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------------|----------------|
| - (9:18-26) | Peter’s Confession | Cross foretold |
| - (9:27-36) | Jesus transfigured | Cross foretold |
| - (9:37-50) | Demoniac son cured | Cross foretold |

Steven Cole: Problems like this wreak havoc on the whole family. The family becomes defined by their problem. Others describe them as “the family with the demonic son.” Often others in the community feel uncomfortable being around them and so they avoid them. Certainly, they don’t want their children playing with a boy like this. Who knows what might happen? It might rub off on their children or the crazy kid might erupt in a fit of rage and harm or kill their children. It’s just better to keep your distance.

For the family with a boy like this, life centers on “the problem.” Every minute of every day the boy had to be watched for fear that he would have a violent seizure that would throw him into the fire or water where he could be killed. If the father had to attend to his work, the mother had to be on duty. She had to try to get the household chores done with this boy in tow. If she went to the marketplace, she was afraid that he would have a seizure there, and she would be a spectacle in front of the whole town.

Did you know that 80 percent of couples who have a handicapped child or whose child dies cannot handle the pressure and end their marriages in divorce? As a church family, we need to be sensitive to families that have problem children—be it physical, emotional, or spiritual problems—and surround them with the love of Christ. We need to listen without condemnation

and we need to help in practical ways. This distraught father and his debilitated son show us one aspect of our desperate need before God.

MacArthur: So here comes the man. He believes Jesus has the power to deliver his son. He believes Jesus is Lord. He falls down in reverent posture and humility. **Mark 9:21** says that he explained to Jesus that the boy had been afflicted this way since childhood, so maybe he was by now a teenager and this had been going on in his life since he was a little child, causing many years of unbelievable, unbearable, indescribable horror for the family. Open fires, by the way, were common in that part of the world. Unless you think that it doesn't get cold in Israel and you wouldn't need a fire, guess again. It does, it gets very cold. And in and around Jerusalem, of course, you're at very, very high elevation and there are very cold days and nights there, particularly through the winter season and even occasionally snow, and fires were used all the time. But not just fires for warmth but fires for cooking. And what the demon did in his effort to destroy this boy was to slam the boy into fires, open fires. Whenever there was an open fire around and the demon determined to do so, he would literally overpower the boy's body and slam the boy into an open fire. Another thing that was present everywhere was a well, or a pool. Obviously they needed water and that's why there were wells and pools all over the area. Whenever there was such a pool or well present, the boy needed to be protected because it would be the desire of the demon to throw the boy into the water, drown him there. Furthermore **Mark 9:17** says that he was possessed with a spirit that made him mute. And Jesus in **Mark 9:25** called it a deaf and dumb spirit. . .

Why? They had the power. They had the commission. They had the experience. They already had the success. Why can't they do it? Why? What was wrong?

Matthew 17:19 and **20** gives the answer. "The disciples came to Jesus privately and asked, 'Why could we not cast it out? Why? Why couldn't we do it?'" which means they must have tried. "And He said to them, 'Because of the littleness of your faith.'" Because of the littleness of your faith. There was no lack of available power. There was no lack of experience. There was no lack of knowing whatever a formula they might have known. There was no lack of commission. There was no lack of privilege. There was no lack of right. There was a lack of faith. And Jesus says, "You didn't believe you could do it." They must have concluded that this was way over the top. This was too much for them, too severe. They had done it before by the power that had been delegated to them from Christ, but this was more than they could hope to see deliverance. There was a severity about this. There was an extremity in this situation that was beyond their ability to believe. And Jesus answered and said, "Oh unbelieving and perverted generation," you don't believe because your view of Me and My Word is perverted, distorted is what it means, twisted, wrong. You know, He says, "How long shall I be with you and put up with you?"

Rod Mattoon: Where in the world did this come from? How did they get to this point? We are informed in **Luke 9:1** that these men had power to heal and perform miracles. This was a great and wonderful accomplishment, but unfortunately, it started fueling the flames of pride in some of the men. When Peter, James, and John were asked to go up to the mountain with Jesus and they saw Moses and Elijah, they became inflated and infatuated with themselves, instead of elated. Evidently, they felt they deserved some special status of greatness because they were eyewitnesses to this event. This grasp for greatness got so bad, that James and John manipulated their mother to ask Jesus to let her sons have important, powerful positions in His kingdom. This really ticked off the disciples (see **Mt 20:20-24**) Whether you are rich or poor, young or old, the

grasp for greatness has a way of pulling at the heart in some way or another, no matter who you are. People grasp for greatness because they mistakenly believe that greatness will make them more valuable or important to others. They believe greatness will make them happy and satisfy their soul. The grasp for greatness created dander, disputes, and division among the disciples.

How did all this arguing lead to happiness? It didn't. The grasp for greatness has the same effect among people today, causing disunity, disharmony, and jealousy. Paul gave a warning about having the wrong attitude in grasping for greatness. (cf **Galatians 5:26**) The next time you get into a dispute with someone, ask yourself, "Am I angry because I am grasping for greatness?" Some may say at this point, "I don't care about greatness. I'm not concerned about this at all." By the time we get finished, I believe you will see that your sentiment is not quite accurate. Everyone, whether young or old has struggled with this desire in their lifetime and most people battle with it until the day they die. The desire of the first couple in the Garden of Eden was to be like a god. There is something in our nature that reflects the desire of Adam and Eve to be great. The grasp for greatness surfaces in so many ways in so many places.

Thomas Constable: The second lesson [first was about humility] was that acceptable service involves caring about people, even insignificant people such as children (**Matt. 18:5; Mark 9:37**). That is the lesson Luke included in his account of this teaching (**Lk 9:48**). It reflects his interest in neglected people. A child was the least significant person in Jewish and in Greco-Roman culture. Jesus meant that instead of seeking status for themselves His disciples should give their attention to the needs of people who have no status, people like children. The disciple who ministers to a person with no status as though he or she was ministering to Jesus does indeed minister to Jesus and to God the Father. The principle is that the disciple who is willing to sacrifice personal advancement to serve insignificant people, as the world views people, is truly great in God's estimation (cf. **Matt. 25:35-40; Mark 9:41**). (**Luke 9**)

TEXT: Luke 9:51-62

TITLE: PRIORITY OF SALVATION

BIG IDEA:

MAINTAIN A SINGULAR FOCUS (WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS AND COMPETING PRIORITIES) ON SEEKING CONVERSIONS AND FOLLOWING JESUS

INTRODUCTION:

This section involves a major transition point in the gospel of Luke.

Geldenhuys: From **iv. 14** to **ix. 50** Luke was mainly engaged in describing Jesus' ministry in Galilee and we were able to contemplate Him in His progressive Messianic self-revelation. At **verse 51** Luke begins a new division of the Gospel and we may regard the whole portion from **ix. 51** to **xix. 44** as a separate section in which the Saviour's conduct and preaching on His way to Jerusalem is described.

Jesus has been establishing His Power and Authority. He has been performing signs and wonders that mark Him as the Promised Messiah – works of healing, exorcism of demons, calming storms, even raising the dead. He has been proclaiming the message of the coming of the kingdom of God – placing a priority on preaching and teaching.

Now He sets His face to go to Jerusalem to complete that all-important work of redemption. He is primarily concerned with the salvation of souls. But while seeking converts, He never lowers the bar of what the cost involves for becoming a follower, a genuine disciple. For Jesus, there never is any disconnect between the faith commitment involved in salvation and the ongoing commitment of discipleship.

I. (:51-56) PRIORITY OF SEEKING CONVERSIONS RATHER THAN PRONOUNCING CONDEMNATION – THE COMPASSION (MERCY) INVOLVED IN FOLLOWING JESUS

A. (:51-53) Rejection by Prejudiced Samaritan Village

1. (:51) Purpose of Jesus

“And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem;”

Lenski: This preamble is entirely too weighty to introduce only the following narrative.

J. C. Ryle: He knew full well what was before Him. The betrayal, the unjust trial, the mockery, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the spitting, the nails, the spear, the agony on the cross — all, all were doubtless spread before His mind's eye, like a picture. But He never flinched for a moment from the work that He had undertaken. His heart was set on paying the price of our redemption, and going even to the prison of the grave, as our surety. He was full of tender love towards sinners. It was the desire of His whole soul to procure for them salvation. And so, *"for the joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame."* (**Heb. 12:2.**)

Sermonwriter.com: This phrase, “*set his face*” is familiar Old Testament language showing resolve (**Isaiah 50:7; Jeremiah 21:10; Ezekiel 6:2; 13:17; 21:2**). Jesus determines to go to Jerusalem. His commitment in the face of Jerusalem danger helps us to understand the demands that he will place on would-be followers in **verses 57-62**.

2. (:52) Preparations by the Advance Team

“and He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him.”

Apparently the interaction of John 4 with that village of Sychar did not have the positive impact on this village that one might have hoped for

3. (:53) Prejudice of the Samaritans

“And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem.”

B. (:54-56) Revenge Is Antithetical to the Mission of Seeking Conversions

1. (:54) Call for Revenge

“And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’”

Geldenhuys: Bearing in mind the course adopted by Elijah, as described in **2 Kings 1: 9-11**, they ask whether they should not also make fire descend from heaven to consume the hostile Samaritans!

Steven Cole: If you struggle with pride and anger and have failed often, these verses offer hope. James and John were known as the Sons of Thunder. **Matthew Henry** observes that here they even want to add lightning to their repertoire! But James went on to give up his life as a martyr and John grew to be known as the Apostle of Love. If the grace of the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit could change these hotheads, there is hope for us all! Change begins when we acknowledge our sin and come to the cross in repentance. We should walk in the same way (**Col 2:6**). If you have wronged someone through pride or anger, humble yourself, go and ask their forgiveness. As you learn to practice humility and love, even toward those who have wronged you, you will become an effective servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. (:55-56) Correction Regarding Mission and Mercy

a. (:55a) Rebuke of the Disciples

“But He turned and rebuked them, and said,”

b. (:55b) Repent of Your Condemning Spirit

“You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;”

Is your motivation in ministry to serve others or to exert power over others?

Lenski: Jesus will, indeed, in due time attend also to the judgment, but that time is not yet, and the time of grace shall not be curtailed. It is this spirit which loves and labors so earnestly, so perseveringly, so patiently to save, which fills his heart and thus must fill the hearts of his disciples of all ages.

MacArthur: We are, as Jesus was, on a **mission of mercy**. And I only say all that because I...I want to make sure we understand we're not making an easy truce with sin when I say that. We continue to confront sin and call for repentance, but we leave the final determination of judgment to God and as long as we have time, we cease from pronouncing judgment and plead with sinners to receive the mercy that we offer in the gospel. That's the lesson on mercy and how we need to learn it.

Mercy is at the heart of redemptive ministry. Mercy is to extend to all without regard for race, or status, or gender, or age. And mercy is to be offered patiently toward those who are ignorant in unbelief. And by the way, **Micah 7:18**, "*God delights in mercy.*" And He'll delight in you if you are a merciful Christian.

c. (:56) Reset Their Priorities = Key Verse

*"for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to **save** them."*

The context in this section is all about salvation; our priority has to be seeking converts

TRANSITION:

"And they went on to another village."

No time for condemnation; moving on to another village to bring blessing to them and to proclaim to them the message of the kingdom of God

II. (:57-62) PRIORITY OF FOLLOWING JESUS TRUMPS ALL POSSIBLE EXCUSES – THE COMMITMENT INVOLVED IN FOLLOWING JESUS

A. (:57-58) Excuse #1 = Unwilling to Embrace the Hardship of the Mission

1. (:57) Superficial Commitment

"And as they were going along the road, someone said to Him, 'I will follow You wherever You go.'"

It is easy to make big claims of loyalty and commitment; much harder to walk the walk; It is important to keep in view that the concept of "following Jesus" is at the core of **salvation** because you cannot be saved apart from becoming a genuine disciple; a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ; this is not some type of second tier commitment post salvation

Geldenhuys: He spoke with so much self-confidence because he had no inkling of the way of sorrows and death which the Lord would yet follow and also because he did not realise his own weakness and instability.

2. (:58) Lifestyle of Deprivation

"And Jesus said to him, 'The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.'"

Donald Miller: acting on emotional enthusiasm – One must count the cost and be ready to share Jesus' privation (**vs. 58**). This means the abandonment of all security except that of commitment to God.

B. (:59-60) Excuse #2 = Family Commitments Require Me to Delay

1. (:59) Timing is Wrong

“And He said to another, ‘Follow Me.’

But he said, ‘Permit me first to go and bury my father.’”

Morris: Some hold that, had the father been a corpse at home, the man would probably not have been with Jesus at all; he would have been occupied with duties connected with the funeral. On this view his request was to stay at home until his father died. This might have meant an indefinite delay and the affairs of the kingdom cannot be put off. But the words have an even greater urgency if the father was dead.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now you need to understand that in Jesus’ day, burial was a process that could take about a year. What happened was first, after a person died and after the funeral celebrations had taken place and the body had been prepared and placed in an open tomb, the body would be allowed to decompose over about a year and then the eldest son had the responsibility of going and taking what was left of that decomposed body — by that time just the bones — and placing the bones of his father or mother, his parents, into an ossuary, a box in which the bones of the person would be more permanently laid in a tomb. And this was considered to be part of honoring your father and your mother. This was part of fulfilling the command that you were going to care for your parents all the way up to and even after death.

2. (:60) Mission is Urgent

“But He said to him, ‘Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.’”

C. (:61-62) Excuse #3 = Other Distractions Compromise a Singular Focus

1. (:61) Divided Loyalties

“And another also said, ‘I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.’”

2. (:62) You Must Be All In

“But Jesus said to him, ‘No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.’”

Morris: Jesus points out that the kingdom has no room for those who look back when they are called to go forward.

Sermonwriter.com: Plowing behind a draft animal is exacting work, because the farmer must control the plow with one hand and goad/guide the animal with the other hand. He must watch a fixed point directly ahead to plow a straight furrow. Looking back will cause him to lose sight of the fixed point and to lose control of the plow—causing him to plow a crooked furrow—the mark of an amateur. The crooked furrow will be there for all to see until next year’s plowing.

Geldenhuys: Complete devotion to His service and unconditional faithfulness to the task to which He calls are the indispensable requisites for true following of Jesus.

J. Ligon Duncan: He wants disciples whose hearts are not divided. They've already decided that He's more important than anyone else and so they're ready to give up everything and follow Him.

Steven Cole: He thought that following Jesus was important, but not important enough to let go of the *old relationships and ways*. The Lord could tell that the man's heart was divided. Like Lot's wife, he just couldn't quite cut the ties with the old life. He wanted to keep the door open so that if things didn't work out, he could always go back. He wasn't willing to make a clean break with the old contacts and way of life.

MacArthur: Jesus said, "Look, if you're going to follow Me, you have to say goodbye to your family. You have to be willing to cut the cord with your family." He was going to go back to a family who would never understand this, who would prey on him, who would ply him not to do this and dissuade him. In the 25th verse of Luke 14, "Multitudes were coming along. Jesus turned and said, *'If anyone comes to Me and doesn't hate his own father, mother, wife, children, brother, sisters, yea and hate his own life, he can't be My disciple.'*" You're back to that whole thing of self-hate. And it doesn't mean that you...you loathe the people in your family, you despise them with some kind of vitriol. It simply means that in a relative sense your love for the kingdom of God is so great that you are really from the spiritual viewpoint indifferent to the compulsions and the pull and the interests of your family.

CONCLUSION:

Steven Cole: In our text, Jesus makes some radical demands on His followers. Interestingly, just two verses later He laments that the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few (**10:2**). If Jesus had hired a marketing consultant, he would have said, "Lord, if you want more workers, you're going to have to be a bit more realistic. You just lost three good volunteers because you demanded all or nothing!"

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) We know that mercy should triumph over judgment; where in our life have we allowed judgment to triumph over mercy?
- 2) What comforts have we had to give up in serving Christ?
- 3) Where have we put serving the Lord ahead of family considerations?
- 4) Where do we struggle with divided loyalties?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuys: We must not forget that the Saviour Himself fully complied with every one of those demands which He enjoins upon His followers. He followed the way of utter self-denial and privation to the bitter end. He even set aside the most intimate family ties with His mother, brothers and sisters where this was necessary for faithfully accomplishing His life's vocation; and without any division of attention or half-heartedness He set His hand to the plough with a fixed purpose and completed His task at the highest cost to Himself.

MacArthur: In fact, it's always amazed me how many people Jesus had a conversation with and He put a barrier up between them and salvation. It wasn't easy to get saved if you were talking to Jesus. He never led anybody to a superficial response to Him whatsoever, even people who believed in Him. He always raised the barrier of sin and self-denial and taking up a cross and hating family and being willing to give up everything you have. I mean, how important is this to you, is really the issue. It isn't that He'll necessarily ask for all of that, but if Jesus Christ is important enough to you, then you would be happy to receive Jesus Christ under any conditions that He might ask for. I've subtitled that book, *Hard to Believe: The High Cost and Infinite Value of Following Jesus*. And the reason you're willing to pay the high cost is because of the infinite value. Jesus continually set the standard so high and here in the passage I just read to you, which has a parallel in the 8th chapter of Matthew, chapter 8 verses 19 to 22, Jesus is confronted by these three would-be disciples. And in each of these cases there is a barrier that He puts up. And the end of the story is obviously that the person went away. None of these people are said to have affirmed their commitment. None of them responded positively to what Jesus said. So here you might say that Jesus had three evangelistic prospects and He set conditions that caused each of them to walk away without eternal life. . .

The issue here is **salvation**, people. The issue is coming into the kingdom. And if you've ever wondered what the issue here was, some people think it's sort of second-level discipleship. No. And verse 62 makes it clear. It's about coming into the kingdom. And Jesus is simply saying to these people, "Look, if you're holding back anything, you can't come in. Salvation is for those who have come to complete self-denial." The Lord may not take away all your comfort. He may not take away all your possessions. He may not take away all your relationships. But you're not negotiating. You're simply saying the infinite value of the gospel of Jesus Christ is so great that if He asks, I'll give it all up. I'll give it all up. . .

So responding properly to Christ is not a matter of emotion. It's not a matter of an event. It's not a matter of a momentary acceptance or a decision. It is not some superficial interest. It is not even a matter of saying, "I will follow." It is a matter of self-denial, total self-denial, a willingness to give up everything because the value of Christ is so infinite. The sinner has reached that level of desperation by the prompting of the Holy Spirit. He who doesn't take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of Me, Jesus said. He who has found his life shall lose it. He who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. It's about losing your life. It's about hating yourself. It's about holding on to nothing. It's a beatitude attitude.

Hendriksen: Foxes were plentiful in the country of Christ's travels (**Judg. 15:4; Neh. 4:3; Ps. 63:10; Song of Sol. 2:15; Lam. 5:18; Ezek. 13:4**). Their holes, dens, or lairs were often burrows in the ground. From these they would make their nightly raids, not only hunting frogs, rabbits, mice, poultry, and birds, but also devouring eggs, fruits, etc., and devastating the fields, orchards, and vineyards. The point Jesus emphasizes is, however, that these animals have their definite dwelling-places, their homes to which they return again and again. [cf. foxes that took up residence underneath my shed one year.] The same is true also with respect to birds. Ecological conditions (weather, food supply) permitting, they have their definite roosts, temporary lodging places, the place where they, as it were, pitch their tents. If "enemies" try to intrude, they drive them away if they can at all do so. For "the Son of man", things are entirely different, however. In his wandering from place to place he, for whom there was no room in the inn, has no place on which he can figure to spend the night. As the story develops, Judea rejects him (**John 5:18**), Galilee casts him out (**John 6:66**), Gadara begs him to leave its district (**Matt. 8:34**), Samaria

refuses him lodging (**Luke 9:53**), earth will not have him (**Matt. 27:23**), and finally even heaven forsakes him (**Matt. 27:46**).

Bruce Hurt: Have you ever sung the hymn "*All to Jesus I Surrender*?" Did you do it? Did you really mean what you sang? Sometimes I think when we sing hymns like this (sometimes even with tears) and we deceive ourselves into believing that our singing is a substitute for our surrender! We mouth the words with our head but they are too often far removed from our heart. Lest you think I am being too hard on you, I am describing what I have often done. There have been a couple of times where the Spirit so convicted me that I simply would not sing the words, knowing full well I would not follow through with my vocal commitment. Sounds a lot like the three men in **Luke 9:57-62**. Good intentions, external sincerity, but a paucity of internal integrity of heart. O, not always, but often enough. If we are all honest, these hard sayings of Jesus challenge everyone of us at our very core - will it be self or Savior?

All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

I surrender all,
I surrender all.
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

If words mean anything, I think this is one of those songs we should sing only if we truly mean what we are singing. I wonder how loud the congregation's singing would be if the song leader challenged everyone "Don't sing these words unless you are ready to deny yourself, take up your cross daily and follow Him!" Woe!

St. Andrews – Enfield Church: Cost of Discipleship

- 1) No earthly security
- 2) No earthly ties
- 3) No earthly distractions

<https://standrewsenfield.com/index.php/2-uncategorised/149-luke-9-51-62-the-cost-of-discipleship>

Chuck Smith: RULES OF FOLLOWING CHRIST.

- A. Detachment from all that hinders progress.
- B. When the highest earthly love comes into conflict with my following Him let the dead bury the dead.
- C. When the hand is once placed on the plow don't look back.

TEXT: Luke 10:1-24

TITLE: BRINGING THE KINGDOM OF GOD NEAR TO THE LOST

BIG IDEA:

MINISTRY SUCCESS GOVERNED BY SOVEREIGN GRACE BRINGS THE KINGDOM OF GOD NEAR TO THE LOST ALONG WITH THE CONDEMNATION ASSOCIATED WITH REJECTION

INTRODUCTION:

In previous contexts we have seen the failures of some of Jesus' disciples highlighted as He found it necessary to correct their wrong perspectives. Here we have a **success story** in the training process. We can glean many significant ministry principles from studying the evangelistic campaign and its aftermath as presented here by Luke. We also learn how to deal with expected rejection and the importance of appreciating the privilege of spiritual revelation and illumination which we have been graciously and sovereignly granted.

Scott Harris: **Luke 9** concludes with people claiming they wanted to follow Jesus, but who also found reasons to delay their claimed commitment. **Luke 10** is set as a contrast to these people. It jumps past all that occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles and opens with Jesus' instructions to a group of disciples that were committed and were being sent out to do ministry.

**I. (:1-9) COMMISSIONING OF THE SEVENTY FOR EVANGELISTIC BLITZ –
Bring the Kingdom of God Near to Those Who are Lost**

[cf. sales blitzes I managed as Director of Business Development]

A. (:1) Summary of Commissioning

“Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.”

This was different than the mission of the Twelve Apostles described earlier;
Principle of ministering in pairs is important

Donald Miller: The Jews considered 70 to be the number of the Gentile nations. Although Jesus' own work was largely confined to the Jews (**Matt. 15:24**), there are clear indications that, quickened by the Old Testament promises (**Isa. 42:6; 49:6**), he intended his followers to take the gospel to all men (**10:33-37; 13:28-30; 14:23; 20:16; Matt. 15:22-28; 20:16; 21:43**).

Morris: Others, however, associate the number with that of the elders appointed by Moses (**Nu. 11:16f., 24f.**; seventy-two with the two who remained in the camp). They see Jesus as the second Moses. Others again think of the seventy members of the Sanhedrin, the religious leaders who should have been preparing for the coming of the Messiah.

Lenski: sent them along the border of southern Galilee and down along the eastern side of the Jordan through Perea. This was new territory “*where he himself was about to come*”.

B. (:2) Supplication for More Evangelists

“And He was saying to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’”

- The harvest belongs to the Lord
- Laborers do not work on a volunteer basis, but are sent out by the Lord of the harvest
- The choke point is not the availability of souls to be harvested, but the availability of workers
- Prayer is the primary strategy

MacArthur: You know I just have to kind of say at this point, Jesus was fully reformed in His theology. He understood the sovereignty of God. He understood the doctrine of election and the doctrine of predestination. He understood that the names of those who were chosen by God were written in a book before the foundation of the world and that all of them would be redeemed. He understood that. He understood that God's plan would come to its fulfillment. He believed and understood perfectly the doctrine of predestination. He understood that the Father was collecting a bride for His Son and that the Father had predetermined who it would be. He understood that. But I want you to get the picture here, folks. As well as He understood that, that had no negative impact on His grief over those that were lost. You always balance out the doctrine of predestination with the doctrine of volition, human volition. Jesus says, "*You will not come to Me, you will not come, how often I've tried to gather you.*" If your doctrine of sovereignty robs your evangelistic zeal, then you have a sinful reaction to that truth. Here is our Lord Jesus literally in gut-wrenching agony over these lost people. He is not indifferent. He is not so fully resigned to the plan of His Father working itself out that He has no compassion. He has compassion and He knows that the means by which the Father will gather them is human, human because they can't hear without a preacher. And so as He looks and feels compassion. He says the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few and He switches metaphors from the sheep metaphor to the harvest metaphor. . .

So this is where evangelism begins [with compassion for the lost]. You understand the massive issue. How can you be content to do nothing? How can you be content to sit idly by? Evangelism begins with a compassion born of a proper assessment of the massive character of the problem. Unbelievers flayed and stripped and depressed and destitute and made so by false religions all over the face of the earth, lying as it were on the highways and byways of the earth destitute, desolate, bewildered, confused, and headed toward divine wrath, destroyed by false shepherds and on their way to a fiery hell.

C. (:3) Safety Found in God Alone

"Go your ways; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."

Donald Miller: Witnesses of the Kingdom are always in a hostile environment, but are to win their way by meekness, not by force.

Morris: The simile points both to danger and to helplessness. God's servants are always in some sense at the mercy of the world, and in their own strength they cannot cope with the situation in which they find themselves. They must look to God.

D. (:4-9) Specifics of Commissioning

1. (:4) Dependence on the Lord Alone

"Carry no purse, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way."

Morris: not an exhortation to impoliteness; it is a reminder that their business is urgent and that they are not to delay it

MacArthur: Don't depend on making relationships with people so that they provide for you. Don't...don't go the human route. Just go, don't stop to make relationships, and know this, I will provide even if you have no human relationships to depend on. That's the great lesson of trust. You're going to have to be cared for by strangers you don't even know, people you haven't even cultivated a relationship with. This is just trust. You go, you trust, wherever God sends you, you go, you preach the gospel, you leave the results to the Lord. If you have nothing, you go, He provides. If you have everything, you go, you use what you have and if you ever come to a point where you have need, you know He's going to step in and make provision. Don't worry about the friendship side of it. Keep the message clear. . . But it is interesting that this was not friendship evangelism which may be...some people may overrate. I think friendship evangelism is good, you should evangelize your friends, but I don't think you should wait to evangelize someone until after you've made a friendship. I don't think that's necessary. People are saved by the power of the gospel, not by the power of a friendship.

2. (:5-6) Ministry of Peace

*“And whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.'
And if a man of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him;
but if not, it will return to you.”*

MacArthur: So in our ministry as we go, first of all, we direct our efforts toward those who are eager to hear. We make it clear, secondly, that we seek nothing for ourselves. Thirdly, we validate our message not by some miracles which we're able to do, but rather by the miracle of revelation, the Word of God. And we minister with compassion to people as those did who healed the sick and cast out demons. But we preach the gospel of the kingdom which is the gospel of peace, peace with God. And wherever we find prepared hearts, sons of peace will embrace the truth. And so our ministry will be a ministry unto peace. . . Where there is not reception of the King and His kingdom but rejection, the kingdom brings not peace but punishment.

3. (:7-8) Contentment with Deserved Provision

“And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house. And whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you;”

4. (:9) Ministry of Healing and Preaching

*“and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them,
'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'”*

MacArthur: A kingdom is a domain ruled by a single monarch who has absolute sovereignty, who functions with unilateral authority, whose will is non-contradictable, authoritative, absolute. It is not representative, it is not democratic. The will of the people does not rule. The will of the people virtually has no impact. The duty of the people is to submit. The duty of the people is to obey. The duty of the people is to fall under the standards and commands that are determined by the king and do whatever it is he asks. . . The greatest form of government, the purest form of government, the best form of government is a monarchy with a perfect King who is always just, who's perfectly benevolent, perfectly just, perfectly wise, perfectly powerful, and perfectly everything else. And that's the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God has come, folks, and those of us who know Christ are in it. We are in it and the Lord Jesus Christ is our King.

II. (:10-16) CONDEMNATION FOR REJECTING JESUS

A. (:10-12) Accountability Once the Kingdom of God Has Come Near

*“But whatever city you enter and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust of your city which clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you; yet be sure of this, that **the kingdom of God has come near.**’ I say to you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city.”*

Morris: In rejecting the preachers they were rejecting not simply a couple of poor itinerants, but the very kingdom of God, and that has serious consequences.

Scott Harris: Jesus gave them specific actions to take if the city would not receive them. They were to make a public protest against them and warn them of the judgment they had brought upon themselves. This was not done if they would listen to their message, for God is patient even with those that are slow to understand and believe. This was done against those who heard a clear presentation of the gospel and rejected it or those who refused to listen to them at all. Their condemnation would be greater than that of Sodom because they refused the message of salvation.

Jason Wing: There are a couple of truths the disciples needed to catch here. The first is that they would be rejected and the second is that when they were rejected they were not to give up.

Greater privilege in terms of revelation and access to Jesus and the kingdom of God leads to greater responsibility

B. (:13-14) Applied to Chorazin and Bethsaida

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been performed in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment, than for you.”

C. (:15) Applied to Capernaum

“And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will be brought down to Hades!”

Lenski: The cities named here were the populous centers in Galilee from which the ministry of Jesus radiated. Chorazin is mentioned only here in the Gospels. Bethsaida was the home of some of the Twelve and is mentioned only a few times. Both are close to Capernaum, on the west side of the lake, where Jesus even had his home (**John 2:12**).

D. (:16) Applied Universally Based on Rejection of Jesus

“The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”

III. (:17-20) CELEBRATION OF MINISTRY SUCCESS – REASONS FOR REJOICING

A. (:17) Subjugation of Demons – In the Name of Jesus

“And the seventy returned with joy, saying,

'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.'”

Divine power over Satan’s kingdom

B. (:18-19) Subjugation of Satan = Over All the Power of the Enemy

1. (:18) Defeat of Satan

“And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.’”

Divine power over Satan himself

2. (:19) Power Over Satan

“Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall injure you.”

Donald Miller: Serpents and scorpions are symbols of spiritual enemies, and are not to be taken literally.

MacArthur: Evangelism is the task of rescuing people out of the clutches of Satan, ripping them, as it were, from the lap of the evil one. It is breaking in to the domain of darkness, it is a rescue operation. And in order to achieve that, the powers of hell must be overthrown. The power of demons must be conquered. Evangelism is not just convincing people by a good argument of the truth of the gospel and thus they believe. It is not just a human operation. It is not just an argument about who's right. It is not just a rational debate. It is a rescue operation into the supernatural realm of darkness where all the souls of the unbelievers are under the control of demons and they are in a condition of being spiritually dead and spiritually blind. So you're dealing with people who don't have the apparatus to respond and in order to reach them, they have to be awakened from the dead. They have to be given sight. That's a supernatural operation. And then the very world of Satan has to be overpowered so they can be rescued. This is not a simple operation. It is an assault on the forces of hell and they are powerful, powerful forces.

C. (:20) Salvation Trumps Ministry Success as Cause for Rejoicing

“Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

Gets back to that theme of the **Priority of Salvation** that was addressed at the end of chap. 9

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus rejoices over converting grace and you see this in **verse 20** — *“Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven”*. Rejoice over your conversion. Rejoice over the conversion of others. Don't get all hung up about your gifts and your elegance. Your ability to call upon demons to obey in My name. Rejoice fundamentally in this, that your hearts have been changed, that you've responded in faith to the Word of the Lord, that your names are written in the Lamb's book of life. You rejoice in converting grace.

Spurgeon: To be elect is better than to be endowed with the greatest gifts. When we are likely to become too elated by what the Lord does by us, it will be well to remember that what he has done for us is a far greater and safer reason for joy.

IV. (:21-24) CONTROL OF SPIRITUAL REVELATION/ILLUMINATION – GOVERNED BY DIVINE CHOICE -- REASONS FOR JESUS TO GREATLY REJOICE

A. (:21) Paradox of Spiritual Revelation/Illumination -- Governed by Divine Choice

“At that very time He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, ‘I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from the wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.’”

Spiritual Illumination does not function on the basis of natural selection – does not favor the wise and the intelligent as one might expect

Jesus rejoicing in the sovereign purpose of His **Heavenly Father** (**MacArthur**)

Geldenhuys: the Saviour rejoiced in the fact that God in His wisdom, omnipotence and love has so arranged matters that insight is given into the redeeming truths of the kingdom not to those who are self-exalted and wise in their own esteem (as so many Pharisees and scribes were at that time), but to those (like His faithful disciples) who in childlike simplicity and humility feel their utter dependence on the Lord and accept without intellectual arrogance the truths revealed by God through Him.

B. (:22) Process of Spiritual Revelation/Illumination – Governed by Divine Choice

“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

Jesus rejoicing in the supreme power and authority invested in Him **the Son** by His Heavenly Father

C. (:23-24) Privilege of Spiritual Revelation/Illumination – Governed by Divine Choice

“And turning to the disciples, He said privately, ‘Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see, for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.’”

Jesus rejoicing in the work of **the Holy Spirit**

Geldenhuys: However great the privilege of those disciples was, we who possess in the New Testament the completed revelation of God in Christ have a still greater privilege. They indeed saw Him in the flesh, but we see Him in the New Testament not merely as the Incarnate Son of God but also as the Crucified One, and as the Risen Redeemer and the glorified King of His church. And because our privilege is so great, a great responsibility likewise rests upon us. The people of that time who rejected the revelation of God in Christ did not escape the divine judgment. So much the more will those who reject the completed revelation of God in His Word also bring judgment upon themselves!

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are you actively praying for more workers to be sent into the harvest?
- 2) What does it mean for you personally to be sent out in the Great Commission as “*lambs among wolves*”?
- 3) What gives you the most joy in your Christian life?
- 4) Why do so many Christians have a negative reaction to the doctrines of Sovereign Grace?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J. Ligon Duncan: In Luke's teaching the kingdom of God is something that God does. It's not something that we do. And the kingdom of God is something that fulfills what God promised in the Old Testament. And the kingdom of God is not what the people of Israel were expecting, but it is good news that is being proclaimed that through the Messiah, God's kingdom and the promises that He made to His Old Testament people are being realized in their very presence and they are to respond to that good news in faith and trust in God through His Messiah. The kingdom of God is not an earthly or military or political or national kingdom. The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God through Jesus Christ in people's hearts and lives and it's manifested by following Jesus and His teaching. And that's the message that they're given to go out and proclaim in the highways and byways.

Steven Cole: Jesus didn't speculate about the future judgment; He spoke about it with authority (**10:12**)! He makes it clear that people will be judged according to the degree of light that they rejected. There will be degrees of punishment in hell. It will be worse for those who heard plainly of Christ and rejected it than for those, such as Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon, that lacked clear witness. Verse 13 is mind-boggling: Jesus declares that He knows how those who never heard would have responded if they had heard! Yet even though they would have repented if they had heard, they did not hear and they will be judged for their wickedness and unbelief!

But the real warning that we must take to heart is this: These cities that Jesus warns of terrible judgment to come were religious cities that were familiar with Jesus' message and miracles. Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon were pagan Gentile cities. The warning is that those who sit in church and yet remain unmoved by the offer of peace with God through Christ, those who are familiar with spiritual truths, but who refuse to submit to Christ as Lord—these religious people will be judged far more harshly than raw pagans who are ignorant of the gospel. . .

We often hear people say that if they saw a miracle or actually heard Jesus in person, they would believe. Not so! These towns heard Jesus and saw His miracles, but they hardened themselves against Him. They would not submit to Him as King. To hear Jesus' messengers is to hear Him, and to reject them is to reject Him (**10:16**). Jesus predicts Capernaum's demise. They thought highly of themselves (exalted to heaven), but Jesus thought otherwise, and His word stands. The city of Capernaum is now an uninhabited heap of ruins. The same that happened there could

easily happen to America. Our nation has had great light, but even many of those who profess Christ show by their disobedient and self-centered lives that they are not subject to His lordship. It is a terrible thing for those with such knowledge to reject the gospel!

William Barclay: applies Luke 10:1-16 - This passage tells us certain supremely important things about both the preacher and the hearer.

(i) The preacher is not to be cluttered up with material things; he is to travel light. It is easy to get entangled in the things of this life. Once Dr. Johnson, after seeing through a great castle and its policies, remarked grimly, "**These are the things which make it difficult to die.**" **Earth must never blot out heaven.**

(ii) The preacher is to concentrate on his task; he is to greet no man on the way. This goes back to Elisha's instruction to Gehazi in **2 Kings 4:29**. It is not an instruction to discourtesy; but means that the man of God must not turn aside or linger on the lesser things while the great things call him.

(iii) The preacher must not be in the work for what he can get out of it; he is to eat what is put before him and must not move from house to house seeking better and more comfortable quarters. It was not long before the church had its spongers. There is a work called *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. It was written about A.D. 100, and is the church's first book of order. In those days there were prophets who wandered from town to town. It is laid down that if a prophet wishes to stay in a place for more than three days without working he is a false prophet; and if a prophet in the Spirit asks for money or a meal he is a false prophet! The labourer is worthy of his hire, but the servant of a crucified Master cannot be a seeker for luxury.

(iv) To have heard God's word is a great responsibility. A man will be judged according to what he has had the chance to know. We allow things in a child we condemn in an adult; we forgive things in a savage we punish in a civilized man. Responsibility is the other side of privilege.

(v) It is a terrible thing to reject God's invitation. There is a sense in which every promise of God that a man has ever heard can become his condemnation. If he receives these promises they are his greatest glory, but each one that he has rejected will some day be a witness against him. (*Daily Study Bible*)

Scott Harris: Every true Christian is equipped and called by God to serve Him. This passage reviews some important principles of ministry.

- Successful ministry takes team-work.
- Successful ministry begins with prayer.
- The work God calls us to can be dangerous, but our safety is in His hands.
- Successful ministry keeps its focus
- Contentment is crucial to Successful ministry.

- Successful ministry is faithful to the gospel and Jesus' teachings.
- Ministry can be successful in God's eyes even when it is rejected.
- Be humble even when ministry is successful.
- Be happy about successful ministry, but rejoice even more over your salvation.
- Rejoice over being able to see God's hand at work and His grace granted to you.

TEXT: Luke 10:25-37

TITLE: HOW GOOD DO I HAVE TO BE? - PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

BIG IDEA:

GOD'S STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS CONVICTS US ALL OF OUR INABILITY TO MERIT SALVATION BY GOOD WORKS

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus is concerned with exposing self-righteousness and the inability to fully love God and our neighbor as the law requires. There is no works-oriented approach to obtaining eternal life that man can successfully pursue. So as Jesus enters into this evangelistic dialogue with this prominent Jewish religious leader who was an expert in the OT law, He presses home the demands of the law. This is not some simple recitation of religious platitudes about how to be kind to other people. This is a hard-hitting parable of conviction that is designed to crush the pride of a sinner who is in denial about his lost condition.

2 KEY QUESTIONS THAT EXPOSE THE FUTILITY OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

I. (:25-28) QUESTION #1 = WHAT SHALL I DO TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE?

A. (:25) Asking the Question

1. Motivation

"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying,"

Morris: he asked his question, not in the search for information, but to see what kind of answer Jesus would produce. He may even have been hoping that Jesus would do badly and that he would have the opportunity of showing Him up.

Deffinbaugh: He feigns respect for Jesus as a teacher of the law, but he is only seeking to test Jesus by questioning Him so that he can then say, "Your teaching is not consistent with the law." When the lawyer asks, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life," this phraseology is not that of the Old Testament. The Old Testament law says, "Do this and live." The lawyer is using Jesus' terminology, and is asking, "What is the essence of your teaching?" He wants to take the bottom line of Jesus' system and compare it with the bottom line of Judaism so that he can then say, "Your system is wrong." That is his intention.

2. Substance

"Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Comes from a salvation by works orientation; does not understand the grace of God

J. Ligon Duncan: Jewish people in the time of Jesus were very concerned, and even Gentiles, were very concerned about the question of how a person can be accepted by God at the last judgment. How can a person be welcomed into the kingdom of God? How can a person inherit eternal life? And that language of "*kingdom of God*" and "*eternal life*" and "*being saved*" is all related.

MacArthur: All evangelism, beloved, begins here. It is not about this life. It is not about prosperity in this life. It is not about health in this life. It is not about happiness in this life. It is not about healing in this life. It is not about success. It is not about money. It is not about possessions. It is not about freedom from trouble. That's junk-bond evangelism. It's not about that. That bilks people out of their souls on false premises. Run from people who sell that; they're false teachers. And so, if you're going to do some evangelism, you've got to move people from "Jesus is going to fix me here," to "Jesus is going to deliver me in the life to come." Until the sinner really understands that, evangelism can't even start.

B. (:26-28) Answering the Question – In the form of a Question

1. (:26-27) The Gold Standard for Righteousness = Obeying the Law

a. (:26) What Does the Law Say?

“And He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?’”

The bible is the only authority for how one can be right with God and obtain eternal life

b. (:27) Substance of the Law Summarized = Love God and Neighbor

1) Love God

“And he answered and said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind;’”

Deffinbaugh: His answer to our Lord’s question draws together two of the great Old Testament texts:

(1) *“loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength,”* a citation of **Deuteronomy 6:5**; and,

(2) a citation from **Leviticus 19:18**: *“You are to love your neighbor as yourself.”*

2) Love Your Neighbor

“and your neighbor as yourself.”

Joseph Parker: Love of God means love of man. Religion is the divine side of philanthropy; philanthropy is the practical side of religion. We must first be right with God, or we never can be right with man. If we begin by endeavouring to get right with our neighbour, we shall fail. But if we begin by establishing right relations with God, according to the conditions which he himself has laid down, we shall find that being right with God our whole life is elevated and all social relationships are redeemed from error, and our neighbour is loved with a lofty and pure charity.

2. (:28) The Application

a. (:28a) Confirming the Answer

“And He said to him, ‘You have answered correctly;’”

b. (:28b) Commanding the Behavior

“do this, and you will live.”

Deffinbaugh: Jesus answers, *“You tell Me, according to the law.”* He responds, *“One can be saved by perfectly and persistently obeying the whole law, with one’s whole heart, soul, mind and strength.”* The lawyer is now on the spot. The system he is seeking to defend, is a system

that cannot save anyone. In seeking to condemn Jesus, the lawyer has just condemned himself and the whole world.

Hampton Keathley IV: When Jesus tells the man to “*do this and you will live,*” He is not saying, you can get to heaven by being perfect. He is using the man’s statement and saying, “Assuming it is true for the sake of argument, do it and you will live.” Jesus is just holding up a mirror so the man can see his sin. He makes an accommodating statement - to accommodate the man’s understanding and help him see the truth. Jesus knew the man could never do it. He wanted the man to see it too. You’ve heard the statement - “You’ve got to get them lost before you can get them saved.” That is what is going on here. Jesus is trying to make the man see his need for salvation.

II. (:29-37) QUESTION #2 = WHO IS MY NEIGHBOR?

A. (:29) Asking the Question

1. Motivation

“But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus,”

MacArthur: “*But wishing to justify himself*” literally in the Greek means desiring to proclaim himself righteous, desiring to proclaim himself righteous. And this was a public event. Remember now, he stood up in an environment where Jesus was very likely teaching. He stood up and in the middle of everything that was going on with the people sitting around, this man was not about to confess the reality of his wretched heart. He wanted to maintain the deception. So he rejected the pangs of conscience that prompted the question. He disdains the conviction of sin which he feels on the inside. And he seeks to publicly reaffirm his achievement as righteous. . . what keeps people from being saved when they understand the gospel is the issue of whether or not they will admit their wretchedness.

2. Substance

“And who is my neighbor?”

Donald Miller: The lawyer thus suggests limits to love. There must be those to whom the obligation to love does not apply. This was an effort to evade the real issue by theoretical discussion. Furthermore, it focused attention on the worthiness of the object of love rather than on the condition of heart of the one who is to do the loving.

Deffinbaugh: it is difficult to test one’s love for God. How do you assess one’s attitudes, one’s devotion, one’s meditation, one’s relationship with God? You can’t. But if you want to find some way to measure one’s love for God, you can look at his love for his neighbor. Isn’t that what the Book of James is saying to us (and 1 John too)? James says that a man who professes that he has faith and yet doesn’t show love for his neighbor is a man with a false profession. I find it interesting that the title of one of Chuck Colson’s books is Loving God, but the subject matter of that book is about loving man. When you read this book, you find that the love men have for God is expressed by their love for their fellow man. I suspect that the reason this lawyer is so uneasy about the command to love his neighbor is because he knows his love for his neighbor is deficient.

B. (:30-37) Answering the Question – In the form of a Parable

1. (:30-35) The Story

a. (:30) The Situation

“Jesus replied and said, ‘A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead.’”

Morris: The road from Jerusalem to Jericho runs down a steep descent through desolate country. The distance is about seventeen miles and the road descends more than 3,000 feet. It is the kind of wild country in which robbers might well be safe.

b. (:31-35) The Reactions of Different Individuals

1) (:31) The Priest = Indifference and Avoidance

“And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.”

2) (:32) The Levite = Indifference and Avoidance

“And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.”

3) (:33-35) The Samaritan = Showed Love and Mercy

a) Ignored Existing Social Prejudice

“But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him;”

b) Saw the Need

“and when he saw him,”

c) Motivated by Compassion

“he felt compassion,”

d) Dressed His Wounds – Intimate Involvement

“and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them;”

e) Provided Immediate Care – Personal Expense and Inconvenience

“and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.”

f) Provided Long Term Care – Whatever It Takes

“And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.’”

2. (:36-37) The Application

a. (:36-37a) Confirming the Answer – Who Acted Like a Neighbor?

“Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?”

“And he said, ‘The one who showed mercy toward him.’”

b. (:37b) Commanding the Behavior

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do the same.’”

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus in this passage is not telling this story to show the lawyer how to be a better person. He's showing him his sin. . . Jesus says it will take more than right answers to inherit eternal life. It requires a life of perfection in not just giving the right answers or knowing the right answers but living the right answers and doing the right answers and guess what? No human being except one has ever done that.

Deffinbaugh: Now we see why Jesus doesn't go any farther with this man than he does; it is because this man first has to see the inadequacy of the law keeping system he embraces as the only means to obtaining eternal life. This man will not turn to Christ as the Messiah until he first turns from his dependence on law keeping to save him.

CONCLUSION:

It is all about the right application of the text of Scripture. It does us no good to delight in the story of the Good Samaritan if our hearts remain cold and merciless to those in need.

Steven Cole: A little boy came home from Sunday School after learning about the Good Samaritan. He told his mother the story in great detail. He had all the facts straight and all the people in their right character roles. Then the mother asked, “What is that story meant to teach us?” The little boy replied, “It means that when we are in trouble, others should come to help us.” Well, not quite!

In fact the point of the story is not even primarily that we need to show ourselves to be a Good Samaritan towards others. Instead, it is intended to show us the depravity of our own hearts; our inability to keep the law as a means to obtaining eternal life; and to drive us to Christ and His mercy and grace to save us and empower us to love God and others as we should.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we effectively use the righteous standards revealed in God's law to show sinners their need for the gospel of grace?
- 2) Should concerns for personal safety be considered as a balancing perspective to this type of aggressive, risky love that Jesus advocates for here?
- 3) What excuses do we make or prejudices do we invoke to effectively limit whom we consider to be our neighbor?
- 4) How are we practically showing love to those in need as the opportunity presents itself to us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Love is not a self-centered feeling of achievement according to a predetermined

standard of obligation. It is rather the spontaneous overflow of a heart that forgets itself in the presence of any human need.

Anyabwile: I believe this lawyer felt guilty in that moment. . . That's why the scribe replies as he does in **verse 29**. He was guilty, but he wanted to justify himself, to find a way to be right in his own sight, a way to say, "I am a good guy." He couldn't do that by obeying God perfectly. None of us can. The only way to do that is to fudge on the law. He had to somehow lower the requirements to a point where he could do it. So he asked, "*Who is my neighbor?*"

That's what people often do when they see that they've broken God's law. They look for a way out, an excuse, a loophole, some way to say that they're not that bad and God should cut them some slack. Do you think a holy, sinless God will cut an unholy, sinful person some slack? "*Do not be deceived; God is not mocked*" (**Gal. 6:7** ESV). Rather than loosen the definition of "neighbor," Jesus radically expands it. The Lord tells the story of the good Samaritan (**vv. 30-35**), a story that blows all the categories of the day. The story:

- Features the brokenness of this sinful world (**v. 30**),
- Exposes the emptiness of religion without love (**vv. 31-32**),
- Challenges the racism and prejudice we all can feel (**v. 33**), and
- Requires sacrifice and risk (**vv. 34-35**).

Geldenhuys: But God be praised that Christ Jesus as Man lived a life of complete love towards God and men and, as the entirely Innocent One, endured death for us on the cross, forsaken by God, so that by faith we are absolved from the death we deserve, and inherit eternal life. This, however, does not remove the obligation to obey Jesus' words: "*Go, and do thou likewise.*" But the difference is as follows: the Law has said: "Do this and thou shalt live", while Christ says: "I have given you eternal life through grace, and this new life in you will enable you to have real love towards God and your fellow-men and to carry it out in practice; so go forth and live a life of true love to God and to your fellow-men, through the power I give you."

Steven Cole: When you see the impossibly high standard of God's Law, you can go one of two ways. The right way is to let that Law drive you to Christ, who bore the curse of your sin on the cross. He alone perfectly loved God and loved His neighbor. We need His righteousness as our covering or we cannot stand before the Holy God. As Paul makes clear, God grants that righteous standing as a gracious gift to the one who trusts in Christ (**Rom. 3:24**). The wrong way to go is to try to bring down the standard to a level that you think you can keep, so that you can justify yourself by your own good works. The lawyer took the second route, and so Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan to show him that he fell short and to show him the kind of good deeds that the Holy Spirit will produce in the lives of those who have come to Him in faith.

MacArthur: If you follow church history through the intervening years to the present time, you get more misrepresentations of the story. Even today, it has become a very, very popular story in defending the church's interest in social justice. Forms of socialism, even Marxism, lean on the story of the Good Samaritan. . . Any time you get into discussions with people who talk about poverty and the alleviation of poverty and the reallocation of wealth and taxing the wealthy to provide for the poor and social justice and all forms of socialism, you will find somewhere in their emphasis the story of the Good Samaritan - that somebody cared for people, divesting himself of what he possessed for the sake of someone else. . .

This is a scene of **personal evangelism**. It is parallel to Jesus and Nicodemus in **John 3**. It is parallel to Jesus and the rich young ruler in **Matthew 19**, Jesus doing personal evangelism. So let's set the scene. Go back to **verse 25**. This is what establishes the intent of the parable. . .

He asked Him the same question that Nicodemus had on his heart. "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? What shall I do to inherit eternal life? What is the path to heaven? What is the path to a right relationship to God that's going to guarantee that I am going to live forever in the presence of God?" That is a very important question. That is the most important question that any person can ever ask. That is the right question. That is the right question to ask to exactly the right person, who is Himself eternal life, the very life-giver. . .

This is a man who will not come to a real understanding of his condition. He thinks he loves God perfectly the way God requires him to. He thinks he loves the people he's supposed to love, the ones that God expects him to love perfectly. "I'm okay with God. I'm okay with people. I'm fine." Justifying himself, all he says is in a mocking tone, "Maybe you'd better tell me who my neighbor is."

This is a lost man. This is a doomed man. This is just another one of many religious people that Jesus encounters in His life who think they can earn eternal life by their virtue, by their morality, by their religion, by their emotional connections to God. Now, Jesus could have left him sitting there or standing there. He could have walked away, left him in his self-righteous pride, never said another word, but instead, Jesus engages in an act of evangelistic compassion with this man, and He gives to this lawyer one more powerful insight. The purpose of this story is to crush this guy's self-righteousness. It is really a wake-up call that he is damned and doomed. The story is to shatter his pride, to shatter his imaginary spirituality. It is a crushing, unforgettable work of conviction. . .

And there he was standing in front of the one person in the world who could forgive him, and he never asked, never asked as far as we know. Social justice, that's not the issue here. Righteousness is the issue before God. There was Jesus, the personification of heavenly mercy and forgiveness, ready to give it lavishly to that lawyer if the man would simply admit his wretched condition. That's the message. That's the message to you as well. You need to come for mercy and grace. Then when you're saved, it's amazing how He sheds abroad His love in your heart, and you begin to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength - not perfectly, but that becomes the direction of your affection. And you begin to love other people as you love yourself - not perfectly, but that's the direction.

This story is not to make people feel guilty about not giving their money to poor people. It's not to make people feel guilty about not taking care of those that are suffering. This story is designed to make people feel guilty for not loving God perfectly and loving others perfectly, and then running to the One who alone can provide forgiveness for that sin and eternal life.

Craig Condon: The way the beaten man is treated shows three of life's philosophies:

1. What's yours is mine—represented by the robbers.
2. What's mine is mine—represented by the priest and Levite.
3. What's mine is yours—represented by the Samaritan.

Deffinbaugh: This parable (and this sermon) are not intended to demean true biblical scholarship and study. I do believe that this parable was meant to condemn scholasticism, the intellectual and

academic study of the Bible that is substituted for faith and obedience. How this lawyer seems to have enjoyed intellectualizing the truth of God's Word. How hard he tried to keep the discussion scholarly and detached from life. But our Lord would not allow this man to deal with the truth of God's Word in a test tube. Jesus would not define the term "neighbor" by doing a Hebrew word study. He defined it by telling a story. And Jesus will not allow the lawyer to deliberate and pass judgment as to whether someone else is our neighbor; He challenges us to ask ourselves whether or not we are good neighbors to those in need. That is what the truth of God's Word is for, it is to be rightly understood and then rightly lived. God does not want us to give Him a textbook definition of loving our neighbor; He wants us to demonstrate love for our neighbor in the real world, by showing compassion to one in need, as did the Good Samaritan. Let us beware of intellectualizing the truth. Let us beware of keeping the Word of God in the classroom. And let us live out the grace of God that we have experienced it, if indeed we have experienced it.

TEXT: Luke 10:38-42

TITLE: *DISTRACTION OR DEVOTION?*

BIG IDEA:

COMMUNION WITH GOD MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER SPIRITUAL SERVICE

INTRODUCTION:

This is a critical passage for women – especially mothers – who are consumed with so many necessary everyday activities that it can be difficult to maintain their communion with God. Interesting that Jesus begins with elevating the role of women in society by violating cultural norms of the day to enter into Martha’s home to fellowship with her and her sister Mary. Jesus had a high view of women and included them in critical areas of service. But in this context He is going to lovingly correct the distracted spirit of Martha who is consumed with the busyness of service and neglecting the highest priority of all which is worship and communion with the Lord Himself.

Sermonwriter.com: Context: These stories balance each other. The early part of the Samaritan story lifts up love of God, neighbor and self, and Jesus concludes by saying, “*Go and do likewise*” (v. 37)—calling for an active, “*doing*” discipleship. The Mary-Martha story is the reverse. Jesus criticizes Martha for her worry and distraction and affirms Mary for listening—thus calling for a “*being*” discipleship.

Perhaps the key to understanding this dichotomy is to emphasize, not the active or passive role of the one who loves, but the appropriateness of the response to the situation. The wounded man needed the Samaritan to love him actively—needed him to bind his wounds and arrange for his care. The situation is quite different when Jesus visits Martha and Mary. While he has human needs for food and hospitality, his is a Godly visitation, and it is more appropriate to focus on the spiritual food that he offers rather than the food that Martha is preparing. . .

Both listening and acting are appropriate behaviors for Jesus’ disciples. The discipleship quandary is trying to determine which is needed in the immediate situation.

Warren Wiersbe: Worship is at the heart of all that we are and all that we do in the Christian life. It is important that we be busy ambassadors, taking the message of the Gospel to lost souls. It is also essential to be merciful Samaritans, seeking to help exploited and hurting people who need God’s mercy. But before we can represent Christ as we should, or imitate Him in our caring ministry, we must spend time with Him and learn from Him. We must “take time to be holy.

(:38) PROLOGUE – VISIT IN MARTHA’S HOME

*“Now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village;
and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home.”*

Only recorded by Luke (cf. different account of the same two sisters in **John 11** in connection with the death and raising up of Lazarus)

Morris: Elsewhere we find that Martha and Mary lived at Bethany (**Jn. 11:1**), about two miles from Jerusalem. Here the house is said to be Martha's and the impression we get is that she was the elder of the sisters and the hostess.

Steven Cole: In that culture, many rabbis thought that teaching women was a waste of time. But Jesus took the time to evangelize and teach women, thus showing the value that God puts on every person.

I. (:39-40) CONTRASTING CONDUCT OF MARY AND MARTHA

Chiastic structure abba

A. (:39) Conduct of Mary – Devoted to the Person of the Lord and His Word

“And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet.”

1. Listening to the Word of God

2. Sitting at the Teacher's Feet

J. Ligon Duncan: The Posture of a Disciple -- That is what a disciple does. A disciple is devoted to the authority of Jesus and sits under His teaching. A disciple acknowledges the authority of Jesus and drinks in His teaching. A disciple is not telling Jesus how he or she thinks it ought to be. A disciple has his mouth closed and he's drinking in every word that comes from the Savior.

Piper: It seems to me that Martha isn't the strange person in this story. Mary is. What's remarkable is that Mary *wasn't* distracted. She ignored the insistent to-do lists so she could listen to Jesus.

And this irritated Martha. She was working like crazy while Mary just sat there. Martha considered this either laziness or negligence. Exasperated, she finally appealed to Jesus: *“Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me”* (**Luke 10:40**).

B. (:40) Conduct of Martha – Distracted by Service Activities

1. Consumed with Busyness - Distracted

“But Martha was distracted with all her preparations;”

J. Ligon Duncan: We live in the busiest culture in the history of the world. We are constantly surrounded by, and bombarded by, busyness. And you know what? Most of our busyness is superficial busyness. I think our forefathers who were far less busy got a lot more done than we get done because we spend so much time doing superficial stuff. But we're busy all the time. There's stuff going on all the time. There are beepers going off and phones going off and iPads going off and iPods going off and cell phones going off and there's stuff going on all the time. And that busyness is an enemy to discipleship because it keeps our eyes focused on a multitude of less important things and we forget the most important thing.

2. Critical Spirit - Disgruntled

“and she came up to Him, and said, ‘Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.’”

- Impatient with the Lord for not intervening and correcting the situation
- Critical of the priority that her sister Mary has chosen

II. (:41-42) CONTRASTING EVALUATION OF MARTHA AND MARY

A. (:41) Evaluation of Martha’s Conduct – Distracted by Lower Priority Concerns

“But the Lord answered and said to her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;’”

B. (:42) Evaluation of Mary’s Conduct – Devoted to the Highest Priority = Communion with God

“but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Anyabwile: In all your busyness don’t forget that only one thing is necessary. That one thing is not the next task on your to-do list. That one thing is not serving others. The one necessary thing is enjoying the Lord himself.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What distracts you from communion with the Lord?
- 2) How can we guard against a critical spirit that pokes at how others are choosing to worship the Lord and show Him devotion and attention?
- 3) When do we find ourselves complaining, “Lord, don’t you care?”
- 4) Where do you find yourself anxious about how Jesus or others will perceive your performance?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The close relation of the story of Mary and Martha to that of the Good Samaritan supplements the teaching there set forth. Service in the name of love may degenerate into mere human activity empty of eternal value, if it is divorced from constant communion with the One who is the source of all good. Martha’s motives were high. Jesus was her guest, and she wished to do him honor. But she sought to honor him with service and material gifts rather than with spiritual communion. As a result, she became “distracted,” or “drawn about in different directions” (vs. 40). This led to inner anxiety and external bustling (vs. 41), occasioned not by necessity but by her own sense of values. She created her own problem by placing too much value on things which are transitory, and too little on that “good portion” which cannot be taken away – fellowship with God in Jesus (vs. 42). . . Worship is as important as service, and service has Christian meaning only when it is rooted in worship.

Anyabwile: you've probably met a Martha before. She is happy to serve, but somehow her serving makes her sour. She's a little bossy. "Tell her to give me a hand." She's a little impatient with people she thinks aren't helping enough. Churches can be full of Marthas.

Geldenhuis: This story should not be taken to mean that the Saviour taught that a life of quiet worship and contemplation is the right form of religion and that an active Christian life is to be disapproved of. There is here no question of such a contrast. What we do learn here is that in our life's active service we must not be anxious and agitated, sulky and dissatisfied with our fellow-Christians or with our Master, and that we should not busy ourselves to such an extent with outward things that we neglect the quiet worship of the Lord. The most important part of our religion is the spiritual exercise of communion with our Redeemer. . . . Jesus calls us to a life of worship as well as practical service.

Steven Cole: Note that sitting at Jesus' feet is something Mary *chose* to do. It won't happen accidentally, because there are too many other things, many of them good things, to crowd it out. It's not something you choose once for life and it's settled. You have to keep choosing it over and over again, day in and day out, by saying no to other things so that you can say yes to this one necessary thing.

So the bottom line is, Jesus says that sitting at His feet and listening to His word is the one necessary thing for those who follow Him. You know that if you did this well and consistently it would have significant positive results in your relationship with God and with others.

J. Ligon Duncan: It's Not About Martha, It's About You

- 1) The Distinctive Discipleship of Women
- 2) The Devotion of Discipleship
- 3) The Distraction of Discipleship
- 4) The Delight of Discipleship

Alistair Begg: First Things First

Introduction: The presence of the guest gave rise to the one sister's annoyance Jesus was a frequent guest in this home . . . these individuals were familiar with one another and could speak openly with one another . . .

Connection to previous 37 verses of Chap. 10 –

3 different scenarios presenting Jesus as the Teacher – each provides an opportunity for correction

- 1) **Vs. 20** – Jesus, look at how successful our ministry has been; Rejoice in what God has done in saving you
- 2) Good Samaritan -- The real issue is not what you are supposed to be doing or who is your neighbor, but are you acting as a neighbor to the person who is in need?
- 3) Final verses – again a concern about doing – Lesson: God is first concerned about who we are in Him and only secondly about what we are doing for Him [not so much a contrast between active and passive service]

“The priority of listening to God is the foundation for a life of active service”

3 Characters:

I. Martha

- eldest sister

-given to hospitality – our good things can become bad things due to our attitude

1) distracted – not that the task was too much for her; but she made of the task more than she needed to; her commitment to do something special for Jesus prohibited her from sitting and listening to private instruction from Jesus or the meal would not meet her expectations (not Jesus' expectations)

2) disgruntled – ticked off; Martha not the bad person in this story; both are good people; Jesus loves them both; Jesus corrects her for her attitude, not her actions; zealous with a misguided zeal; speaking to Mary with little barbs; then tells her straight out what she is thinking

II. Mary

1) Sitting at the Lord's feet --
- posture of submission
- posture of expectation

2) Listening to the Lord's words
my sheep listen to my voice ...; distinguishing feature of a disciple
Real issue is that Martha should listen to you

III. Jesus

1) Sensitivity of His Tone
“*Martha, Martha*”- tenderness
“*Oh Absalom, my son ...*” / “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . .*”
Don't be worrying about just stuff

2) Clarity of His Teaching
Correcting wrong attitudes; Problem with Dennis Rodman is not his productivity, his rebounding; it is his attitude
Martha was sulking in her attitude towards her sister and dissatisfied with response of Jesus
Martha, you need to get your priorities straight
Mary had made a better choice than you – to listen to My words; that will never be taken away from her
I desired your company more than your service
Don't work for the food that perishes ...

Application:

- Beware of the trap of a performance-driven Christian life
- I want to talk to you about commitment to me before service for me
- None of us is indispensable
- We don't earn God's favor by the frenzy of our activities for Him
- Take time to listen

Piper: I think Martha was anxious over how she pleased or impressed Jesus and her guests. She was troubled at the thought that her home and serving might reflect poorly on her and her family. And this anxiety blinded her to the “*one thing necessary*” — listening to Jesus — and made many unnecessary tasks feel compulsively urgent.

This kind of anxiety is very subtle. It has a selfish root but its fruit looks deceptively like unselfishness. It's the desire for approval dressed up to look like the desire to serve. It's my caring what you think of me dressed up to look like my caring for you. It can be so subtle that we don't see it clearly. It looks so much like the right thing that we believe it is the right thing. That's why Martha was confident that Jesus would agree with her about Mary.

But Mary had chosen the "*one thing necessary*," the "*good portion*." At that moment, Mary was more enthralled with Jesus than with Mary. She cared more about what Jesus said than what others thought of her or her home. And because of this Jesus commended her choice not to serve.

Rich Mullins:

MY ONE THING

Everybody I know says they need just one thing
And what they really mean is that they need just one thing more
And everybody seems to think they got it coming
Well I know that I don't deserve You
Still I want to love and serve You more and more
You're my one thing

Save me from those things that might distract me
Please take them away and purify my heart
I don't want to lose the eternal for the things that are passing
'Cause what will I have when the world is gone
If it isn't for the love that goes on and on with

My one thing
You're my one thing
And the pure in heart shall see God ...

Who have I in Heaven but You Jesus
And what better could I hope to find down here on earth
I could cross the most distant reaches of this world
But I'd just be wasting my time 'cause
I'm certain already I'm sure I'd find You're

My one thing
You're my one thing
And the pure in heart shall see God ...

Every night every day
You hold on tight
Or you drift away
You're left to live
With the choices you make
Oh Lord please give me the strength
To watch and work and love and sing and pray

Who have I in Heaven but You Jesus

And what better could I hope to find down here on earth
I could cross the most distant reaches of this world
But I'd just be wasting my time 'cause
I'm certain already I'm sure I'd find

You're
My one thing
You're my one thing
And the pure in heart shall see God ...

TEXT: Luke 11:1-13

TITLE: TEACH US TO PRAY

BIG IDEA:

AS WE PERSIST IN PRAYING AS JESUS TAUGHT US WE SHOULD HAVE THE EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING ANSWERS FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

INTRODUCTION:

The disciples had the privilege of witnessing the prayer life of Jesus as He communed with the Father. They also saw how John the Baptist instructed his followers in this important spiritual discipline. Having been confronted with their own ministry power deficiencies, they were motivated to seek remedial help from Jesus to grow in this critical area. Jesus took the opportunity to train them up regarding both what to pray for and how to approach the Father in prayer with an expectation of receiving answers.

J. Ligon Duncan: Sometimes we think that a spontaneous, unplanned prayer is more spiritual than a planned prayer, but Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer — not just words to repeat in rote, not just a mantra to say over and over again, but a structure, a pattern for prayer that starts somewhere and is going somewhere. And He's taught us that that will in fact help us to pray more Biblically, more effectively, and so He takes us to the Bible and He gives us a pattern for prayer.

AS WE PERSIST IN PRAYING AS JESUS TAUGHT US WE SHOULD HAVE THE EXPECTATION OF RECEIVING ANSWERS FROM OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

(:1) PROLOGUE – TEACH US TO PRAY

“And it came about that while He was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.’”

3 AREAS OF INSTRUCTION REGARDING PRAYER

I. (:2-4) PATTERN OF PRAYER DEFINED BY TOPIC

A. (:2) Topics Relating to God

1.(:2a) Seek the Glory of God

“And He said to them, ‘When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be Thy name.’”

Intimate communication such as takes place between a child and a father within the context of a loving family

Steven Cole: In order to pray rightly, we must be able sincerely to address God as our Father. There is a general sense in which God is the Father of all people, since they are His offspring as Creator (**Acts 17:26-28**). But since the human race fell into sin, we enter life alienated from God. In fact, Jesus told the Jews that they were of their father, the devil (**John 8:44**). It is only when a person is born spiritually by God’s will and power that he becomes a child of God in the true

sense (**John 1:12-13**) and thus can address the Almighty Creator personally as Father.

- “*Father*” implies the intimacy and love of a personal relationship.
- “*Father*” implies the respect and authority of a submissive relationship.

This focus on God’s glory was the constant focus of the Lord Jesus Christ. In His high priestly prayer, Jesus declared, “*Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, ... I have glorified You on the earth, ... I manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me*” (**John 17:1, 4, 6**)

Anyabwile: To honor God’s name is to respect God’s person.

J. Ligon Duncan: Point one, pray the Bible. It's very clear that Jesus wants His disciples to pray the Scriptures back to God. Two, pray to your Father in heaven. Jesus says in this prayer that His disciples are to address their God as “Father.” That's extremely important. It's not just a passing thing; it's not just an honorific title. It's really, really important for your practice of prayer. And third, pray that God’ name will be glorified.

2. (:2b) Seek the Kingdom Purposes of God
“*Thy kingdom come.*”

Morris: looks for the bringing in of the kingdom that was the constant subject of Jesus’ teaching. There is a sense in which it is realized here and now, in the hearts and lives of men who subject themselves to God and accept His way for them. But in another sense it will not come until God’s will is perfectly done throughout the world.

Geldenhuys: “Let thy divine rule come.” The prayer is that the Father’s divine sovereignty should more and more fully attain its rightful place in the heart and life of fallen mankind, who otherwise are bound under the sway of the powers of darkness; that instead of living in sin and rebellion against God men should be brought to live their whole life more and more under the control of God’s sovereign rule. So this supplication refers to the extension of the divine dominion in the life of mankind in this age. But in the highest instance, it is a supplication that the kingly dominion of God which came with power into the life of mankind in the first coming of Jesus shall come in full glory and perfection through Christ’s second coming.

J. Ligon Duncan: He's encouraging you to pray that God's kingdom would come in the destruction of Satan's kingdom, that God's kingdom would come in the building up of His own kingdom, that God's kingdom would come in the conversion of men and women and boys and girls, and that God's kingdom would come finally in its completion when Jesus comes again.

MacArthur: It comes through salvation. That's how you come into the kingdom. It grows through sanctification. That's how the kingdom takes over more and more of your life. And finally, it consummates in the Second Coming, the Second Coming. When you say, "Your kingdom come," you're praying for Jesus to come back. You're praying for the Lord to come. "Thy kingdom come, oh God, Thy rule, oh Christ, begin. Break with Thine iron rod the tyrannies of sin." We understand that. "How long, oh Lord, are You going to let this go on? Lord Jesus, come back. Stop the sinning in this world. Stop the mockery and the reproach on Your name. Stop the blasphemy. Take over." We look for the day when “Jesus shall reign where e’er the sun does its successive journeys run. His kingdom spread from shore to shore, till

moon shall wax and wane no more.” We long for the day when Jesus reigns and rules the world. If you ask me what is your greatest single desire? I would have to say, and so would you as a believer, the greatest desire that I have is that Jesus would come and set up His promised kingdom. John said it at the end of Revelation, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Come. The day will arrive when He will come, He will gather His church. He will bring horrific judgment on the world. And then He will establish the glory of His 1,000-year millennial kingdom. His feet will come down, hit the Mount of Olives, change the geography of the land of Israel. He will reign for 1,000 years there with the saints who come back with Him, reigning with Him. His knowledge and wisdom will fill the whole earth, He will rule with a rod of iron. And we will have the kingdoms of this world becoming the kingdoms of our God and of our Christ. There will be 1,000 years in which Satan will be chained and Christ will totally rule the world. At the end of that time, the universe as we know it disintegrates, God creates a new heaven and a new earth which is the eternal kingdom in which we will dwell forever.

B. (:3-4) Topics Relating to Us

1. (:3) Seek Daily Provisions

“Give us each day our daily bread.”

Durative aspect – need provision each day; need for constant dependence on the Father

2. (:4a) Seek Forgiveness

“And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.”

Steven Cole: God’s forgiveness is granted only on the basis of His grace, not our works. The idea here is that if we, who are sinful, can forgive others, then surely God, who is perfect, will forgive us if we come to Him. But there is also the notion that the true mark of one who has been forgiven by God is that he will forgive others. I cannot honestly pray, “Father, forgive my sins,” if I refuse to forgive someone who has sinned against me.

3. (:4b) Seek Protection From Temptation

“And lead us not into temptation.”

Steven Cole: The idea is that, far from leading us into temptation (which He cannot do), God would lead us into His ways of righteousness where we will be kept from sin.

Morris: while it can be prayed privately, it is essentially a corporate prayer. All the pronouns are plural.

Donald Miller: Encouragement to prayer is given in two brief parables.

II. (:5-8) PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER IN INTERCEDING FOR OTHERS

A. (:5-6) Request Should Be Legitimate

“And He said to them, ‘Suppose one of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him.’”

B. (:7) Rejection Must Not Discourage You

1. Nuisance Factor / Inconvenience
“and from inside he shall answer and say, 'Do not bother me;”
2. Timing Factor / Window of Opportunity Has Closed
“the door has already been shut”
3. Accessibility Factor
“and my children and I are in bed;”
4. Willingness Factor
“I cannot get up and give you anything.”

The deck seems stacked against any type of positive response; Instead of giving up and going away, you must double your efforts and persist in your request.

C. (:8) Principle: Persistence Matters

“I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.”

J. Ligon Duncan: [“shameless” or “persistent”?] - Well, that's exactly what's going on in that story, isn't it? Because in the story we're going to read, a person goes and wakes a whole family up in the middle of the night. That's why the ESV translates *impudent* here but it doesn't mean it in the sense of being disrespectful or uppity. It means it in the sense of **crossing the bounds of normally accepted social behavior**. I just wanted to say that since we don't use that word all the time. . .

Jesus wants us to beg. If I could put that in a little more elegant way, Jesus wants us to be *importunate*. Now there's another word that we don't normally use in our day to day conversation but it just means *to beg, to plead, to appeal*. Do you remember the story in the gospels of the importunate widow who went to the judge and she basically bugged him to death until he gave her justice? That's what it is to be importunate. He wants us to beg, to plead, to appeal in prayer. . .

So why in the world would Jesus tell us that He wants us to beg in prayer? Because most of us have no idea how needy we are and how vulnerable our situation is.

James 4:17 *“Elijah prayed earnestly”*

Donald Miller: This is not to suggest that God is one whose reluctance to give must be overcome. It may, however, imply that although God is desirous of answering our prayers, he cannot do it lightly nor cheaply in response to half-hearted desire on our part. The importunity is necessary for us, not God.

This illustration of how persistence can lead to answered prayer moves us right into the next topic.

III. (:9-13) PROSPECTS OF ANSWERED PRAYER FROM YOUR GOOD HEAVENLY FATHER

A. (:9-10) Persistent Asking Leads to Receiving

1. (:9) Promise of Divine Response When You Ask / Seek / Knock

“And I say to you, ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”

Need to have the expectation that God will answer our prayers

Steven Cole: Also, the idea of persistence is reinforced by the increasing intensity of the words “ask,” “seek,” and “knock.” Seeking is stronger than asking; knocking is stronger than seeking.

J. Ligon Duncan: not as you pray them, but according to the Father's goodness He answers all your prayer.

2. (:10) Universal Principle – Receiving / Finding / Door Opening

“For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it shall be opened.”

J. Ligon Duncan: Now, why in the world would Jesus say this? Because He knows that you pray and you stop, and sometimes you stop because you don't think it's working, because you're not getting what you've prayed for, because it's not turning out like you'd expected or hoped. And Jesus is saying, “Don't stop praying, and if you have, start again because blessed is he and she who starts to pray over and over and over again.”

B. (:11-12) Earthly Fathers Don't Disappoint and Give Something Harmful

1. (:11) Illustration #1 – Won't Give a Snake Instead of a Fish

“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?”

2. (:12) Illustration #2 – Won't Give a Scorpion Instead of an Egg

“Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?”

Lenski: No father mocks his child in such a heartless way.

C. (:13) Principle: Heavenly Father Likes to Give Good Gifts to His Children – Argument from the Lesser to the Greater

1. Contrast to Earthly Fathers

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children,”

Heavenly Father far exceeds earthly fathers in the area of Goodness vs. Evil; So the good gifts dispensed by our Heavenly Father should far exceed the good gifts given by evil earthly fathers.

2. Extent of the Gift Giving

“how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

Our expectation should be of the “*how much more*” extent – even to the extent of the Father giving us the ultimate (all-inclusive) good gift = *the Holy Spirit* – a permanent and irrevocable gift.

But everything starts with the asking – no receiving apart from asking.

- Prayer is necessary
- Prayer should be natural within the family of God
- Prayer is effectual
- Prayer should be exciting

Rom. 8:32 *“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What motivated the disciples to seek this instruction from Jesus regarding prayer?
- 2) What topic in prayer do you tend to neglect the most?
- 3) What comparisons and contrasts can you draw between the friend in this short story and our Heavenly Father when it comes to responding to requests for help?
- 4) How long should we persist in prayer when it seems like God is not responding on a particular issue?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuys: No regenerate child of God should ever doubt that when he prays to God out of real need his prayer will be answered. He who doubts this does Him the greatest dishonor, for by not believing that He will give what we really need, we in fact appear to regard Him as less sympathetic and less faithful than an ordinary earthly father or even an ordinary earthly friend. Therefore unbelief in relation to the answering of prayer is not only a weakness, but a serious sin and utter folly.

David Felker: Well He gives us in verses 5 to 13 these two brief parables and they focus on the identity and the character of the One hearing our prayers. First in verses 5 to 10, to motivate you to pray you have to see that God is your friend and you are a beggar. God is your friend and you are a beggar. And then second in verses 11 to 13, to motivate you to pray, you have to see that God is your Father and you are His beloved child. And so God is your friend and God is your Father and you are a beggar and you are His child and He is the best friend and He is the best Father that you could imagine. . .

In **Paul Miller's** book, *The Praying Life*, he has a section on learning to pray to the Father as a child. I have three kids. I have two, a five and a three year old, who - I can affirm the truthfulness of this quote. He says, “What do little children ask for? Everything and anything.” What do little children ask for? Everything and anything. “How often do little children ask? Repeatedly. Over and over again. How do little children ask? Without guile.” Jesus tells us to watch little children

if we want to learn how to pray. **Tim Keller** said - this is a famous quote. He once said, "Who dares to wake the King in the middle of the night? Who dares to enter the King's presence at night without being summoned? Only His child. Abba, I'm scared. Abba, I can't sleep. Abba, it is dark. Abba, I need You." You see, that is the spirit that Jesus is saying we are to have in prayer.

J. Ligon Duncan: So how do we pay attention to this priority in prayer? Well, it might be when you find yourself in trouble it might be financial trouble. It might be marital trouble. It might be family trouble. It may be vocational trouble. It may be trouble of all sorts. Your temptation is to pray for deliverance from or through that trouble and God as the means, whether it's ordinary or extraordinary, whether it's usual or unusual deliverance, from or through that trouble. God is the means to the end.

And Jesus is saying, "Don't pray that way. That's upside down. You pray that God would be glorified in your trouble, that God will be seen to be great in your trouble, that you will see God's greatness, that you will see God's glory in that trouble. Yes it's appropriate to pray for deliverance from that trouble. Yes it's appropriate to pray for deliverance through that trouble, but your ultimate concern even through that trouble ought to be God's name, God's kingdom, God's glory, God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven." And this is one of the ways that Jesus turns our prayers right side up because God is not just a means to an end. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, and in the end what matters is that God gets the glory.

MacArthur: We're going to see adoration. We're going to see gratitude involved in this. We're going to see a recognition of the holiness and the glory of God. We're going to see a desire to submit here, a willingness to be obedient. It's all going to come out in the disciples' prayer. And so what I want you to understand is this. In this prayer Jesus is reestablishing the original, divine formula for prayer. And as I said, it had been lost in Israel. Hypocrisy had taken over and they were a...they were a false and superficial and shallow people. If anyone questions that, all you have to do is remember that they were led to scream for the blood of their Messiah and He was executed by the Romans as an expression of the will of the people. They were a fickle, superficial, hypocritical people led by leaders of such characteristics. And what Jesus is doing is going back to what the Old Testament taught. How you approach God has always been the same. You come to Him with adoring praise and love. You come to Him with gratitude and thanks because He's the source of everything. You come to Him pursuing His glory. You come to Him submitting to His will. You come to Him confessing your sin. You come to Him unselfishly embracing all who are within the framework of His holy purposes. You come to Him humbly and you come to Him persistently.

TEXT: Luke 11:14-28

TITLE: TWO WARRING KINGDOMS – THY KINGDOM COME

BIG IDEA:

DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN REQUIRES THE SUPERIOR POWER OF JESUS CHRIST THAT TRANSFORMS THOSE WHO HEAR AND OBEY HIM

INTRODUCTION:

As opposition to Jesus intensifies, the arguments posed by the Jewish religious leaders become more irrational and inconsistent. There can be no question about the reality of the supernatural power being demonstrated in the healing miracles of Jesus and in His power over demons. How can one interpret these events apart from acknowledging the prophetic fulfilment of all the OT speaks regarding the Promised Messiah? The kingdom of God has arrived in the reality of the dominion of Jesus. There can be no neutrality in terms of how one responds to His claims of deity and supremacy. Will you listen to Jesus and respond in faith and obedience as a genuine disciple of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN REQUIRES THE SUPERIOR POWER OF JESUS CHRIST THAT TRANSFORMS THOSE WHO HEAR AND OBEY HIM

I. (:14-16) DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN DEMONSTRATES SUPERNATURAL POWER

A. (:14a) Reality of the Miracle

1. Power of Exercising Dominion Over the Demon

“And He was casting out a demon, and it was dumb;”

Matthew says the man was blind as well – but was this the same incident or a different one??

2. Proof of Healing

“and it came about that when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke;”

B. (:14b-16) Reaction of the People

1. (:14b) Positive Reaction = Awe

“and the multitudes marveled.”

2. (:15-16) Negative Reaction – No Denying the Power of the Miracle

a. (:15) Attributing the Power to Beelzebul

“But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”

MacArthur: Get this, here was their response. They called the highest and holiest one the lowest and most evil. They called the one who was pure good, pure evil. They called God the devil. They called perfect holiness wickedness. They called incarnate truth a liar. This is the extreme opposite and if you're there, you can't be redeemed because when you've had all the revelation and you've concluded the opposite of the truth, you're irredeemable and that's **Hebrews 6:4 to 6**. You can't be renewed again to repentance because you've rejected the full truth after all of

Christ's manifest glory in the world. You might understand if they said, "Well, we're not really sure yet," but this? And then this mocking, sneering, slanderous taunting that went all the way to the cross where they taunted Him as He was hanging there. And they were religious and their hatred and their hostility shows the reality of their apostasy, the ugliness of spiritual pride. Is there anything more ugly than spiritual pride? Is there anything more cruel than religion, the wrong religion, satanic religion? They had nothing but self-righteousness and ceremonial virtue, outside white, inside full of stinking dead men's bones. The holy Lord of heaven receives from their lips the vilest possible slander and blasphemy and they use the worst name they can think of to identify Satan, the lord of the dung.

J Vernon McGee: The convincing nature of Jesus' miracles forced the Pharisees to offer some explanation for them. They could not deny the existence of miracles when they were happening before their eyes. They resorted to the basest and most blasphemous explanation for the miracles of Jesus. They did not deny that they took place but claimed that they were done by the power of the Devil.

- b. (:16) Demanding Additional Demonstrations of Power
"And others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven."

II. (:17-20) DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN CANNOT COME FROM SATAN

A. (:17-18a) Conviction - General Principle = Powerful Kingdoms Are Not Divided – Argument of Absurdity

1. (:17) Statement of the General Principle Twice

*"But He knew their thoughts, and said to them,
'Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste;
and a house divided against itself falls.'"*

2. (:18a) Application to the Powerful Kingdom of Satan –
Shows the Absurdity of Their Reasoning

"And if Satan also is divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?"

Morris: The forces of evil are destructive of good, not of one another.

Lenski: The conclusion is inescapable; and the very thought of Satan's destroying his own kingdom shows its absurdity – no man believes such a thing. So the Lord's syllogism is a *reduction ad absurdum*.

B. (:18b-19) Charge of a Double Standard – Argument of Consistency

1. (:18b) How Do You Judge Me?

"For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul."

2. (:19) How Do You Judge Your Fellow Jews?

*"And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons,
by whom do your sons cast them out?"*

Geldenhuys: After exposing the absurdity of the accusation of His enemies, the Lord now reveals their willful falseness by showing that they measure by two standards. It was at that time the general idea among the Jews that when a rabbi or other Jew delivered anyone from possession of the devil, it was a sign that God worked through him. But now that they see that Jesus (indeed in a far more signal manner) releases unhappy possessed people from demoniacal powers, they ascribe this in the wickedness of their hearts to the powerful workings of Satan. Thereby they declare, as it were, that their fellow-Jews also who in God's power freed people from demon-possession, did so through Satan. So they will be judged by their fellow-countrymen.

Lenski: Identical effects prove an identical cause.

3. (:19b) Your Double Standard Judges You
“Consequently they shall be your judges.”

C. (:20) Claim of Dominion by the Arrival of the Kingdom of God – Argument of Prophetic Fulfilment

“But if I cast out demons by the finger of God,
then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Donald Miller: “finger of God” – see **Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Ps. 8:3**

Matthew has “*Spirit of God*” here

Morris: The presence of the kingdom is to be seen, not in good advice nor in pious practices, but in the power that expels the forces of evil.

Lenski: the royal, divine, saving rule of God as King, is present as having arrived for you, and you can see it in the abject defeat of Satan and his demons in every demoniac's deliverance. Jesus means: you should welcome this rule and open your hearts to its grace. Only devilish minds could deny what was so evident and would attempt to oppose that rule.

Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: on **the Kingdom of God has come** - The exorcisms performed by Jesus provided strong evidence that God's Kingdom, long anticipated and hoped for, had at last entered history in a transforming way. In fact, the words and works of Jesus as a whole revealed the fact that the Kingdom of God had actually arrived in the person of Jesus of Nazareth (cf. Jesus' answer to John the Baptist's questions in **Lk 7:22+; Mt 11:5**). Yet, there was still the future time when the purposes of God would be fully realized and consummated, and so the disciples were taught to pray, “*May your Kingdom come soon*” (**Lk 11:2; Matt 6:10**). The Kingdom's nearness and imminence (**Mark 1:14-15+**) called for repentance in preparation for its final realization, when the Son of Man would come in power (**Mark 14:62; Matt 26:64; cf. Luke 21:36; 22:69**). Both the “already” and the “not yet” dimensions of the Kingdom must be affirmed and kept in careful balance to do justice to the present and future dimensions of the Kingdom theme.

Ryle: **The kingdom of God is come upon you.** The argument here appears to be this,—“If these miracles which I work are really worked by the finger of God, and I am clearly proved by them to be one sent from God, then, whether you will allow it or not, the times of Messiah have evidently arrived. The kingdom of God has come down upon you unawares, and these miracles are signs that it is so.”—This argument reduced the enemies of our Lord to a dilemma. Either

they must deny that our Lord cast out devils,—this they could not do;—or else they must admit that their own sons cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub;—this they would not do.—The nature of the argument appears to show that when our Lord spake of “*your sons casting out devils*,” He could not have meant His own disciples.

III. (:21-23) DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN REQUIRES A SUPERIOR SUPERNATURAL POWER

A. (:21-22) Illustration of Protecting a Homestead

1. (:21) Power Protects

“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own homestead, his possessions are undisturbed;”

2. (:22) Superior Power Plunders

“but when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied, and distributes his plunder.”

B. (:23) Invitation to Align with the Superior Power – No Possibility of Neutrality

“He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.”

IV. (:24-26) DOMINION OVER THE REALM OF SATAN MUST BE DIVINELY TRANSFORMATIVE – ATTEMPTS AT MORALITY OR SELF-REFORMATION FAIL MISERABLY

A. (:24) Demonic Spirits Look for a Home = Opportunities to Possess and Afflict

“When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’”

B. (:25) Demonic Spirits Land Where They Find a Void of Supernatural Power

“And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.”

Genuine conversion involves embracing the authority of the kingdom of God; much more than any type of external moral renovation of one’s life

J. Ligon Duncan: What does Paul pray for the Ephesians in **Ephesians 3:14-19**? *“That the Father would grant you power by His Spirit so that Christ would dwell in your hearts by faith.”* That is a picture of the renovation of a life that only comes by the occupation of our hearts by the Lord Jesus Christ and that is by the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and conversion and it is received by faith. But Christ is to dwell in our hearts by faith. This is a picture of a person who has tried to sweep up and clean up his or her life but Christ is not dwelling in that heart.

C. (:26) Demonic Spirits Love to Return in Greater Force to Wreak Greater Havoc

“Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

Geldenhuys: Here the Lord uses the simile of a person from whom the demon has been cast out but who has not let the Spirit of God take possession of his vacated heart – in other words, one

who desires to remain neutral. Such neutrality is, however, impossible – the human heart is inhabited either by Christ or by Satan, and cannot remain empty. The result is that, when the man does not set his life open to the Spirit of God, he practically invites the exorcised spirit to come back. Now he is more helpless under the sway of the Evil One, so that the unclean spirit goes to fetch seven other demons as well, more wicked than himself, to dwell in their victim. And thus the state of that foolish person is worse than before.

MacArthur: Danger of morality - In other words, the person is more infested with the agents of hell when morally reformed than when immoral. What a statement. Listen to what the Lord said in **Matthew 23:15**, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," listen to this, "for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made you make him twice the child of hell than yourselves." Why? Because the proselyte becomes more fanatical for self-righteous works than the teacher, because he sees somehow this...this move from immorality to morality as some elevation of himself and he sees the change and he relishes the change and he gets temporarily sort of cleaned from the pollution of his iniquity and he becomes even more an advocate for that than the old Pharisees who have cultivated their hypocrisy and know the truth of their own wretchedness. . .

It was never the immoral people, by the way, that blasphemed Jesus. You just need to know that. As you go through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you're never going to find the immoral people blaspheming Jesus. It was always the moral ones. It's never the harlots, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the riff-raff, the criminal element. It was the religious people. It was the self-righteous people. Moral people, religious people are...are self-congratulatory, they are self-righteous, they're confident in their own holiness, in their own morality. They are utterly deceived into believing that they have been delivered from the powers of Satan because they live moral lives. And the truth of the matter is they may be more infested with demons than a prostitute or a criminal. Moral people tend to have no vigilance and therefore no protection.

(:27-28) EPILOGUE – HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND OBEY IT

A. (:27) Blessing Directed Towards Human Source of Jesus

*“And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him,
‘Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed.’”*

B. (:28) Blessing Redirected Towards Those Who Obey the Revealed Word of God

*“But He said, ‘On the contrary,
blessed are those who hear the word of God, and observe it.’”*

Donald Miller: Discernment of the meaning of Jesus for men does not lie in any superficial, external approval of his teaching or his human personality. Personal compliments are not in order! (**vs. 28**). No other relationship to him is important, not even that of his mother. This verse should have sufficed to prevent Mariolatry in the Roman Church.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now Jesus is saying that that is the mark, that is the evidence of every heart that has been converted. The heart that has been converted hears the Word of God and shows its loyalty to the Word of God and to the Lord Jesus Christ and then does what the Word says. That's the evidence of conversion that we hear and obey God's Word, that we trust and obey. That we trust and obey is not a way that we earn our way to conversion. It's not the way that we

earn our way into the presence of God. Remember Jesus is saying that conversion is far more than some human attempt at personal, moral, self-reformation. No, it takes Jesus coming in and removing the strong man and taking up residence in our life and giving us a new heart and a new spirit and new life, eternal life, and then we hear and we obey. And so this is the evidence of conversion that Jesus is talking about.

Deffinbaugh: Obedience to Jesus is one of the central themes of the Gospels, one of the fundamental elements of discipleship. The Father said it at the mount of transfiguration: “*This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him*” (**Luke 9:35**). In John’s gospel, the issue of obedience (or of not wanting to obey) is clearly linked with the accusation that Jesus was demon-possessed: “At these words the Jews were again divided. Many of them said, “*He is demon-possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?*” But others said, “*These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?*”” (**John 10:19-21**). The real problem for those who rejected Jesus and who attributed His power to Satan was that of obeying Him. In seeing this as the issue, they were correct. In rejecting Jesus as Messiah, as the Son of God, they were wrong. The woman was wrong, too. She did not interpret the evidence correctly. She saw Jesus as great and His mother as blessed, but she did not see that Jesus was the One to receive and to follow by obeying His commands. How often we view Jesus through the grid of our own needs and desires and our own narrow view of significance.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does Christian sectarianism and denominational quarrels constitute a house divided against itself?
- 2) What encouragement can we take as believers in the power that Jesus exercises over the domain of Satan?
- 3) Where do we see people caught up with efforts at self-reformation and morality that actually hinder them from responding the gospel of God’s grace in Jesus Christ?
- 4) What is the connection between the Epilogue (vv. 27-28) and the preceding section covered here?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: There are only two sides in this warfare: “*Anyone who is not with me is against me, and anyone who does not gather with me scatters*” (v. 23). Our Lord makes this exclusive claim about himself. Jesus puts himself forward as the only way to do the work of God. He basically says a person is either with Him or against him in doing or failing to do God’s work. There are not other options. There is no neutral ground, no Switzerland. The way we know which side we’re on is by whether we gather with him or scatter against him. In other words, do we try to gather people through sharing the good news about Jesus, or do we scatter them by failing to share the good news?

Lenski: Let it be noted that there as elsewhere Jesus speaks of Satan as being the ruler of a kingdom that is composed of all the demons. They operate in this world as a solidly unified force, and all their purposes and their works are wholly evil, opposed to all God's work of grace through Christ. To destroy the works of the devil and to abolish his rule in this world are the mission of Jesus. To deny the existence of Satan, the demons, and their kingdom is one of the wicked means by which Satan seeks to maintain his rule among men, but this deception, too, is doomed.

Steven Cole: A number of years ago, some people wanted to bring Twelve Step groups in my church, and at first I was open to it. I reasoned that the Steps seemed to be in line with Scripture and the program seemed to help a lot of people. Besides, a number of well-known evangelical churches were using them. But then I began reading the literature and I grew increasingly alarmed. It was obvious that the Twelve Steps "worked" no matter who or what you chose as your "Higher Power." I thought, "If it works whether your Higher Power is Jesus or a Buddha idol, then it's obvious that the Higher Power is not the real power." It trivializes Jesus to lump Him with all the other possible Higher Powers, as if it really doesn't matter which one you pick! At that point, I did a U-turn and told the church that I could not endorse those programs.

Here's the point: If we get "help" from any other power than Jesus Christ and His gospel, we have not gotten true and lasting help. You may get a clean and well-ordered house, but you don't have transformation of your soul. You may have a sense of peace and freedom from the troubles that plagued you, but you don't have eternal life. You have a temporarily empty house, whereas the sinner who repents and trusts in Christ has the Holy Spirit as the new permanent occupant (11:13). Even more alarming, you may feel content enough without Christ that you assume that all is well in your soul. Not having a desperate sense of need, you will not flee to the cross to lay hold of the only true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose shed blood is necessary to deliver you from Satan's power. In that sense, your last state is worse than the first. . .

There is a spiritual battle raging with two and only two sides. Clearly, Jesus has authority over Satan and his forces. We are on one side or the other. If you are not decisively on Jesus' side, you are against Him. To join His side, you must believe in Him and follow Him in obedient faith.

MacArthur: He gives three reasons to turn from being against Him, three reasons to stop blaspheming Him.

One, blasphemy against Christ lacks **rationality**. (:17-18)

Secondly, it lacks integrity. It lacks **integrity**. It just isn't honest. (:19)

thirdly, and lastly, it lacks **spirituality**. It lacks spirituality. (:20)

TEXT: Luke 11:29-36

TITLE: RECEPTIVITY TO REVELATION

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (SIGHT - the type of understanding that leads to Obedience) DEPENDS NOT ON GREATER REVELATION (LIGHT) BUT ON THE RIGHT HEART CONDITION

INTRODUCTION: -- the heart of the passage -- **v.28**

"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it"

A rebuke here:

- Serious warning for those who are hearers only
- Tremendous promise for those who both receive and implement God's Word

Context: 11:14-16 Christ had once again revealed His divine power by casting out a demon from a possessed person;

Revelation always demands a response -- you can't be neutral or unaffected

People responded in different ways:

General reaction = amazement -- How could Jesus do this?

- 1) Some attributed His power and authority to Satan –Christ answers this blasphemous charge in **v.17-26**.

Conclusion: the final condition of such people is worse than the first (**v.26b**)

- 2) Others were more guarded in their skepticism and demanded that He perform another indisputable, divine miracle to authenticate His person and His message

Christ responds to this smokescreen for wickedness and unbelief in **v.29-36**.

No evidence of any real spiritual discernment = the type of understanding that leads to obedience

In between in **v. 27-28** He teaches that rubbing shoulders with God is nothing compared to the benefit of obeying God's revelation.

- there is no magical grace communicated simply by spending time in the presence of Christ or under the teaching of God's Word

actually if we are not applying that Word and living it out, our last state is worse than the first

Application: The message of the Bible is really very simple:

"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it"

If you came looking for something complicated or intricate or brand new, I'm afraid you will be disappointed. But the beauty of God's truth is that the same simple message is both shallow enough for a newborn Christian -- a child -- to wade . . . and deep enough for some of us older elephants (who have been Christians a long time) to drown.

The Bible repeats this simple theme many times in many different pictures because we need to hear it:

- 1) Construction: the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount -- the wise man who **builds his house on the rock** instead of the sand is *"the man who hears the Words of Christ and puts them into practice"*

- 2) Agriculture: **the good soil** in the parable of the Sower is that which allows the Word of God to take root, to grow, to produce fruit
- 3) Personal Hygiene: James uses the image of a mirror to represent the Word of God -- The faults exposed by the **mirror** need to be corrected

We want the blessing that comes from obedience -- How do we get it?

BIG IDEA:

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (SIGHT - the type of understanding that leads to Obedience) DEPENDS NOT ON GREATER REVELATION (LIGHT) BUT ON THE RIGHT HEART CONDITION

I. GREATER REVELATION BRINGS GREATER CONDEMNATION (NOT GENUINE SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT) IF YOUR HEART CONDITION IS WRONG (:29-32)

The wicked generation to which Jesus preached made the mistake of assuming that they would naturally embrace the truth if only the amount and quality of the revelation were sufficient -- Please, give me another miraculous sign to make the truth plain

Christ points out that the problem is not with God's Revelation

A. Despite the Attacks of the Ungodly, God's Revelation Cannot be Faulted (:29-30)

“And as the crowds were increasing, He began to say, ‘This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so shall the Son of Man be to this generation.’”

1. The problem is one of spiritual wickedness and ungodliness

This is exactly the point at which humanistic solutions to the problems of this world prove to be so futile.

If the problem is not with God's Revelation, why do people keep criticizing it? You hear the complaints all the time:

- the Bible is impossible to understand
- everyone has his own interpretation, so there is no valid interpret.
- it's full of myths and fairy tales -- like the story of Jonah and the big fish
- it's full of historical and scientific errors

What we need to understand is that:

2. The Attacks of the Ungodly in Finding Fault with God's Revelation are Mere Smokescreens

despite the clear and glorious revelations of Christ in His Messianic power, the people keep demanding more signs

"*sign*" = something that accompanies the Word of God or the spokesman of God to prove its validity and reliability

God granted many gracious signs throughout history:

in the OT most signs are grouped around 3 main time periods:

- a) Exodus -- deliverance from Egypt and journey to promised land;

b) Elijah and Elisha and their conflict with pagan religion

c) time of Daniel during the exile when the supremacy of Yahweh and the faithfulness of Daniel and His companions were vindicated

(God cries out against the hardness of heart of the Jews who refused to believe in the face of such dramatic testimony: **Num.14:11,22; Ps. 78; 95**)

time of Christ and the apostles next great period of signs

Jesus unmasks the hypocritical demands of his day as mere smokescreens for refusing to repent -- v.17 "*He knew their thoughts*"

Knowing they lacked spiritual discernment because of their hard hearts, He basically tosses their request back in their face:

You want a sign? I'll give you a sign all right, but not one that you will like.

B. God's Supreme Revelation in the Resurrected Christ is the Watershed for Blessing or Condemnation -- a sign like that of Jonah

Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites because he appeared there as one sent by God after having been miraculously saved after spending 3 days and 3 nights in the belly of the great fish; So Jesus by His resurrection and His coming again in Judgment will prove conclusively that He has been sent by God as His representative--the Christ, the promised Redeemer.

Those who judge the Word of God will end up being judged by it -- **John 12:47-50**

C. 2 Examples that illustrate the point Jesus is trying to make:

Lesser revelation can bring genuine spiritual discernment where the heart condition is right while greater revelation brings greater condemnation where the heart condition is wrong

Study the contrasts in each example:

a) the contrast in the revelation

b) the contrast in the heart condition and response

1. The Example of the Faith of the Queen of Sheba (:31)

"The Queen of the South shall rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

a) Solomon -- a wise and prosperous king -- combining all of the functions of our 3 branches of govt.: executive, legislative, judicial; his fame had spread abroad -- what a privilege to learn at his feet

one greater than Solomon is here -- a far greater and wiser king

b) What faith on the part of the Queen of Sheba -- making a long and difficult journey from the southern tip of Arabia = the ends of the earth at that time; spared no effort or expense to check out truth for herself

1 Kings 10:1 "*When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relation to the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions.*"

but with a spirit of wanting to embrace the truth rather than seeking to discredit it;

she was able to see the connection between the prosperity of Solomon's kingdom (including his moral standards for justice and righteousness) and the blessing of the Lord

the Jews saw far more in the miracles and teaching of Christ but remained skeptical -- Show me something else

Lenski: The reference to “*wisdom*” is especially pertinent to the scribes whose very profession it was to seek and to dispense the true wisdom of God from his Word.

2. The Example of the Repentance of the Ninevites (:32)

“The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.”

a) Jonah -- a famous prophet and powerful preacher – but certainly not a perfect spokesman or model of God's truth; tainted with nationalistic pride and lacking compassion; unpopular message: judgment coming in 40 days

now one greater than Jonah is here -- the greatest Prophet of all; one with a message of God's judgment sure to fall after 40 years; one with compassion and love to reach out to all the world; one who perfectly models the truth

b) Dramatic, unconditional, total repentance

most unlikely people to respond to God's message (Jonah thought so too)

from the king on down *“blessed are the poor in spirit”* --

fasting, clothing themselves in sackcloth, calling urgently on God to show mercy (*“God be merciful to me a sinner”* -- not the prayer of the proud Pharisee *“Thank God I am not like that wretched sinner over there”*); gave up their sinful ways

Application: When was the last time you repented? of what specific sin?

How effective was that repentance?

Why do we struggle with giving up our sinful habits?

We cannot expect to benefit from more revelation when we are unwilling to apply what we already know

Our lack of faith and our failure to turn away from sin will keep us from understanding and obeying God's truth

The fault is not with God: we need to constantly be exercising repentance and faith

II. THE VERY NATURE OF REVELATION PROVES THAT GOD'S INTENTION IS NOT TO CONCEAL BUT TO ILLUMINE ALL WHO TRULY SEEK ILLUMINATION (:33)

“No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar, nor under a peck-measure, but on the lampstand, in order that those who enter may see the light.”

the purpose of a lamp is to give light to those who are seeking to use it

conscious effort and resources required to light this oil lamp;

obviously if you did not want people to benefit from the illumination you would conserve the effort and the resources

lampstand = place of prominence in order to diffuse the light and maximize its usefulness

the light will only benefit those who choose to come to it; others choose to remain out in the darkness; you might say: "But none can come apart from the ministry of the Holy Spirit" and you would be right; Jesus promised back in v.13 "*God will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him*"

Jesus' intention has not been to conceal the light of his self-revelation. On the contrary, He causes the light to be spread thru His words and works. The problem is not with the lamp, but with the wickedness of the hearts of those who are exposed to the light.

Two Applications:

- 1) Rebuke to the unbelievers who refuse to come to the light even though it is so readily available
- 2) Reminder to believers that our purpose is not to conceal God's revelation, but to openly display it for others to benefit; we are to shine as lights in the world

Ryle: a man's religion is suspect when he is content to go to heaven alone; the Christian who is satisfied to burn his candle in hiding has real problems

III. EXAMINE YOURSELF TO MAKE SURE YOUR HEART CONDITION CAN RECEIVE GOD'S REVELATION WITH SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT (:34-36)

A. Check the Condition of Your Heart Because That Determines How Much of God's Light Can Be Received to Provide Light Within (:34)

"The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness."

cause and effect relationship

1. Statement of the Heart's Function

"the lamp of your body is your eye"

the eye is the organ by means of which the light is taken in and distributed for the service of the entire body

therefore, the function of the eye to the body parallels the function of the lamp to those in the room

Here the eye must be a reference to one's heart -- the core of one's being where you interact with God's revelation

We cannot afford to ignore our heart condition or take it for granted; we should be willing to go to any length to guard the condition of our heart

2. Two Possible Conditions of the Heart -- Examine the cause to see what effect to expect

a. *single* -- without fold, without duplicity, without ulterior motives or divided loyalties -- characterized by faith and repentance -- focused on the reality of Christ

pure devotion to Christ -- David gave God his silver and gold for the building of the temple in singleness of heart (1 Chr.29:17)

one thing I desire; one thing I do; one thing I live for (Ps. 27:4; Lk. 10:42; Philip. 3:13)

Result is complete uninhibited illumination and spiritual discernment

b. *evil, bad* -- not characterized by faith and repentance

full of hypocrisy and ulterior motives

Result is complete darkness; no illumination or spiritual discernment

Note: the amount and quality of the revelation has not changed; but your capacity to receive and understand that revelation so that it benefits you is zero

Morris: The eye is the organ that receives light and Jesus speaks of it as *the lamp of your body*. When the eye is reacting to light in the normal manner, the whole body gets the benefit. A man can perform almost any bodily function when he has good illumination. But if his eyes are impaired so that he cannot make use of the light, almost every function is impaired.

B. Check How Much Light You Have Within Because That is An Indication of the Condition of Your Heart Which Determines How Much Light You Can Receive from the Outside (:35-36)

“Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.”

Keep Checking Your Heart's Condition by Checking Your Level of Spiritual Discernment (:35-36)

you can also examine the effect to determine which heart condition caused it

1. Darkness (:35)

(the danger is that if your inner attitude is wrong, your heart will become increasingly hardened against the light of God's revelation)

Or more likely, the danger is that you are self-deceived and while you have been thinking all along (like the Pharisees) that you have the light within you, upon closer examination based on the teachings of Christ and based on inward spirituality rather than external legalism, you discover that you are really spiritually dead

2. Full Discernment (:36)

difficult verse -- *“If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, then your heart condition must be right and you will be able to receive more light from the lamp of God's revelation so that you will continue to be full of light”*

CONCLUSION: Relationship between Faith and Repentance

really flip sides of the same coin; wherever you have one, you must have the other;
I like the picture here -- speaks of only 1 eye -- combining faith and repentance -- not 2 separate eyes

Col.2:6 "*As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him*"

"Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of smokescreens or excuses do you see people using to try to avoid their accountability to the message of the gospel?
- 2) Is it always wrong to provide more evidence to those who ask for it?
- 3) In what ways can we cause the light within us to shine more brightly to those around us?
- 4) How can you tell whether your eye of spiritual receptivity is clear and healthy or not?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuys: Just as no normal person will light a lamp and then cover it up so that it can shed no light, just so Jesus' refusal to give the Jews the sign asked for does not mean that He wishes to hide the light of His self-revelation, the light of the Gospel. On the contrary, He causes the light to be spread in full glory through His words and works, and especially with His resurrection and transfiguration the light will radiate strongly. The reason why the hostile, unbelieving Jews still live in darkness and do not see and accept Him as the Messiah is not to be attributed to a concealment of the light of His revelation of salvation, but is (as is taught in the subsequent verses) to be imputed to the wickedness of their own hearts.

Lenski: The points are these: wicked Gentiles – to whom a strange prophet is sent from a foreign land – one who was miraculously rescued from a terrible death by God's hand – who brought nothing but the dire threatenings of the law – yet these Gentiles believe that prophet – repent by fasting in sackcloth and ashes – desist from sin and amend their ways. On the other hand, these Jews – who in addition to all their other prophets now have the Messiah himself – whom God would glorify by the resurrection from the dead – who came with the gospel and its consummation in his own resurrection – and these Jews spurn it all.

Steven Cole: How to Respond to God's Word

As a philosophy major in college, one of the major fallacies that I often observed among philosophers was the assumption that all we need is enough evidence plus human reason in order to arrive at the truth. When it came to the existence of God, most philosophy professors delighted to show us students

that we simply did not have enough evidence to prove it and we never could have such evidence. Thus at best we could be logical agnostics or we could abandon logic and take a leap of faith. But we could not be reasonable believers in God because there is insufficient evidence.

The problem with the assumption that evidence and reason are sufficient to arrive at the truth is that it ignores the need for God's revelation to inform human reason and it ignores the inability of fallen human reason to grasp divine revelation. Because of sin, the human intellect is blinded to the light of God's revelation in Christ and the gospel (**2 Cor. 4:4**). Just as a blind man can look at the sun and not see a thing, so fallen people lack the capacity of understanding and apprehending spiritual truth in and of themselves (**1 Cor. 2:14**). Thus a fallen sinner can look at all the evidence and logic in the world and yet not grasp the truth of the gospel unless God opens his eyes and grants him repentance and faith to turn from his sin and believe in Christ. . .

The Jews were demanding a sign from Jesus to test Him (**11:16**), but Jesus confronted them with their wickedness in seeking for a sign (**11:29**). Christ, who knows the hearts of all men (**11:17**), knew that a hundred miraculous signs would not be sufficient for these scoffers. They had just seen Him cast the demon out of a man who could not speak so that he became able to speak (**11:14**). They had seen Him raise the paralytic (**5:17-26**), heal the man with the withered hand (**6:6-11**), and do many other miracles, but none of these signs had brought them to believe in Him.

What was their sin in seeking for a sign? Their sin was their rebellious, unrepentant hearts. They were curious to see Jesus perform miracles, but they were not contrite about their sins. They wanted to watch a good show, but they would have been quick to explain away any signs that Jesus performed because they were not willing to follow Him. In other words, their problem was not a lack of evidence. Their problem was a lack of repentance. Thus Jesus tells them that no sign will be given to them except the sign of Jonah.

J. Ligon Duncan: And if you wanted to hang this message on three words you could hang it on these words: **repentance, wisdom, and Gospel**, because we're going to look at repentance through the story of Jonah, we're going to look at wisdom through the story of the queen of the South and Solomon, and we're going to look at the Gospel through not only the story of the lamp, but what Jesus says about this generation only getting one sign. And you remember what that sign was? The sign of Jonah. And once we're done with the sermon I want you to see how the sign of Jonah is directly related to the Gospel. . .

Jesus is saying, "Don't play games with God. Make sure your eyes see Jesus and the Gospel because it's by that light and that light alone that your body is enlightened. Otherwise, there will be nothing but darkness in you, because apart from Me, you are still dead in trespasses and sins and your eyes are blind. You can walk around in noon-day sun and see nothing, not because the sun is not bright but because your eyes are darkened. They're on the wrong thing. They're diseased, they're closed, they're dead." The sun is bright. Jesus is shining. But unless your eyes are enlightened by that lamp, that light, Jesus Christ, you have no hope.

MacArthur: He is saying to these Jewish leaders: It's not a question of **light**; it's a question of **sight**. Light is everywhere. It's the sight that is the issue. The presence of light, unmistakable, the problem is sight. It is this very simple message that our Lord conveys here to us today. . .

Now remember, they considered themselves the people of the utmost spiritual insight, didn't they? They considered themselves to have the greatest spiritual perception. They considered themselves, according to Paul in Romans chapter 2, to be light to the blind. They considered

themselves to be the spiritual guides, the people who had the knowledge of the law of God, the people who knew the true and living God, the people who knew the will of God and the way of God and the Word of God. And they themselves believed to be themselves to be a light to the blind. And so the conclusion of the leaders and the people who followed these leaders is that we don't have enough light to conclude that You're from God. So if You want us to conclude other than what we've concluded, You better do a sign that is distinctively from heaven because we don't have enough light. That was the issue.

They were blind willfully because they hated His message. They hated the indictment of their sin and hypocrisy and false religion and self-righteousness. They hate... They hated the idea that He called on them to acknowledge themselves as poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed, sinners under the judgment of God, headed for eternal punishment, who needed to repent and be saved. They hated that message. And so it skewed their ability to see the truth. You remember back in **Luke 4** when Jesus went to His own synagogue. He preached one sermon and told those self-righteous people in His own town that He had grown up with that they were not who they thought they were. They were not right with God. They were alienated from God. They were poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed, who needed to be saved, who needed to repent; and they tried to kill Him after one sermon. They were blind, and they were willfully blind. . .

From the presence of light to the problem of sight, He then moves to the pretense of sight, the pretense of sight. This is amazing, **verse 35**. He says, "*Then watch out, watch out that the light in you may not be darkness.*" Well, He knew what their response was going to be: What are You talking about that we're blind? What are You talking about? They saw themselves as the most sighted of all. They saw themselves as the ones who understood all truth. And He says, "You better watch out," *skope* in the Greek, scope it out; pay attention to it; be concerned about it. The light in you may in fact be what? Darkness. The world is full of these people, isn't it? Every time you hear some Eastern mystic announce that he has reached enlightenment, you can be sure that the light he thinks is in him is actually what? Darkness. Every time you hear some liberal theologian deny some truth of Scripture because he's come to some profound, historic understanding and he's been lifted above the errors of the Bible, you know what he thinks is light is actually darkness. Every false religion, every form of heresy, every system in the world apart from the true gospel of Jesus Christ is nothing but another form of darkness. But the sad reality of it is the people think it's light. There are people who think Jewish kabala is light. It's darkness. There are people who think that Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses have the light. It's darkness. And Jesus is saying to these Jewish leaders, You better be careful, you better watch out that the light you think is in you is not in fact darkness.

TEXT: Luke 11:37-54

TITLE: EXPOSING THE RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY OF THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES

BIG IDEA:

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY FOCUSES ON EXTERNAL FORMALISM AT THE EXPENSE OF INTERNAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus reserved his sharpest criticism for the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders of His day. He was not only concerned that their emphasis on religious formalism and external practices had caused them to miss the heart of God's instruction regarding internal righteousness, but that they were leading others down this legalistic path as well. Not only were they ignorant of God's truth but they were hiding God's truth from the multitudes. While claiming to be experts in God's law, they had substituted their own lifeless man-made religion for the power and vitality of truly knowing God.

J. Ligon Duncan: People in Jesus' day would have revered the **Pharisees**. They were religious leaders, lay leaders of synagogues throughout the land who were calling Jewish people back to the Bible, to live by the Book, to not cave in to the cultural corruption of the occupying Romans the way the Sadducees were caving in at every turn and giving cultural ground. And so the people revered the Pharisees as among the holiest of all those in Israel.

And the **lawyers** in this passage, who are not lawyers in the sense of attorneys practicing law for their vocation, they are law experts — they are scribes in one place called in this passage — that is, people who were specifically devoted to the recording and teaching of the law. They were not identical to the Pharisees but they were associated with the Pharisees and part of what we might call the conservative party in Judaism in Jesus' day. These people were highly thought of.

(:37) PROLOGUE – OPPORTUNITY TO CONFRONT HYPOCRISY – LUNCH AT THE HOME OF A PHARISEE

“Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table.”

This sharp critique takes place on the home turf of this Pharisee who had invited Jesus to join him and a bunch of his respected religious colleagues for lunch; seems like a relaxed setting but the atmosphere is anything but relaxed; you could cut the tension with a knife

I. (:38--41) TENSE EXCHANGE -- EXTERNAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES CANNOT COMPENSATE FOR INTERNAL SPIRITUAL DEFICIENCIES

A. (:38) Supposed Offense – Regarding External Religious Observances

“And when the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.”

Donald Miller: The handwashing had nothing to do with hygienic cleanliness, but was a Pharisaic prescription to remove the moral uncleanness they felt was acquired by contact with

unholy people and things. It had grown out of tradition, and was not prescribed by the Law. It was one of many indications that official piety had degenerated into concern with appearances, rather than with reality.

MacArthur: Their religion was purely external. And what happens is this: In order to live out your religion and put on a convincing show, you elaborate the external. So you expand the emblems; you expand the functions; you expand the ceremonies; you expand the rituals; you proliferate the prescriptions. That's exactly what the Jews had done, way beyond the Old Testament. That's what the Roman Catholics, the Greek Orthodox have done, way beyond what the New Testament teaches, adding almost endless rituals, routines, ceremonies, regulations, because there's nothing on the inside but you can create a bigger illusion that way.

B. (:39) Sharp Rebuke – Regarding Internal Depravity

“But the Lord said to him, ‘Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.’”

C. (:40) Superficial External Focus Misses God’s Intention Regarding Internal Righteousness

“You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?”

D. (:41) Spiritual Lesson Regarding Cleanliness

“But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.”

Donald Miller: The best evidence of a true heart toward God is to share one’s goods with a needy neighbor. This will cleanse the life more than concern with religious ceremonies (**vs. 41**).

Morris: it seems that Jesus is stressing the importance of the inward over against the outward, and it is better to take the words as referring to the importance of a right inward state when we give alms. We must give our hearts and not just make an outward gesture.

Geldenhuis: Instead of concentrating all attention upon the outward ceremonial cleansing of cups and platters and other articles of use, they should rather exercise true love, and share their possessions with other people who need them. The simile in the first place refers to the distribution of the contents of cups or plates, but also means that all possessions of a person should be placed at the disposal of God in true charitable service for our fellow-men. When a man’s inner life is so purified that he acts in this manner, he will be “clean”, together with everything he possesses – he will stand in the right relationship to God without all kinds of ceremonial purifications.

II. (:42-52) SEVERE CONDEMNATION - 6 WOES PRONOUNCED AGAINST THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS, HYPOCRITICAL PHARISEES AND LAWYERS

A. (:42-44) 3 Woes Pronounced Against the Pharisees

1. (:42) Substituting the Lesser for the Greater - Wrong Priorities

*“But **woe to you** Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”*

Bruce Hurt: *Woe* (alas) (*ouai* pronounced "oo-ah'ee," an eerie, ominous foreboding sound some

say is like the cry of an eagle) is an onomatopoeic word (an imitation of the sound) which serves as an interjection expressing a cry of intense distress, displeasure or horror. Jesus uses it to convey a warning of impending judgment and disaster on the Pharisees.

Donald Miller: The tithe was intended as an acknowledgment of God's provision and an offering of love. Woe on a religion which had become a substitute for justice and the love of God – a means of escaping the full demands of obedience to God by the scrupulous fulfillment of a part of the letter of the law (**vs. 42; Micah 6:8**).

2. (:43) Self-Promotion

“Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the front seats in the synagogues, and the respectful greetings in the market places.

3. (:44) Hidden Sources of Death and Defilement

“Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.”

Morris: There is irony in the comparison of the religious Pharisees, who thought so well of themselves, to these unsuspected sources of defilement. Men who walked over unmarked graves became ceremonially unclean. And men who walked in the teaching and ways of the Pharisees became morally unclean.

Geldenhuys: According to **Numbers xix. 16** everyone who touches a grave in the open is for seven days ceremonially unclean. For this reason the Jews as far as possible tried to mark all graves clearly by whitewashing them. Now Jesus says that the Pharisees are like graves not clearly marked; and just as people unconsciously walk over such graves and thus become ceremonially unclean, the Jews without realizing it become unclean in their imitation of the Pharisees through the pernicious influence of those members of the party who in their hypocrisy profess to be the pious ones in Israel while in reality they are spiritually unclean.

Steven Cole: The application is that the sin of legalism contaminates unsuspecting people. It turns off unbelievers and keeps them from the truth of the gospel, because they can see the hypocrisy of the legalists. It contaminates young believers, who are mistakenly taught that if they do certain things and do not do other things, they will grow in holiness and be pleasing to God. But invariably, the things that they are told to do and not do are not the important issues of the Bible, such as the love of God and neighbor (as summed up in the Ten Commandments). Rather, they are petty things, often things that Scripture does not directly command.

B. (:45-52) 3 Woes Pronounced Against the Lawyers

1. (:45-46) Taskmasters Enforcing Hypocritical, Burdensome Regulations

*“And one of the lawyers said to Him in reply,
‘Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.’*

But He said, ‘Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.’”

Steven Cole: Legalism burdens people with peripheral issues and rules. Biblical holiness frees people by pointing them to the beauty of God's holiness and love. As **1 John 5:3** states, “*This is*

the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”
When we obey out of a heart of love for God, even though it is not always easy, it will always result in great joy and blessing.

2. (:47-51) Killers of God’s Messengers

“Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs.

For this reason also the wisdom of God said, 'I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute, in order that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.'“

Steven Cole: the underlying problem is that though outwardly they act as if they honor the prophets, inwardly they do not repent of the very sins which the prophets condemned.

3. (:52) Concealers of God’s Truth

“Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered.”

Morris: Their methods were such that people could not get at the essential meaning of God’s word. Instead of opening up the treasures of knowledge, the lawyers closed them fast. They turned the Bible into a book of obscurities, a bundles of riddles. Only the experts could understand it. And the experts themselves were so pleased and preoccupied with the mysteries they had manufactured that they missed the wonderful thing that God was saying. They neither entered themselves nor allowed others to enter.

MacArthur: You have no spiritual power (:45-46) because you have no spiritual life (:47-51). You have no life — listen to this — because you have no truth (:52). You took the key of knowledge and you threw it away. . .

He says, you're no different, you're embellishing the tombs of the prophets is a kind of hypocrisy that makes you as guilty as your fathers. If you really wanted to show honor to the prophets, you'd obey the message the prophets gave, which they still rejected the message of true heart righteousness. And if you really wanted to honor the prophets, you would honor the one of whom the prophets spoke who stands right here. So they pretend to honor God's prophets. They pretend to be righteous, to be holier than the generations of the past. But they were no different.

They thirsted for the blood of the greatest prophet ever. And in **verse 31 of Matthew 23** Jesus says directly to them, "*You are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the guilt of your fathers.*" You're in the same line, nothing changed. The history of Israel is just horribly sad. Apostates through the Old Testament all the way, apostates in the New, pretending to honor the prophets while not believing their message nor believing on the One they predicted would come. They were so spiritually blind, they were so spiritually lifeless. That's the word, they didn't have any spiritual life and that's why they couldn't know who was in their midst, they were so dead. It was as if a live person walked into a mortuary amidst a whole group of corpses.

They couldn't connect. There's no way corpses would know who was there. They possessed no spiritual life, therefore no spiritual perception. And so they wanted to kill the prophet of all prophets.

(:53-54) EPILOGUE – OPPOSITION TO JESUS GROWS

“And when He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, plotting against Him, to catch Him in something He might say.”

Morris: The word rendered *catch at* is *thereusai*, which is used of hunting wild beasts. It is a vivid word for intense opposition.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we tell if we are raising our kids within a legalistic framework?
- 2) How do we recognize legalism in our church and in our Christian circles?
- 3) Where can we do a better job of pursuing justice towards fellow men and love for God?
- 4) How can Jesus hold His present generation accountable for sins of past generations?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

J C Ryle: Let us notice in this passage the foolishness which accompanies hypocrisy in religion. We are told that the Pharisee with whom our Lord dined marvelled that our Lord “had not first washed before dinner.” He thought, like most of his order, that there was something unholy in not doing it, and that the neglect of it was a sign of moral impurity. Our Lord points out the absurdity of attaching such importance to the mere cleansing of the body, while the cleansing of the heart is overlooked. He reminds His host that God looks at the inward part of us, the hidden man of the heart, far more than at our skins. And He asks the searching question, “**Did not He that made that which is without, make that which is within also?**” The same God who formed our poor dying bodies, is the God who gave us a heart and soul. For ever let us bear in mind that the state of our hearts is the principal thing that demands our attention, if we would know what we are in religion. Bodily washings, and fastings, and gestures, and postures, and self-imposed mortifications of the flesh, are all utterly useless if the heart is wrong. External devoutness of conduct, a grave face, and a bowed head, and a solemn countenance, and a loud amen, are all abominable in God’s sight, so long as our hearts are not washed from their wickedness, and renewed by the Holy Ghost. Let this caution never be forgotten. The idea that men can be devout before they are converted, is a grand delusion of the devil, and one against which we all need to be on our guard. There are two Scriptures which are very weighty on this subject. In one it is written, “*Out of the heart are the issues of life.*” (**Prov. 4:23.**) In the other it is written, “*Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh at the heart.*” (**1 Sam. 14:7.**) There is a question which we should always ask ourselves in drawing near to God, whether in public or private. We should say to ourselves, “Where is my heart?”

Lenski: This was the only interruption [vs. 45], the only objection offered. Why did the entire company not at once break up in violent turmoil? Why did they allow Jesus to go on making each crushing statement stronger than the preceding one? We know only one answer: the power of Jesus' personality, the impressiveness of his presence. All these woes were delivered, not in heat, but in cold, deliberate, absolutely masterful calmness. The *oti* states the reason for each woe which is full, complete, yet brief, with not one unguarded word, with not one overstatement, each word being driven home with unerring aim. I do not think that much was eaten at that meal; Jesus was serving food for the conscience.

Steven Cole: Why Jesus Hates Legalism

Legalism is an attempt to gain favor with God or to impress our fellow man by doing certain things (or avoiding other things), without regard to the condition of our hearts before God. At the root of legalism is the sin of pride, because the legalist thinks that he is able to commend himself to God by his own good deeds. Invariably, he is only looking at externals, not at his heart. Also, the legalist's pride motivates him to exalt himself in the sight of others by his outward behavior, again neglecting to see the corruption of his own heart. Thus legalism denies human depravity and exalts human ability. As such, it is opposed to the gospel of God's grace. That's why both Jesus and Paul clashed with the legalists.

Jesus hates legalism because it does not deal with the condition of our hearts before God.

Christianity is primarily a matter of the heart. Everything flows from a heart relationship with God, who transforms our hearts when He regenerates us. The Jewish religious leaders seemingly were seeking after God, but in reality they were self-seeking. They didn't see themselves as sinners in need of a Savior. They saw themselves as good people because they kept the Law. But in reality, they didn't keep the Law because they didn't apply it on the heart level. Thus, Jesus in effect said that if they would be as careful about clean hearts as they were about clean hands, then they would be what they ought to be.

The structure of our text is that in **11:37-41** we have the setting and overall theme, that *legalism puts the emphasis on the external to the neglect of the internal*. Then, in **11:42-44** Jesus pronounces three woes on the Pharisees in which He sets forth some of the specific problems with legalism. At this point, an expert in the Jewish law speaks up in self-defense, pointing out that Jesus' remarks not only condemn the Pharisees; they also insult the lawyers. Rather than apologizing, Jesus launches into a series of three more woes on the lawyers (**11:46-52**). The result was not repentance, but rather increased hostility on the part of the Pharisees and lawyers in an attempt to trap Jesus in something He might say (**11:53-54**).

J. Ligon Duncan: this issue of religious hypocrisy is one that is alive and well in our own day, two thousand years after Jesus had this very awkward dinner conversation.

Now we all have it in different ways, but it's important for us this morning, before we even come to the Lord's Table to examine our hearts and ask this — Do we care more about looking religious or looking Christian than we do about having a living relationship with a living God by faith in Jesus Christ? Does our love for God and our trust in Jesus Christ animate our lives above everything else or is the heartbeat of our life found in something else other than God and the Gospel and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and we just like to have that as a part of our lives? We have a little box over here where Jesus and the Gospel and the church fit in our lives. We want it

to be a part of our lives but it's not the heartbeat of our lives.

MacArthur: So barely a lifetime, a very short lifetime from the murder of Jesus came the days of vengeance. It all started in May of 66. Radical zealots, a party within Judaism who hated the Romans...They were killers and terrorists who went around stabbing Romans. They did deeds of violence and rebellion. They finally broke in open revolt in May of 66. Rome struck back by starting a bloody butchery in Galilee. They swept into Galilee and started massacring the Jews there. This went on for some time and shortly before the full moon in the spring of 70 A.D., the great Roman general Titus marched with an enormous army outside of Jerusalem, something in excess of eighty thousand men. Jerusalem was swarming with people at the time because it was Passover. The Romans moved into their camps outside the city and called for a surrender. They put on a siege. The Jews laughed at the Romans. Siege machines were then brought in. They threw hundred-pound stones, massive stones at the city, battering rams smashed at the gates and the walls, and eventually the Romans broke through the wall and called again for surrender and the Jews said no. The battle began again and the death toll was absolutely enormous. It's hard to know exactly how many died. There are some estimates as high as a million; from in the hundreds of thousands to a million. Tree after tree was cut down to make crosses, ramps, scaling ladders, campfires. The land was completely raped of trees in this tremendous siege. The Romans sealed off the city with a dirt mound all around it and killed everybody who came out by crucifying them so that they crucified thousands of them. The historians said an unbearable stench from the dead bodies thrown over the wall piled outside and one estimate is 100 thousand dead bodies were pitched over the wall because of their corruption and their stench. Famine resulted. Whole families died daily. Finally in August of 70 A.D. the temple itself was destroyed. The Roman soldiers erected their banners in the holy place and sacrificed to their idols there. They took about 100 thousand prisoners, took out about 100 thousand corpses. This was divine judgment. One writer says, "That generation that filled up the final measure of iniquity was the one to reap the full consequences of sin." And so Jesus says, it's coming. Apostate Judaism at this point, at this level, is not only no different than the past, it is worse and you've demonstrated it by the fact that you're plotting to kill Me, and you will kill Me and all the preachers and apostles of the gospel. You are headed for judgment more terrible than anything you've known historically. And, of course, beyond that when they died they would be cast into eternal hell as well.

Barclay: Two things stand out about the Pharisees and for these two things Jesus condemned them.

(i) They concentrated on externals. So long as the externals of religion were carried out that was all that mattered. Their hearts might be as black as hell; they might be utterly lacking in charity and even in justice; but so long as they went through the correct motions at the correct time they considered themselves good in the eyes of God.

A man may be regular in his church attendance; he may be a diligent student of his Bible; he may be a generous giver to the church; but if in his heart there are thoughts of pride and of contempt, if he has no charity in his dealings with his fellow men in the life of the everyday, if he is unjust to his subordinates or dishonest to his employer, he is not a Christian man. **No man is a Christian when he meticulously observes the conventions of religion and forgets the realities.**

(ii) They concentrated on details. Compared with love and kindness, justice and generosity, the washing of hands and the giving of tithes with mathematical accuracy were unimportant details.

TEXT: Luke 12:1-12

TITLE: CONFIDENCE AND INTEGRITY IN CONFESSING CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

AVOID HYPOCRISY IN BOLDLY CONFESSING CHRIST IN THE FACE OF PERSECUTION IN LIGHT OF FUTURE JUDGMENT

INTRODUCTION:

The pressure is being ramped up not only against Christ but also against His disciples. Jesus takes this opportunity to build up the courage and boldness of the disciples so that they will maintain their testimony and life of integrity and not fall into the trap of hypocrisy. They need to fear God rather than man and be assured of His care for them. The Holy Spirit will strengthen them and give them the ability to respond when the threat of physical danger presents itself. Confessing Christ will be the key point of divide on the Day of Judgment.

(:1a) PRELUDE - SETTING

A. Hostility Brewing

“Under these circumstances,”

Direct connection to previous section in chapter 11 -- the extreme hostility that had developed after Jesus had so openly exposed the hypocrisy of the Jewish religious leaders – specifically the Pharisees and scribes (lawyers)

B. Crowd Milling About

“after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another,”

MacArthur: As we come to chapter 12, the people are becoming fixed in their resentment and resistance and animosity and rejection of Jesus. And, in fact, the...the character of the crowd has changed. In the early years of His ministry they were really interested, they were peaked, they were curious, they were hungry, they were excited, they were enthusiastic, they were coming off the ministry of John the Baptist, they were eager for the kingdom, they were eager to find out if He was the Messiah. They were stunned and shocked by the amazing power that He exhibited in all of His thousands of miracles which He did day by day. He was very attractive to them. They were thinking maybe He could be the Messiah. But as the months went on, that began to change. And by the time we come into chapter 12, most of the crowd has sided with the Pharisees and the Sadducees and His enemies. Most of the crowd is rooted and dug in and entrenched in their false religion and they see Jesus now as the enemy. And so, from here on out there's a tone in Jesus' ministry of warning and judgment that has escalated. For most, the decision has been made and Jesus now warns them of the coming judgment, not so much the promises of coming blessing, although they will come, but the warnings of judgment that fall on those who reject Him.

Deffinbaugh: I think that this story helps us to understand how the disciples must have felt as they realized that they were encircled by a crowd of thousands, and not, it would seem, a very friendly crowd. Luke tells us that this large crowd was trampling on one another. Crowds

sometimes tend to turn to a hostile group. We know of riots which have broken out at various sports events, where many were hurt. This unruly crowd must have given the disciples a rather uncomfortable feeling. Jesus had just attacked the religious leaders, the leaders whom they regarded as holy, the leaders they had respected. Was the crowd threatening to become hostile?

C. Disciples Singled Out

“He began saying to His disciples first of all,”

Geldenhuys: While the Pharisees and scribes were busy outside the house of the Pharisee (**xi. 37**) asking Jesus all kinds of catch-questions, an exceptionally great multitude gathered there in much excitement. A spirit of hostility to Jesus probably prevailed among the major portion of the multitude owing to the influence of the enraged Pharisees and scribes. As a result, the Saviour in the long connected oration of **verses 1-59** addresses Himself mostly to His disciples, although in the hearing of the multitude.

J. Ligon Duncan: What in the world was so important to Jesus that He didn't address that vast multitude but first turned to His disciples and said something?

I. (:1B-3) LIVE A LIFE OF INTEGRITY RATHER THAN HYPOCRISY

A. (:1b) Warning Against Hypocrisy

“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

Morris: The metaphor would have been more obvious then than now, for people tended to make their own bread and everyone would be familiar with the way a little yeast slowly transforms a large lump of dough. Leaven speaks of a penetration that is slow, insidious and constant. In this case the leaven is hypocrisy. The practice of saying one thing and doing another eats at the moral life like a canker.

Steven Cole: The Greek word for hypocrisy referred to a mask used in acting. It means to lead people to believe that you are something you are not. The hypocrite's emphasis is on how others see him, not on how God sees him. Thus his focus is on the outward person, not on the heart. Jesus calls it leaven or yeast because it is subtle and insidious. Just as a small pinch of yeast will spread until it puffs up a large lump of dough, so a small amount of hypocrisy tolerated in our lives will spread until it contaminates us totally.

Bruce Hurt: The idea is to pretend, to act as something one is not and so to act deceitfully, pretending to manifest traits like piety and love. It means to create a public impression that is at odds with one's real purposes or motivations, and thus is characterized by play-acting, pretense or outward show. It means to give an impression of having certain purposes or motivations, while in reality having quite different ones. The first century Pharisees had mastered the art of "play acting," and took the practice of hypocrisy to a new level! Sadly, their "offspring" still exist in the Church and among those who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ

B. (:2-3) Exposure of Hypocrisy on Judgment Day

1. (:2) Open Revelation of Everything Hidden

“But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.”

2. (:3) Open Proclamation of Everything Spoken

“Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

Donald Miller: reminder that at the Day of Judgment all the secrets of the heart will be publicly placarded before *“the eyes of him with whom we have to do”* (vss. 2-3; Heb. 4:13).

Anyabwile: One day our lives will be shown on the big screen of God’s judgment. It will be a split screen. On one side will be the life we showed the world. On the other side will be the life we tried to hide. If they’re the same, then we have integrity. We are true disciples – true to God, true to self, and true to others. But if the two screens show different pictures, then we will be condemned as hypocrites. It will be shouted from the rooftop of heaven.

Darrell L. Bock: This figure of speech describes our most private practices. This is a classic reversal theme: the most private of acts and utterances become the most public. It is this exposure that makes hypocrisy useless in the long run and the heroic deed done in private an object of admiration eventually. The contrasts are strong: darkness versus light and private whispering versus public preaching.

II. (:4-5) FEAR THE ULTIMATE JUDGE RATHER THAN MEN WHO CAN ONLY HARM YOU PHYSICALLY

A. (:4) Men Have Limited Potential to Harm You In This Life

“And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.”

B. (:5) God Has Ultimate Ability to Cast Into Hell Forever

*“But I will warn you whom to fear:
fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell;
yes, I tell you, fear Him!”*

Morris: We much prefer to stress the love of God. But, while there is a sense in which perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:18), there is another in which fear is quite compatible with love. This kind of fear is continually regarded in the Bible as a necessary ingredient in right living. It is an attitude compounded of a recognition of the greatness and the righteousness of God on the one hand and our readiness to sin on the other. Fear of this kind guards against presumption and must find its place in a right faith.

III. (:6-7) DO NOT FEAR MEN BECAUSE GOD CARES FOR YOU

A. (:6) God Cares for the Least Significant

*“Are not five sparrows sold for two cents?
And yet not one of them is forgotten before God.”*

B. (:7a) God Knows All About You

“Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

William Barclay: God's care is the most detailed of all. To God we are never lost in the crowd. Matthew says, "*Are not two sparrows sold for 1/4 pence ?*" (**Matthew 10:29**.) Here Luke says, "*Are not five sparrows sold for 1/2 pence ?*" If you were prepared to spend 1/2 pence you got not four, but five sparrows. One was flung into the bargain as having no value at all. Not even the sparrow on which men set not a 1/4 pence value is forgotten before God. The very hairs of our head are numbered. It has been computed that a blonde person has about 145,000 hairs; a dark-haired person, 120,000; and a person with red hair, 90,000! The Jews were so impressed with the individual care of God that they said that every blade of grass had its guardian angel. None of us needs to fear for each can say, "God cares for me."

C. (:7b) God Values You

"Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Morris: God takes notice of the commonest and cheapest of birds. Much more, then, will He be concerned for men.

MacArthur: 3 Reasons to Fear God:

- Fear God because He will uncover what is hidden
- He will punish the hypocrites in hell forever
- He knows everything.

IV. (:8-12) DO NOT FEAR MEN BUT TESTIFY BOLDLY IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION

A. (:8-9) Contrast Between Confessing and Denying Christ

1. (:8) Confessing Christ

"And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God;"

Steven Cole: *To confess Christ means to proclaim to others the fact that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord and that our salvation is all from Him and not at all from us.* Other Scriptures show that we do this initially through baptism, where we publicly confess that Jesus Christ is our Savior and Lord (**Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16**; examples in Acts, e.g., **16:33**). Then, through both our lives and our words, we openly acknowledge that we are followers of Jesus Christ and that He has saved us by His grace, apart from anything we have done. If Jesus Christ has truly saved you, then you will be a different person. You will be growing in righteousness, love, and truth. You will judge and confess your sins. When opportunities come up to tell others of the great love and mercy of the Savior, you will do it because of your gratitude to Him for saving you.

MacArthur: So what you're doing when you confess Jesus as Lord is you're confessing the truth that He is in fact the absolute and utter sovereign of the universe and has every right to be the sovereign over your life, and particularly because you are so desperately hopeless in running it yourself. And left to yourself, you'll run your life right into hell. "Lord" means sovereign ruler.

2. (:9) Denying Christ

"but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

Geldenhuys: They must be specially on their guard against the hypocrisy of denying Jesus in word or deed, because those who deny Him, by refusing to acknowledge that He is the Messiah

and that they are His followers, will at the Final Judgment also be denied by Him, through His disowning of any bond of true communion between them and Him.

Deffinbaugh: Why would our Lord teach His disciples not to be hypocritical by referring to the requirements God has for man's salvation? Very simply. How can the disciples call upon men to publicly profess their faith in Christ for salvation if they are, at the same time, trying to conceal their own faith? In times of persecution, such as the early days of the church, a decision to trust in Christ was most unpopular, and could lead to persecution by some and rejection by one's family. The disciples must not waver in their boldness, for they must set an example for those who would come to faith.

B. (:10) Contrast Between Blaspheming Against Christ vs. Blaspheming Against the Holy Spirit

“And everyone who will speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him.”

Donald Miller: The unforgiveable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is somehow related to ascribing Jesus' works to demonic powers (**11:15; Matt. 12:24-32**). This is more than a personal affront. It is a state of spiritual stupor which confuses the Spirit of God with the Devil.

MacArthur: Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit has nothing to do with rejecting your supposed claim to a...tongues as a gift from the Spirit, or a word from the Lord, or a vision or a prophecy. That's another issue all together. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is rejecting His revelation as to the truth of Jesus Christ. And if you reject the revelation the Spirit has given us, if you reject the Scripture, if you reject the external record of the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and there were some people who not only had heard the teaching but had seen Christ and seen the miracles both done by Christ and the apostles, if you reject that revelation of the Spirit to the truth of Christ and the gospel, you can't be saved. You've just insulted or blasphemed the Holy Spirit. That's not possible to be forgiven if it's a final rejection of that truth. You can never be saved; no one can ever be saved who doesn't believe the testimony of the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ, right? You can't be saved unless you believe the truth about Christ. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of Christ." As long as you reject the testimony of the Spirit to Jesus Christ, you are unforgivable.

C. (:11-12) Contrast Between Anxiety vs. Confidence When Facing Persecution

“And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we prepare ourselves to face persecution with boldness and confidence?
- 2) Where are we tempted to be hypocritical in our confession of Christ?

- 3) What are some of the pressures that drive us to fear men rather than God?
- 4) How would you describe the degree to which God values you?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuys: Nothing is so injurious to a man's spiritual life as hypocrisy. And why should we play the hypocrite seeing that it does not profit us in any way to do so? But, above all, how could we dissemble whilst knowing that we are thereby being disloyal to our Master? There is no reason for dissembling, for in our heavenly Father who cares for us (**verses 6, 7**), in Jesus who intercedes for us (**verse 8**), and in the Spirit who instructs us (**verse 12**), we have everything we need to lead a sincere and fearless life in His service.

Steven Cole: Confessing or Denying Christ

We must beware of hypocrisy and confess Christ, even unto death, because hypocrites will face God's judgment.

1. We must beware of the sin of hypocrisy because hypocrites will face God's eternal judgment.

A. HYPOCRISY IS A REAL DANGER FOR THOSE WHO PROFESS TO FOLLOW CHRIST.

B. HYPOCRISY IS A DANGER BECAUSE WE ARE PRONE TO PLEASE PEOPLE AT THE EXPENSE OF PLEASING GOD.

C. HYPOCRISY IS A DANGER BECAUSE WE FEAR WHAT PEOPLE WILL DO TO US IF WE TAKE A STAND FOR CHRIST.

D. HYPOCRISY IS A DANGER BECAUSE IT RESULTS IN ETERNAL JUDGMENT FOR THE HYPOCRITE.

2. We must confess Christ, even unto death, because we will stand before God for eternal judgment.

A. TO CONFESS CHRIST, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT ALL OF LIFE IS LIVED UNDER THE FATHER'S GAZE.

B. TO CONFESS CHRIST, WE MUST FEAR THE JUDGMENT OF GOD MORE THAN WE FEAR THE JUDGMENT OF MEN.

C. TO CONFESS CHRIST, WE MUST TRUST IN THE LOVING, PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF THE FATHER.

D. TO CONFESS CHRIST, WE MUST COUNT ON THE FAITHFUL PROMISES OF THE SON.

E. TO CONFESS CHRIST, WE MUST RELY ON THE INSTRUCTIVE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Spurgeon on Hypocrisy - THE HYPOCRITE'S CHARACTER.

1. A hypocrite may be known by the fact that his speech and his actions are contrary to one another. As Jesus says, "They say and they do not." Talk is easy, but walk is hard; speech any man may attain unto, but act is difficult. We must have grace within to make our life holy; but lip-piety needs no grace.

2. The next mark of a hypocrite is, that whenever he does right it is that he may be seen of men. To him virtue in the dark is almost a vice; he can never detect any beauty in virtue, unless she has a thousand eyes to look upon her, and then she is something indeed. The true Christian, like the nightingale, sings in the night; but the hypocrite has all his songs in the day, when he can be seen and heard of men.

3. Hypocrite, love titles, and honours, and respect from men. There was another evidence of an hypocrite which was equally good, namely, that he strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Always suspect yourself when you are more careful about little than about great things.

4. These people neglected all the inward part of religion, and only observed the outward. As our Saviour said, they "made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excess." There are many books which are excellently bound, but there is nothing within them; and there are many persons that have a very fine spiritual exterior, but there is nothing whatever in the heart.

5. You may know a hypocrite by another sign. His religion depends upon the place, or upon the time of day. He rises at seven o'clock perhaps, and you will find him religious for a quarter of an hour; for he is, as the boy said, "saying his prayers to himself" in the first part of the morning. Well, then you find him pretty pious for another half-hour, for there is family prayer; but when the business begins, and he is talking to his men, I won't guarantee that you will be able to admire him. If one of his servants has been doing something a little amiss, you will find him perhaps using angry and unworthy language. You will find him, too, if he gets a customer whom he thinks to be rather green, not quite pious, for he will be taking him in.

6. There is another sign of the hypocrite, and now the lash will fall on my own back, and on most of us too. Hypocrites, and other people besides hypocrites, are generally severe with others, and very lenient with themselves.

David Guzik: Even as there was an honorable reward for the faithful, there is a terrible penalty for the faithless. They would be denied and disgraced before the throne of God.

i. Jesus did not say, denies Me in their heart or denies me in their mind; He said, denies Me before men. There is a real and important place for a public declaration of allegiance to Jesus. For many, this is the most difficult thing of all – and is usually difficult because of a fear of man, the exact thing Jesus warned against in His previous words (**Luke 12:4-7**).

ii. The test to either confess or deny Jesus before men may come in many ways; but it will always come. It is helpful to be determined in heart and mind before the test comes.

iii. Jesus clearly called His listeners to a choice. As before in **Luke 11:23+** the choice is to either be with Jesus or against Him. Here the choice is to confess Jesus or deny Him.

Brian Evans: **The Logic of Jesus** goes like this:

- God is to be feared because He has the power to cast you into hell.
- God is omniscient, He knows when the least little thing happens.
- He is very much aware of you in even the smallest details.
- When we fear God we don't need to fear anything else.
- Fear God and Fear not...

TEXT: Luke 12:13-34

TITLE: INVEST IN GOD'S KINGDOM

BIG IDEA:

LIFE SHOULD BE ORIENTED AROUND INVESTING IN GOD'S KINGDOM TO LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN RATHER THAN ACCUMULATING WEALTH HERE ON EARTH

INTRODUCTION:

There are a wide variety of investment strategies and various paths to prosperity promoted by financial planners. Some might advise a heavier portfolio of stocks and bonds. Some might advocate for at least some holdings in silver and gold. But just as in real estate where the consistent message is "Location, Location, Location" – when it comes to investments the consistent message seems to be "**Diversify, Diversify, Diversify.**"

Jesus Christ cuts against the grain when He gives His counsel relating to the accumulation of wealth. Rather than trusting in riches for our future security, Jesus says forget about fighting over the family inheritance or building bigger barns and instead be rich toward God. In other words, instead of "Diversify, Diversify, Diversify," invest all your eggs in the kingdom of God and trust Him for every provision in this life and an unfailing treasure in the life to come.

Steven Cole: If you had come into a lot of money that you planned to invest, presumably you would take some time, thought, and effort to invest it wisely. You may even pay a financial counselor to give you some insights on where to put that money. Yet, while most of us are quite careful about investing money for our own purposes, we're pretty sloppy when it comes to investing in light of God's kingdom purposes. But, as the parable of the talents shows, we need to invest what God has entrusted to us in such a way that it will bring a good return in light of His purpose of being glorified among the nations.

I. (:13-15) REJECT THE VALUE SYSTEM OF ACCUMULATING WEALTH

A. (:13-14) Money Grab

1. (:13) Inheritance Dispute

"And someone in the crowd said to Him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.'"

Steven Cole: The man was consumed with his problem and he had come to try to get Jesus to solve his problem. He wasn't there to have Jesus change his heart. He wanted his problem fixed without confronting some deeper issues of sin in his life.

MacArthur: He's talking about the loftiest of all things, the most elevated truths of the Trinity, and some guy in the crowd blurts this out: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me." What a materialist. This guy's not hard to figure out. And he can't wait for the Lord to stop talking about heaven, salvation, God, forgiveness, revelation, and get to the really good stuff. This guy wants to turn it into a Tony Robbins seminar.

This is the quintessential naturalist. This is the materialist. No interest in the spiritual at all, he just can't wait for Jesus to get on his subject. He doesn't care about the Son of Man confessing

Him before the angels of God. He doesn't care about what he can't see. He doesn't care about heaven, he's into earth. And he's not even embarrassed, he's not even ashamed, because it's pretty routine.

2. (:14) Indignant Refusal to Intervene in This Earthly Matter Related to Riches

“But He said to him, ‘Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?’”

Lenski: The Jews had rightful judges for disputes about property. Jesus had no appointment of that kind, his office and his work were vastly higher, and he was the last person to interfere with the secular authorities.

Spurgeon: Our Lord kept to his proper business, which was the preaching of the gospel and the healing of the sick. We find, in these days, that the minister of the gospel is asked to do almost everything. He must be a politician; he must be a social reformer; he must be I know not what. For my part, I often feel as if I could answer, “Who made me to do anything of the kind? If I can preach the gospel, I shall have done well if I do that to the glory of God, and to the salvation of men. Surely there are enough people to be judges and dividers, there are quite sufficient politicians to attend to politics, and plenty of men who feel themselves qualified to direct social reforms. Some of us may be spared to attend to spiritual affairs.”

B. (:15a) Guard Against Greed

“And He said to them, ‘Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed;”

Hendriksen: The Greek word for greed is very descriptive. Literally it means: the thirst for having more, always having more and more and still more.

Deffinbaugh: both men were probably guilty of greed—the one for not giving his brother what was his due (the older brother, who would be the executor of the will, as it were?), and the other for demanding that he get what was his.

Jesus' words spell out the evil motive behind the man's request: greed. They also suggest that greed, like so many other sins, has a variety of forms, each appealing to a certain segment of men. In order to avoid these various forms of greed, men must both “*watch out*” for them and “*be on their guard*” against them. It would seem that the first command indicates the need to believe the danger exists, while the second underscores the vigilance needed to resist the evil for what it is.

MacArthur: So He's saying to this guy and everybody who thought that way, “You're going down the wrong path, man, you're going down the wrong path. You're drinking salt water here. You're never going to have your thirst quenched, because the life that you need, the life that satisfies, the life that fulfills, the life that is eternal and lasts forever is the life of God in your soul, and it's not going to come through acquiring possessions.” Greed is idolatry. It's worshiping the creature, not the Creator; so says **Ephesians 5:5** and **Colossians 3:5**.

C. (:15b) General Principle: Life Cannot Be Defined By Your Possessions

“for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”

II. (:16-21) RICHES CAN'T SATISFY OR SAVE YOU

“And He told them a parable, saying,”

A. (:16-17) Nothing But Headaches

1. (:16) Abundant Wealth

“The land of a certain rich man was very productive.”

2. (:17) Anxiety and Headaches

*“And he began reasoning to himself, saying,
'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’”*

Lenski: When the selfish rich complain about the worry their growing riches cause them, the complaint is always hollow; not for one moment would they exchange places with the poorer man to whom such worry does not come.

B. (:18-19) Never Enough

1. (:18) Unending Pursuit of Greater Wealth

*“And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns
and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’”*

Anyabwile: Storage businesses are one of the fastest growing businesses in the country because we covet and hoard, then we buy more space so we can continue coveting and hoarding.

2. (:19) Unattainable Goal of Contentment and Security and Rest

*“And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods
laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’”*

Darrell Bock: The danger of the pursuit of possessions is that it can make one insensitive to people. Greed can create a distortion about what life is, because the definition of life is not found in objects, but relationships, especially to God and his will. To define life in terms of things is the ultimate reversal of the creature serving the creation and ignoring the Creator (**Ro 1:18–32**)....Jesus will tell a parable to illustrate just how foolish this position is. Real life, he argues, possesses a far different focus. Real life is tied to God, his offer of forgiveness of sins, his values, and his reward.

C. (:20-21) Not a Good Long Term Strategy

1. (:20) Spiritual Accountability and Temporal Futility

*“But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you;
and now who will own what you have prepared?’”*

MacArthur: Oh, the materialist's worst nightmare; somebody else gets it all. (**Eccles. 2:18-19**)

Mattoon: Illustration of a Fool --

The story is told of a prosperous, young investment banker who was driving a new BMW sedan on a mountain road during a snowstorm. As he veered around one sharp turn, he lost control and began sliding off the road toward a deep precipice. At the last moment he unbuckled his seat belt, flung open his door, and leaped from the car, which then tumbled down the ravine and burst into a ball of flames. Though he had escaped with his life, the man suffered a ghastly injury.

Somehow his arm had been caught near the hinge of the door as he jumped and had been torn off at the shoulder. A trucker saw the accident. He pulled his rig to a halt and ran to see if he could help. He found the banker standing at the roadside, looking down at the BMW burning in the ravine below. "My BMW! My new BMW!!" the banker moaned, oblivious to his injury. The trucker pointed at the banker's shoulder and said, "You've got bigger problems than that car. We've got to find your arm. Maybe the surgeons can sew it back on!" The banker looked where his arm had been, paused a moment, and groaned, "Oh no! My Rolex! My new Rolex!!"

2. (:21) Temporal vs. Eternal Riches

"So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Eccles. 5:10

Keathley: The rich man made at least four mistakes:

1. The rich man made the mistake of thinking he was the owner of his stuff when he was just a steward. We are just stewards of our stuff.
2. He was worried about the present and forgot about eternity.
3. He was concerned only for the physical and forgot about spiritual things.
4. He treasured stuff more than people. He lived an isolated life

III. (:22-31) REORIENT YOUR LIFE TO SEEK GOD'S KINGDOM

A. (:22-23) Trust God for Life's Necessary Provisions

1. (:22) Don't Be Anxious About Life's Necessities (Food and Clothing)

"And He said to His disciples, 'For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, as to what you shall eat; nor for your body, as to what you shall put on.'"

Ray Pritchard: **Worry** is excessive concern over the affairs of life. The key obviously is the word "excessive." Worry happens when you are so concerned about the problems of life that you can think of nothing else. It is an all-consuming feeling of uncertainty and fear. And it is a sin. Worry is a sin for two reasons: First, because it displaces God in your life. When you commit the sin of worry, you are living as though God did not exist. And you are living as though you alone can solve your problems. Second, because it distracts you from the things that really matter in life. As long as you are worrying, you can't do anything else. You are strangled by worry.

2. (:23) Don't Over Value Life's Necessities

"For life is more than food, and the body than clothing."

Anyabwile: Never judge your life or God's care for you by your possessions. You are worth far more than your needs, and your life is not determined by your possessions.

B. (:24-28) Take a Lesson From Nature -- 2 Illustrations of God's Provision From Nature

1. (:24-26) Illustration of God's Provision for the Ravens

a. (:24a) God Feeds Them

"Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and yet God feeds them;"

b. (:24b) You Are More Valuable

“how much more valuable you are than the birds!”

c. (:25-26) Anxiety Is Not Productive

“And which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?”

Anyabwile: The world is full of worry. We're tempted to think that worrying is the same thing as thinking or planning or even protecting ourselves. But worry is completely useless and ineffective when it comes to adding to our life.

Steven Cole: Jesus points out the futility of worry. It never changes reality. If you worry, the outcome is the same as if you don't worry. Actually, the outcome is worse because worry takes a toll on your health. But Jesus says that worrying won't add any years to your life.

2. (:27-28) Illustration of God's Provision for the Lilies

a. (:27) God Clothes Them

“Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these.”

J. Ligon Duncan: This argument depends upon your understanding how lavish God is, that He is incredibly generous. You see, the person who is struggling with coveting, here's the sad and secret news — the person who is struggling with coveting, and that's me and you, we believe that God is stingy. We think that God is stingy. We think that He is parsimonious, He just sort of parcels out little tiny chunks of blessing, just enough to get you wanting more, when in fact He is incredibly opulent and lavish and prodigal and generous in His giving, to the point that He cares about the aesthetics of the world that He made so much that He made trees and flowers and grass beautiful. He clothed this world beautifully. And Jesus is saying, “Do you believe that God would make lavish provision for grass and He wouldn't make that provision for you?”

b. (:28a) You Are More Valuable

“But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you,”

c. (:28b) Lack of Faith Is Not Productive

“O men of little faith!”

Donald Miller: The faith which frees from covetousness frees from painful anxiety about the necessities of life (**vs. 22**). It does not, of course, free us from responsible toil and intelligent planning. An economy run on the basis of the life of birds and flowers would collapse. The point is that faith acknowledges even the fruits of toil as the gift of God, and therefore is free to labor without anxious care.

C. (:29-31) Transform Your Ambitions

1. (:29-30) Stop Seeking What the World Seeks

a. (:29) No Need to Worry

“And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying.”

- b. (:30) Your Heavenly Father Will Provide
*“For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek;
but your Father knows that you need these things.”*

2. (:31) Start Seeking God’s Kingdom

“But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you.”

IV. (:32-34) REFINANCE YOUR TREASURE IN HEAVEN

A. (:32) Refinance Based on a Grace Outlook Rather Than a Works Outlook

*“Do not be afraid, little flock,
for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.”*

B. (:33) Refinance to Support Charity in This Life and Invest in Unfailing Heavenly Treasure

“Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys.”

Morris: It seems clear that Jesus is not excluding private ownership; but He is emphasizing that believers must not be dominated by their possessions. Trust in riches prevents trust in God. . . A man’s heart, the concentration of his energies and his interests, is always with his treasure, i.e. the things he values most.

Geldenhuys: Because true life is not to be found in the selfish hoarding of earthly treasures and the real wealth of the faithful is in God they must inwardly be quite free from their worldly possessions and must regard and use these as gifts of God’s love to them, to be consecrated by them to His service by bestowing them on the needy and on the promotion of the work of the Lord in general. When a man acts in this manner, and in the right spirit, his spiritual life grows and he accumulates indestructible treasures in heaven.

J. Ligon Duncan: If you are overly preoccupied with what you don't have, Jesus says, here's how you defeat that — you believe what God has said in the Word, you make sure that what you really want is the kingdom, you believe God's promise, and then if you're struggling with trying to find joy in what you don't have, you start giving away what you already have.

And what does that do? It does two things. First of all it reminds you that God has provided for you generously because He's given you enough to be able to give some away. And secondly it reminds you that that stuff you're giving away isn't where you get your joy. It is not the source from which your happiness comes. And you're just blessed to be able to help someone who's less fortunate than you. So He calls us to be generous with what we already have. This is why generosity is not an option in the Christian life. You will not be able to defeat covetousness if you are not generous because if you are not generous there is every likelihood that you are still coveting stuff.

C. (:34) Refinance to Match Your Heart Devotion

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Anyabwile: Show me a person who cannot give to others, and I'll show you a person who does not believe the Father gives to him. Show me a person who cannot lend, and I'll show you're a person who doubts she has greater riches in the kingdom of Heaven. Show me a person who cannot part with his things, and I'll show you a person who does not believe the treasures of heaven are better. It's that simple. Our life follows our treasure (v. 34).

Geldenhuis: It is not the possession of material things that makes one worldly-minded, but the attitude adopted towards them; nor does the lack of earthly things make one heavenly-minded, but he inward freedom from selfishness and covetousness, and consecration to the Lord.

Steven Cole: We usually get this backwards: we think that we will put our treasure where our hearts are. But Jesus says that if we put our treasure somewhere, our hearts will be there also. Store your treasure in heaven by giving generously to the Lord's kingdom and your heart will be drawn to heaven. Hang on to your earthly possessions greedily and your heart will be on this earth.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are the signs of a spirit of contentment vs a spirit of covetousness?
- 2) Do we hold on tightly to the possessions God has graciously given to us as if we own them or do view them as a stewardship?
- 3) How much do you struggle with anxiety and with doubts about whether God is adequately demonstrating His care of you?
- 4) In what ways are you investing in the kingdom of God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Faith is free to labor without anxious care – Three grounds are given for this:

- 1) First, faith knows that life is in God's hands, and that gnawing anxiety is useless. As the birds and flowers are wholly dependent on providence, and can do nothing to create the means of their own sustenance, so man, with all his cleverness, cannot add one moment to the length of his life (vs. 25). How useless, then, is anxious concern! (vs. 26).
- 2) Second, God's bounteous provision for things of a transient existence indicates his concern for man, who has an eternal destiny (vss. 27-28).
- 3) Third, faith knows that God is more aware of our needs than we are, and that he is concerned that the needs of his children be met (vs. 30).

Bob Deffinbaugh: This large and unruly crowd seems to have set the scene, not only for the first section (vv. 1-12), where Jesus warned His disciples about the danger of hypocrisy, the

hypocrisy for them of behaving differently than that which was required of disciples. Boldness in living out one's discipleship is also related to the next segment (vv. 13-34), which deals with material possessions, for we know that boldness as disciples in a hostile environment may cost one his property (cf. **Hebrews 10:32-34**). In the final section (vv. 35-59), Jesus deals with the matter of readiness for His return, which, as we will see, has much to do with our boldness and our willingness to be unfettered by material possessions in the present age. My great fear is that we will not view this chapter as a whole, since our study will, of necessity, be only of a segment at a time. I urge the reader, therefore, to make every effort to read and to study this chapter as a whole, indeed to study the entire book of Luke as a whole.

- (1) The rich fool was foolish in failing to recognize where his wealth had come from.
- (2) The rich fool erred in his understanding of the purpose of wealth
- (3) The rich fool was foolish in that he saw his possessions as his security, and as the basis for his ceasing to be productive
- (4) The rich fool was foolish in his presumption. The rich man presumed two things about the future, both of which were false. First, he presumed that he would possess his wealth in the future. Second, he presumed that he would be alive in the future, to enjoy his possessions.
- (5) The rich fool was foolish in holding a view of the future which was short-sighted and which excluded the kingdom of God
- (6) The rich man was a fool both in the way he defined life and in the way he thought life was to be obtained. The word "life" is frequently used in chapter 12. To the rich fool "living" or "life" was defined in terms of ease and pleasure, in terms not just of eating and drinking, but of doing so in a way that was enjoyable. And life was obtained by putting oneself and one's wealth first. One found life by seeking life for oneself and by ignoring others, including God.

Steven Cole: A TEST FOR GREED:

Here are five questions to ask yourself:

- (1) DO MY THOUGHTS MORE OFTEN RUN AFTER MATERIAL THINGS THAN AFTER GOD HIMSELF?
- (2) DO I EVER COMPROMISE GODLY CHARACTER IN THE PURSUIT OF MATERIAL GAIN?
- (3) DO I ENJOY MATERIAL THINGS MORE THAN I ENJOY KNOWING GOD?
- (4) HOW DO I RESPOND WHEN I LOSE MATERIAL THINGS?
- (5) WHAT WOULD I DO IF I SUDDENLY CAME INTO A FORTUNE?

THE PROBLEM WITH GREED:

- (1). GREED IGNORES THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST OVER EVERYTHING.

(2). GREED IGNORES THE PRIORITY OF RELATIONSHIPS OVER RICHES.

(3). GREED IGNORES THE SHORTNESS OF LIFE AND THE FACT OF ETERNITY.

J. Ligon Duncan: It's important for us to realize that covetousness involves far more than money. Covetousness is about more than having an inordinate desire for material possessions that you do not have or longing to have what your neighbor has materially — his money or his house. Covetousness can involve wanting your neighbor's husband or his wife. Covetousness can involve wanting your neighbor's status or his position or his prestige or his power. Covetousness can involve longing to have anything that you do not have or overly desiring anything in this world, good or bad. It is a very pervasive sin. And covetousness is a Gospel issue. Covetousness often forces upon us the question, “Do we love God more than we love stuff? Do we treasure the gifts of the Gospel more than we treasure the things that our hearts are preoccupied with in this world?”

Steven Cole: Jesus says that when we're consumed with making a living, we're mimicking the world. The world lives in a constant frenzy of activity to get more and more. This should not be our focus.

I recently read something that illustrates the world's ways of seeking after more and more.

An American businessman was at the pier of a small coastal Mexican village when a small boat with just one fisherman docked. Inside the small boat were several large yellow fin tuna. The American complimented the Mexican on the quality of his fish and asked how long it took to catch them.

The Mexican replied, “Only a little while.”

The American then asked why didn't he stay out longer and catch more fish?

The Mexican said that he had enough to support his family's immediate needs.

The American then asked, “But what do you do with the rest of your time?”

The Mexican fisherman said, “I sleep late, fish a little, play with my children, take siesta with my wife, Maria, stroll into the village each evening, where I sip wine and play my guitar with my amigos. I have a full and busy life, señor.”

The American scoffed, “I am a Harvard MBA and could help you. You should spend more time fishing and with the proceeds buy a bigger boat. With the proceeds from the bigger boat you could buy several boats. Eventually you would have a fleet of fishing boats. Instead of selling your catch to a middleman you would sell directly to the processor, eventually opening your own cannery. You would control the product, processing and distribution. You would need to leave this small coastal fishing village and move to Mexico City, then to L.A. and eventually to New York City, where you will run your expanding enterprise.”

The Mexican fisherman asked, “But señor, how long will this all take?”

The American replied, “Fifteen to twenty years.”

“But what then, senior?”

The American laughed and said, “That’s the best part. When the time is right you would announce a stock offer, sell your company stock to the public, and become very rich. You would make millions.”

“Millions, senior? Then what?”

The American said, “Then you would retire. Move to a small coastal fishing village where you would sleep late, fish a little, play with your kids, take siesta with your wife, stroll to the village in the evenings, where you could sip wine and play your guitar with your amigos.”

Jesus says, “Don’t seek for the same things the nations eagerly seek.” There should be a distinct difference between us and the world regarding our pursuit of material gain. While hard work is a Christian virtue, anxiety about money is not! To get caught up with the world’s attitudes toward money is to forget that we have a Father who knows that we need all these things.

MacArthur: Life is from God. He gives it. He sustains it. He makes provision for it. I want to show you something by way of contrast that's really interesting. Back to Haggai, Haggai, it's three books into the Old Testament from the backside: Malachi, Zechariah, Haggai. The first chapter of Haggai says, **verse 5**, the Lord says, "Consider your ways, consider your ways. You have sown much but harvest little, you eat but there's not enough to be satisfied, you drink but there's not enough to become drunk, you put on clothing but no one is warm enough, and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes." This doesn't sound like provision. It's not. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Consider your ways.’” Take a look at yourself and ask why is it like this? Why do you not have enough food? Why do you not have enough drink? Why are you not able to have the clothes to keep yourself warm? Why is it that when you earn wages they disappear? Verse 8, He says, "Go to the mountains, bring some wood and rebuild the temple." There's the answer. They had forgotten whom? God. "That I may be pleased with it and glorified," says the Lord. "You look for much. You hold it comes to little. And when you bring it home, I blow it away." There's the issue. . .

If you worry and if you're anxious and if you're afraid, it's because you don't understand:

- divine **priority**
- divine **provision**
- divine **privilege**
- divine **preference**
- divine **paternity**
- divine **pleasure**

TEXT: Luke 12:35-59

TITLE: ACCOUNTABILITY AND READINESS

BIG IDEA:

BE READY FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

How were people in Noah's day so unprepared for the cataclysmic flood despite so many years of prophetic warning? Jesus had plenty to say on the topic of readiness and alertness and accountability as they relate to His Second Coming. If the religious leaders failed so miserably to properly discern the times while Jesus was present with them in His three year ministry on earth, how much more likely will they be to miss out on His Second Coming? Jesus wants to exhort His leading disciples to focus on what has eternal value rather than seeking after the temporary worldly pursuits of the Gentiles. They need to take their stewardship seriously and perform the will of their Master even though His return date is certain but undefined.

BE READY FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AT THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

I. (:35-48) ACCOUNTABILITY (REWARDS OR RETRIBUTION) BASED ON READINESS FOR THE LORD'S RETURN

A. (:35-40) 2 Illustrations Exhorting Readiness for the Lord's Return

1. (:35-38) Servants Alert for the Return of Their Master from a Wedding Feast

a. (:35-36) Description of Readiness

“Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight. And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.”

Deffinbaugh: I see three distinct characteristics of the “good waiter” as described by our Lord:

- (1) Preparation—*“be dressed ready ... ”*
- (2) Maintenance—*“keep your lamps burning”*
- (3) Expectation—*“[and be] like men waiting for their master”*

Steven Cole: *“let your loins be girded.”* In that day, everyone wore long robes which were a hindrance if you needed to move quickly or freely. If a person planned to run or work, he would tuck his robe into a sash around his waist so that it would not interfere with his movements. The verb here indicates a state of perpetual readiness for action.

MacArthur: Jesus is saying you...you have to live realizing that the end is near. It can happen at any time. You want to be in My kingdom, you have to have a heavenly perspective. You've got to be more concerned about the fear of God than the fear of man. You have to confess Christ, trust in the Holy Spirit, be rich toward God, seek His kingdom and look for His coming. Anticipation of the Second Coming is motivation. Everything is not just going to go along the way it always has. There's going to be an invasion in this world. There's going to be an invasion from outer space in this world. There's going to be an invasion of the Lord Jesus Christ in final judgment. And the Bible describes it in the most horrific terms.

J. Ligon Duncan: Stay dressed for action; be ready to spring into action. It's not a word about trying to divine when exactly He's coming. It's about whether you're living in readiness to serve Him. He even uses the language of being dressed to serve of Himself later on. Be dressed to serve — it's talking about an attitude that pervades the way that you approach life, that you're always ready to be serving the purposes of Jesus in this world.

b. (:37-38) Need for Readiness – Timing of Master's Return is Unknown

“Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.”

Surprising role reversal in that the master ends up serving up a feast to the servants

Donald Miller: Since the full coming of the Kingdom is in the future, two things are essential to those who are looking for it. Its delay demands continuing hope, and the absolute uncertainty of the time of its arrival requires constant vigilance. . . The fact that the blessedness consists in sitting at table and being served by their master when he comes, indicates clearly that Jesus is speaking of himself (**22:27**). The final reward of watchful waiting is fellowship with him. Lest the delay in his coming should lull his followers into sloth, and divert their gaze to lesser things, they must remember that he will come as unexpectedly as a thief in the night (**vss. 39-40; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev. 16:15**). Unremitting vigilance, therefore, is necessary.

2. (:39-40) Homeowner Alert for the Attack of a Thief

a. (:39) Description of Readiness

“And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.”

b. (:40) Need For Readiness – Timing of Christ's Return is Unknown

“You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

MacArthur: 4 metaphors relating to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ: Clothing, lamps, servants, and a thief

B. (:41-48) Accountability Described

1. (:41) Scope of Accountability = Believers and Non-believers

“And Peter said, ‘Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?’”

Jesus does not choose to directly answer Peter; instead He gives His teaching on Rewards and Retribution and Accountability. Certainly there is a special focus on spiritual leaders – both the apostles who are in the faithful category and the Pharisees and scribes who are in the unfaithful category; but by extension these principles apply to everybody

MacArthur: Everybody is in this somewhere, believers and non-believers. The believers are pictured by the faithful and the unbelievers are pictured by the unfaithful. And that becomes

self-evident and is the only answer the Lord really needs to give to Peter. **Two categories**; that's it, you're in one or the other.

2. (:42-44) Reward for Faithfulness/Alertness

“And the Lord said, ‘Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?’

Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.”

3. (:45-46) Retribution for Unfaithfulness

“But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;”

“the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.”

MacArthur: Well just who might Jesus be talking about here?" Well anybody really, but particularly this had real application to the Pharisees and the religious leaders, who instead of feeding people fleeced them, who instead of helping people with their needs wouldn't lift a finger to help anybody but indulged themselves endlessly. Jesus says this is a foolish way to live because if you live...and this is defiant. If you live in this kind of disregard for the commands of God and the call of the gospel, if you live this kind of sinful life, the master, **verse 46**, will come on a day when that slave doesn't expect it and at an hour he doesn't know. And what will he do? He'll cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. That's *dichotomeō*, from which we get the word “dichotomy,” to cut in pieces. Pretty dramatic, wouldn't you say? That's pretty severe.

Steven Cole: I believe that these frightening words especially apply to unfaithful spiritual leaders who have used their office for their own advantage. They usually teach false doctrine because they want to dodge their sin, which is exposed by God's Word. They use religion to promote their own greed and immorality. Jesus pronounces this most severe judgment on them because they have taken that which should have benefited people eternally and used it to destroy them. Their final punishment shows that they never truly repented of their own sins and submitted their lives to the Master.

4. (:47-48) Degrees of Accountability

a. (:47-48a) Based on Level of Knowledge

“And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few.”

b. (:48b) General Principle: Greater Privilege Means Greater Accountability

“And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.”

Donald Miller: The judgment of leaders will be correspondingly heavy, since more is required of them because of their privileged position (vss. 47-48; James 3:1).

J. Ligon Duncan: But this passage is not just for the disciples and it's not just for pastors and elders. It is for all of us, and you see that at the very end of the passage. Look at **verse 48**. Half way through **verse 48** Jesus says this, *"Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more."* Jesus is establishing a principle there and now we see why He didn't answer Peter's question directly because Jesus was both speaking to the disciples and for all. In other words, He had a specific message in these stories for His disciples and all those other pastor/elders who were going to be given the charge to shepherd the flock of God. And that message was — I want you to be ready, and this is the way I want you to be ready — feed My sheep; make sure they get the pure milk of the Word; make sure they are fed with the rich meat of the Word of God; protect them from the wolves; shepherd their souls; while the world is only caring about what they can get out of those sheep, you be concerned to serve those sheep and to help those sheep and to build them up and encourage them in their time of need. That's what Jesus was saying to the disciples. That's what Jesus was saying to pastors and elders, but He was also speaking for us all. And the "for us all" is this — *"to whom much is given, much is required."*

John Phillips: has an interesting interpretation of the judgments described in **Lk 12:46-48** - there is the matter of his sentence (**Lk 12:46-48**). Three types of servants are in view here. The first type is the **false servant**: *"The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."* This servant is no servant at all. Whatever profession of faith the man might have made is annulled by his behavior. The Lord numbers him among the unbelievers. Judas was just such a man. The second type is the **forgetful servant**: *"And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes"* (**Lk 12:47**). Here is a man who is well schooled in the things of God. He knows what is expected of him. Nevertheless, he wastes his time and talents and ignores God's will for his life. Instead of laying up treasure in heaven, he fritters away his life. He will be *"beaten with many stripes."* Sometimes those stripes come in this life as God chastises him for his neglect. At other times, God withholds judgment here because He intends to deal with it over there. This brings into view the judgment seat of Christ (**Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10**). *"[He] shall be beaten with many stripes."* He will suffer blow after blow, as it were, as the various affairs of his life are weighed and found wanting and are cast into the fire as wood, hay, and stubble. Finally, the third type is the **feeble servant**: *"But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."* No excuse will be accepted at the judgment seat for poor performance, but allowance will be made for ignorance. The principle that the Lord lays down is simple: *"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more"* (**Lk 12:48b**). In other words, the Lord's requirements are similar to those required by a human employer.

II. (:49-53) ACCOUNTABILITY BASED ON THE DIVISION THAT CHRIST CREATES

A. (:49-50) Mission Statement -- Two Images of Christ's Divisive Mission on the Cross – Painful Anticipation

1. (:49) Casting Fire on the Earth – Bringing the Offense of the Cross as a Dividing Point

*“I have come to cast fire upon the earth;
and how I wish it were already kindled!”*

We might like to think of Jesus as the Prince of Peace ... but here He presents Himself in a different light – as one bringing the fire of strife and division upon the earth – the opposite of peace. This is a fire related to His work on the Cross. This requires that all men respond to Him either in faith and acceptance or unbelief and rejection. He will come in His Second Coming to unleash a different form of fire = the fire of judgment.

Lenski – [ties vv. 49 and 50 directly together as I am doing here] –

The two exclamatory statements are due to the intense feeling with which they were uttered . . . The two statements about the fire and the baptism are worded alike, which should have help in the translation. . . [baptism clearly] describes the passion and the death of Jesus. And it thus brings out what the fire and its moment of kindling are, namely this death on the cross. It is the offense of the cross that has set the world ablaze, that has started the division and the strife. . .

The figures are opposites: fire – baptism (water). It is the height of paradox to have a baptism kindle a fire, and yet this is not strange at all in the realities. Christ’s death on the cross kindled the fire of the offense of the cross.

Geldenhuys: Fire has a twofold effect – it destroys what is combustible and purifies and refines non-combustible objects. The Saviour here utters His deep longing that His work of salvation shall be completed, so that His beneficial works may through the power of the Holy Ghost enter into the lives of mankind in full measure – to the undoing and destruction of evil and to the purification and refining of the faithful. . .

Fire here is the spiritual power exercised by the Lord through His Word and Spirit on the strength of His completed work of redemption – to the undoing of those who reject Him and to the refining of those who believe in Him.

2. (:50) Undergoing Painful Baptism -- Creating a Divide by Way of the Cross – Suffering for Sin

*“But I have a baptism to undergo,
and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!”*

Steven Cole: Almost all commentators agree that when Jesus speaks of the baptism He has to undergo, He is referring to the cross, where He would be immersed under the flood of God’s wrath against sin. While as the eternal Son of God, Jesus came to this earth for the purpose of going to the cross to redeem sinners, yet as being fully human, the thought of the cross deeply distressed Him. The agony of the cross for Jesus was not only the physical suffering, as terrible as that was. The worst agony of the cross was the reality of the sinless One becoming the sin-bearer. *“He [God] made Him who knew no sin [Christ] to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).* . .

You would think that every person would be quick to embrace the cross of Christ. But the Bible shows that while many receive Christ and find mercy, many others reject God’s offer because it offends their pride. They don’t want to admit that they are sinners deserving God’s wrath. They

don't want to admit that they can do nothing to atone for their own sins. So the cross becomes a stumbling block to them. And, it leads to division between them and those who accept God's mercy, even to the dividing of close family members:

B. (:51-53) Impact Statement -- Causing Division Within Families – Bringing Strife

1. (:51) Surprising Mission

*“Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth?
I tell you, no, but rather division;”*

Lenski: This contrast shows that “*peace*” is meant in the sense of harmony and an undisturbed condition.

Geldenhuys: Christ is indeed the Prince of Peace (**Isa. ix. 5**) who came not only to bring peace into the heart of every believer but also to bring peace to its fullest extent among the whole of mankind. This will, however, only become a full reality after His second coming; that is to say, on the new earth. Until then the strife between good and evil will continue without a pause.

2. (:52-53) Strife Within Households

a. (:52) Defined by Numbers

*“for from now on five members in one household will be divided,
three against two, and two against three.”*

b. (:53) Defined by Relationships

*“They will be divided, father against son, and son against father;
mother against daughter, and daughter against mother;
mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against
mother-in-law.”*

Hendriksen: The entrance of Christ into this world divides in two, splits apart, cleaves asunder, and in so doing turns one person against another. Faith not only creates division between one race and another, one people and another, one church and another; it even brings about division in the family, in fact often the sharpest division of all.

III. (:54-59) ACCOUNTABILITY BASED ON DISCERNING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES AND PREPARING ACCORDINGLY

A. (:54-56) Discerning the Signs of the Times

1. (:54-55) Two Illustrations

“And He was also saying to the multitudes,”

a. (:54) Cloud From the West

*“When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say,
'A shower is coming,' and so it turns out.”*

b. (:55) South Wind Blowing

*“And when you see a south wind blowing, you say,
'It will be a hot day,' and it turns out that way.”*

Steven Cole: In Israel, a cloud from the west came from the Mediterranean Sea and thus brought rain. A south wind came in off the Sinai desert and thus meant a hot day. Jesus then calls them hypocrites because they are able to discern the weather, but they fail to discern the significance of Jesus' presence in their midst.

2. (:56) Arguing From the Lesser to the Greater

“You hypocrites! You know how to analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?”

Every day they analyze the weather patterns – relatively unimportant and superficial in the grand scheme of things; they should pay much more attention to grasping the significance of the presence of the Promised Messiah in their midst; not that they should know the specifics of the date and time of the Return of Christ; but they should demonstrate appropriate readiness and accountability – especially when the Messiah is standing right before them; If they can't discern the significance of this present moment, they have no chance being prepared for His uncertain return

MacArthur: There's no way to escape it. "How," He says, "in the world can you make conclusions with minimal evidence that are accurate and not make the conclusion that is inescapable about this? Why will you not sit down and analyze it? Why will you not discern it?" They wouldn't. They didn't want to know who He was. They wanted to accept their preconception. Why? Because He attacked their religious system. He stomped on their self-righteousness. It wasn't that they didn't want a kingdom; sure they wanted a kingdom. It wasn't that they didn't want salvation; they wanted salvation. It wasn't that they didn't want forgiveness and eternal life. They want all that. It wasn't the cure they hated; it was the diagnosis they resented.

B. (:57-59) Preparing Accordingly

1. (:57) Judge the Right Thing

“And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?”

Lenski: God was giving them the clear truth so that under its influence and its power they could of themselves decide the right thing to do, namely to believe in his grace and to flee from the wrath to come since the heavens of their time were full of the signs of both. Why did they not judge the right thing?

2. (:58-59) Settle All Accounts While There Is Still Time

“For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, in order that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison.”

“I say to you, you shall not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.”

CONCLUSION:

Steven Cole: Illustration: During a training session for soldiers who were about to make their first parachute jump, the sergeant explained how to open the reserve chute if the main chute

didn't open. A private nervously raised his hand and asked, "Sergeant, if my main chute doesn't open, how long do I have to pull my reserve?"

The sergeant looked directly into the young private's eyes and replied earnestly, "The rest of your life, soldier. The rest of your life." (In *Reader's Digest*, February, 1982.)

If you have not trusted in Christ as your only hope for forgiveness on the day of judgment, you are like that soldier plunging toward earth. Either you accept Jesus as your sin bearer and you are reconciled to God; or, you will come into God's court of justice and pay your own debt, which is eternal separation from Him. How long do you have to get on Jesus' side? The answer is, the rest of your life! Jesus has drawn the line. Will you trust Him now before it is too late?

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you live differently right now if you knew for certain that Jesus was returning within 24 hours?
- 2) What type of division, strife or tension have you experienced in your own family related to your devotion to Jesus Christ?
- 3) Why were the Jewish religious leaders so blind when it came to perceiving the Messiah?
- 4) Are there any accounts you need to settle before Christ returns?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The tragedy of Jesus' people was that they did not sense this decisiveness of his presence. They could predict the weather from wind and cloud, but were blind to the judgment which Jesus' presence was bringing (**vss. 54-56**). The root of their attitude was hypocrisy, religious externalism, formalism, unreality; they were content with superficial appearances, but unresponsive to the profound questions of the soul. Jesus tries to awaken them from their spiritual stupor by a warning. An accused person, making his way to the judge, can hardly escape the consequences when judgment sets in. The only possible escape is to settle with the accuser before official judgment falls (**vss. 57-59**). The details of the parable here cannot be pressed. It means only that God's judgment on his people is near. There is yet time to make a settlement by accepting Jesus as Messiah and Lord. If they refuse, judgment is inevitable. How terribly it came in A.D. 70!

Deffinbaugh: I believe that God is saying to Israel that He has turned (or will do so) to the Gentiles because of the rebellion of Israel. His "servants" who eat, and drink, and rejoice are thus those who have turned to Him in faith, and they include both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Those whom God will "slay" (**Isaiah 65:15**) are His disobedient people. Based upon these premises, my understanding is that the "servant" who is "cut in pieces" is the unbelieving nation of Israel. Unbelieving Israel will be "cut in pieces" (dispersed) and will be cast into hell, along with those heathen they so much disdain and despise. The faithful servant is

God's church, those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as God's Messiah, and who wait expectantly for His return.

But what does all this have to do with stewardship? How does the nation Israel relate to our Lord's teaching on stewardship? The nation Israel was given great privileges and responsibilities. Israel, for example was the nation through whom "light" was to be shed abroad to the nations. Israel was the steward through whom the Scriptures were given to the world. Israel, like Jonah, did not want this to happen. Israel resisted it all the way. Israel consumed its blessings on itself. Israel not only abused the Gentiles, they abused their own, as their prophets frequently said. The early chapters of the prophecy of Jeremiah perfectly depict the very thing of which our Lord is accusing "the servant" of doing (cf. **Jeremiah 4-6**).

The last two verses of our text, **Luke 12:47-48** are especially significant when viewed in the light of the fact that unbelieving Israel is the unfaithful servant. Judgment, Jesus taught, was meted out according to knowledge. Greater knowledge meant greater punishment, for those who rejected it. Israel had that greater knowledge and thus her discipline as well.

William Barclay: It's sort of a fable of three apprentice devils who are coming to earth to finish their apprenticeship, kind of a C.S. Lewis story.

And they were talking to Satan and they said, "You know, we want to go down and ruin men."

And so Satan said, "Well what's your plan?"

And the first devil said, "I'm going to tell them there's no God."

"That will not delude many," he said, "because they know there's a God."

The second said, "Well I'm going to tell men there's...there's no hell."

Satan said, "You'll deceive few that way, they know there's a punishment for sin."

The third one said, "I'll tell men there's no hurry."

"Go, you have found success."

There is a hurry. He's coming and you don't know when.

Wiersbe: observes that in this next section "Jesus shifted the emphasis from being worried about the present to being watchful about the future. The themes in **Luke 12** all go together, for one of the best ways to conquer hypocrisy, covetousness, and worry is to look for the Lord's return. When you are "living in the future tense," it is difficult for the things of the world to ensnare you. In this section, Jesus explained how we can be ready for His return."

TEXT: Luke 13:1-9

TITLE: LAST CHANCE TO REPENT

BIG IDEA:

AVOIDING DISASTER ONLY ACCENTUATES THE URGENCY OF REPENTANCE SINCE IT IS ONLY THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD THAT STANDS BETWEEN US AND ETERNAL DAMNATION

INTRODUCTION:

The self-righteous, prideful Jews were horrified at the demand for repentance. How could they acknowledge sinfulness and the validity of God's condemnation? They compared themselves to others who had met with unfortunate disaster and judged themselves to be worthy of God's favor. Jesus turns the tables on them once again in this passage as He presses home the urgent need for repentance. As a nation, this was their last chance to repent. By A.D. 70 the die would be cast and the times of the Gentiles would be the new focus of God's kingdom program during the Church Age.

This is an excellent passage for answering the typical questions that are raised after some momentous disaster. How (or Why) could God let such events transpire? Why were these people killed? What does this mean for me? We are living on borrowed time and must respond to the claims of Jesus Christ while we still have opportunity.

Donald Miller: A section of teaching is now introduced which shows clearly that membership in Jesus' Kingdom is based on quite different considerations from those which the Pharisees had laid down. Those whom they excluded – the lost sinners – were invited by Jesus into the Kingdom, while the Pharisees themselves were shut out unless they repented. What, therefore, is required for membership in Jesus' Kingdom?

I. (:1-5) TWO DISASTER ILLUSTRATIONS STRESSING THE URGENT NEED FOR REPENTANCE

A. (:1-3) Slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate

1. (:1) Disaster = Sudden and Unexpected

“Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”

Lenski: *Kairos* is more than just time; it denotes a brief period that is marked and distinguished in some way, here, the period that is marked by what the twelfth chapter reports.

Morris: Some men from Galilee had evidently gone up to Jerusalem to worship and had been put to death by the governor as they were in the act of offering sacrifice. That their blood had mingled with that of their sacrifices was a particularly horrible detail.

2. (:2) Wrong Inference = Uniqueness of the Degree of Sinning

“And He answered and said to them, ‘Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered this fate?’”

Deffinbaugh: They had already drawn a false conclusion: these Galileans were greater sinners than others. This false conclusion was based upon a faulty premise: one's suffering in life is indicative of one's sin, just as one's prosperity is proportional to one's piety.

3. (:3) Correct Application = Repent Now or Perish

"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Morris: "*Likewise*" – Perhaps the thought is that the manner of the death of the Galileans gave them no time to repent. Jesus' unrepentant hearers were setting themselves on a course which meant unrepentant death in due course.

Geldenhuys: At that time it was a generally accepted notion that whenever calamities visited people this was a proof that they were exceptionally sinful and that for this reason God allowed them to be overtaken by such disasters. Here, as elsewhere, Jesus rejects this false idea and warns the Jews who brought the tidings that, unless they repented in time, similar disasters awaited them too. They are not to regard the murdered Galileans as more guilty than themselves.

Lenski: What Jesus says is that, as these Galileans were swept away by death while in their impenitent state and thus perished forever, so all other impenitent men, no matter what the manner of their death may be, would "*likewise perish*" forever. The matter that Jesus warns his hearers against is not some form of cruel death but the danger of perishing in death.

B. (:4-5) Jews in Jerusalem Killed by Falling Tower in Siloam

1. (:4a) Disaster – Sudden and Unexpected

"Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them,"

2. (:4b) Wrong Inference = Uniqueness of the Degree of Sinning

"were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?"

3. (:5) Correct Application = Repent Now or Perish

"I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Lenski: Every calamity that sweeps men away is a divine call to repent and a divine warning to escape perishing forever by repenting in time. Sin is the cause of all evil in this world, and when it works out in striking ways as it did in these calamities it warns against itself and its eternal effects, but does so only because God, through Christ has made a way of escape through repentance.

Deffinbaugh: There are differences between these two groups of men who died, but the similarities seem more striking to me. First, those in both groups died. Jesus is not speaking of suffering in general terms, but specifically of death. He also warns His audience of the death which they will experience. Second, both groups died in a similar way—quickly, unexpectedly, tragically. Third, both groups died at a place and time when they may have felt very safe. When would a legalistic Jew feel more spiritual and "closer to God" (thus "safe" from divine judgment) than when he was performing his religious ritual of sacrifice. They died while offering sacrifices! And the 18 men who died in Jerusalem died while standing near a tower, undoubtedly a tower that was a significant part of their defense network. The tower would be that place where guards were stationed, the place from which an attack from outside the walls of the city would be

countered. Where could anyone have stood that would have made them feel more secure? And yet they died by the tower. Literally, they died under the rubble of that tower. That which they viewed as their salvation was their destruction.

MacArthur: So here is the simple principle. God has a right to kill every sinner instantaneously and it's a just act. He doesn't do that so sinners get used to being favored by God in the sense of common grace. In the Old Testament, occasionally, when God opened up the ground and swallowed somebody, or sent bears out of the woods to tear up young men for saying bald head, bald head, mocking a prophet, people say, why would God do that? That's not the question. The question is, why did God let people live? Why does He allow the sinner to live? Why does He extend common grace, the just falls...the rain falls on the just and the unjust. Why is God so patient and so gracious? And we'll see in particular the answer to that at the end of our discussion this morning.

II. (:6-9) PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE: DON'T PRESUME AGAINST GOD'S FORBEARANCE – YOU ARE LIVING ON BORROWED TIME

“And He began telling this parable:”

Opportunity to repent does not last forever;
God's patience won't cut them slack forever

A. (:6) Expectation of Fruit

“A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any.”

Lenski: It is precisely because the owner planted this fig tree in his own vineyard that he had every right to expect it to bear fruit. The tree had grown to full maturity in the very best of places. Jerusalem was not the capital of some pagan nation.

MacArthur: Like in **Isaiah 5**, Israel was planted in a very fertile hill. They were blessed with everything God could give them. Like **Romans 9:4 and 5**, they had the revelation of God. They had the prophets. They had the Scriptures. They had the covenants. They had the adoption and from them came the Messiah. They had it all. They were already apostate when Jesus arrived. They were apostate when John the Baptist began to preach. The ax was already laid at the tree when it started. Before Jesus ever began the ministry, John said the ax is laid at the tree because the nation was already apostate. They already had departed from the true faith and the true and living God and created a system of works righteousness that was an abomination to God.

B. (:7) Exasperation and Logical Pronouncement of Destruction

“And he said to the vineyard-keeper, 'Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?'”

Significance of the 3 years followed by a 4th? Corresponds approximately to the time of the ministry of John the Baptist and of Christ on earth up until His ascension

C. (:8-9) Extension of Merciful Patience and Forbearance

1. (:8) Additional Cultivation Measures

“And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;”

We are all living on borrowed time

MacArthur: Borrowed time is not permanent. God's patience is not permanent. These points are easy to understand in this little story. In fact, they're virtually unmistakable. The tree is a solitary tree. It's a nation, but it's an individual. If you have no fruit, you will be cut down. You're living on borrowed time, judgment is near. And there is nothing about you that earns that borrowed time so it is purely at the merciful discretion of God that you live another day. And His patience is not permanent. And that is why the prophet Isaiah wrote, **Isaiah 55:6 and 7**, "*Seek the Lord while He may be found. Call on Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, the unrighteous man his thought, let him return to the Lord and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.*"

2. (:9) Last Chance to Produce Fruit ... Or Destruction

“and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.”

Anyabwile: The Lord is being patient. He gives more time. He waits for his servants to bear fruit. But he will not always wait. He will not always be patient. One day he will inspect us for fruit. The question is: Will we be fruit bearing, or will we be fruitless?

Deffinbaugh: While this parable, like the account of the tragic deaths of the Galileans and those who died by the tower of Siloam, conveys a message of warning to the Israelites, it also corrects another error in the thinking of the people. The inference underlying the conclusion of the people in **verses 1-5** is that God hastened the death of those who died, in judgment of their (greater than normal) sins. Our parable tells us the exact opposite. The people were wrong to conclude that these people who died prematurely were greater sinners than their peers. God had not come to judge them early because of their greater evil. Indeed, the parable of the farmer and the fruitless fig tree speaks rather of the patience and longsuffering of God with respect to the stubborn rebellion and sin of Israel. This extended time, this delay in judgment, was for the purpose of allowing God's people further opportunity to repent. While some sinners may very well interpret and apply His delay as an occasion to expand in their sin (cf. **12:45**), the righteous will know better. The erroneous conclusion of the people reveals the perspective of the people; the point of the parable reveals the perspective of God.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do people use the disasters that fall on others to justify their own self-righteousness?
- 2) What is the relationship between repentance and fruit?
- 3) Why is God not to blame for the blindness of the nation of Israel towards the identity of their Messiah?

4) How would you apply this passage to answer questions raised by present day tragedies?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Zealotism, the fanatical effort to bring the Messianic Age by armed revolt against Rome, stemmed from Galilee. It is likely, therefore, that either on a pilgrimage or during a feast, there was a messianic outbreak which Pilate ruthlessly put down. The Pharisees were at one with the Zealots in their desire to be rid of Rome, but rejected their use of force. With a theology which attributed individual suffering to individual sin, it was easy for the Pharisees to think that these Galileans were particularly wicked because of their use of force and therefore had been directly punished by God (vs. 2). The Zealots, on the other hand, would judge the workers on the tower in Siloam to have been particularly wicked. Pilate had built an aqueduct in Jerusalem, financed by funds from the sacred Temple tax. The Zealots would have considered work on this to be a fatal compromise with the Romans and a denial of loyalty to God, and could well have looked upon the accident as God's judgment (vs. 4).

Jesus insists that both Pharisee and Zealot were wrong, in that their conception of the Kingdom – whatever the method of bringing it – was self-centered. To both, the coming of the Kingdom meant merely the replacing of the romans by the Jews as world conquerors. Unless they repented, changed their minds about the Kingdom, and laid aside the resistance to “*the purpose of God*” which they had manifested both toward John the Baptist and toward Jesus (7:30; 11:53-54), they would all perish (vss. 3, 5). In fact, were it not for the infinite patience of God, this would have happened already. The tree of Israel, which had not produced the fruits God expected, should before this have been cut down (vss. 6-7). But the time for repentance is now short. If fruit does not appear, the end will come (vss. 8-9). Repentance and acceptance of Jesus are immediate necessities.

Geldenhuys: The parable here evidently refers to Israel to whom God gave full opportunity to bear fruit but who remain unfruitful, as appears from their rejection of Him, the promised Christ. But nevertheless God will give them a last chance, and if they should then still persist in unbelief and sin they will be irrevocably cut down from their privileged and protected position as the chosen people of God. After Jesus' crucifixion the Lord through His resurrection and ascension, through the Pentecostal miracle and afterwards through the preaching of the apostles and the growth of His church, once more ministered to the spiritual needs of the Jewish people to call them to repentance. The majority, however, refused to repent and thus they drew upon themselves the disasters which accompanied the Roman-Jewish war (A.D. 66-70), when their national existence in the Holy Land was irrevocably cut down.

God's patience is infinite and His mercy boundless towards the penitent; but those who persist in sin will in the end have to suffer. Although God through His grace postpones for such a long time the punishment of the impenitent, in order to give them the opportunity of repentance, the day will nevertheless finally dawn when the time of grace expires.

Lenski: It is a fact that judgment is often preceded by an intensification of grace. Trench points to Noah, the “*preacher of righteousness*” in the days just before the flood; Jeremiah and other prophets just before the captivity; Jesus himself before Jerusalem's doom. The impenitent may misunderstand this and treat the abundance of grace presumptuously and make their judgment

only the more severe. But we should look at this from God's angle. This supreme effort of grace cuts off every shadow of excuse: **Isa. 5:3-5; Rom. 10:21**. In the end the sinner himself sees this, is compelled to admit it, and his complete self-blame makes his punishment the keener.

Steven Cole: What We Should Learn From Tragedies

Jesus was speaking to men who did not apply spiritual truth to themselves (**12:56-57**). From His reply, we can also surmise that these men were smugly thinking that those who suffered such tragedies were deserving of God's judgment, whereas the fact that they had been spared such tragedies meant that they were pleasing to God. Their theology was like that of Job's comforters, who thought that Job was suffering because he had sinned. Jesus corrects this mistaken view by showing that we all are sinners worthy of God's judgment. Twice (**13:3, 5**) He drives home the application: Were those who suffered greater sinners? "I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Then Jesus tells a parable (**13:6-9**) that underscores the point: If *you* don't repent, *you* will soon face God's judgment.

Thus rather than asking the question "*Why?*" with regard to suffering, we should ask the question, "*What?*" What does this tragedy teach me? Our Lord's answer is,

Tragedies should teach us that since death and judgment are imminent, we need to be ready through true repentance.

The lesson for us is to take common subjects that come up, like the tragedies in Colorado and in Oklahoma, and apply them to the person's need to get right with God before he stands before Him. Philosophic discussions are fairly safe; but Jesus turned such discussions into the personal need for repentance. He always had in view the need of sinful souls before the holy God. So should we.

There are two kinds of tragedies in the text: those caused by evil people; and, those caused by accidents or natural disasters. But the worst tragedy, as Jesus shows, will be the final judgment ("*perish*"), which involves not only physical death, but also spiritual death or eternal separation from God in hell (**12:5**). If we learn rightly from earthly tragedies, we will avoid the ultimate and final tragedy. So what should we learn from tragedies?

1. Tragedies stem from God's curse because of the sin of the human race.
2. Tragedies show us that life is fragile and that we must get right with God before we die and face judgment.
3. Tragedies should drive us to repentance, which will spare us from perishing.
 - A. THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE IS TO TURN TO GOD FROM OUR SIN.
 - B. THE TEST OF TRUE REPENTANCE IS FRUITFULNESS.

J. Ligon Duncan: Well, in this passage, whatever else we may say about reading God's providence, Jesus is concerned for us to understand that tragedies are clothing a message of repentance to each and every one of us. That is, that one of the things, maybe not everything, but one of the things that we are to be struck by whenever we see tragedies befall others, is the fact that we all deserve that judgment, not the message that they are especially wicked and so they really got what was coming to them, but we are to at least, as a part of our assessment of what

happens when a tragedy befalls, we are to say, "You know Lord, if I really got what I deserved, that's what I would have gotten." . . .

The Christian life is a life of repentance. We're called to repent and if we're not repenting, something is wrong. If you're not repenting today about something, if there's not something in your heart and life that you know needs to be repented of, then you're just not aware of your own heart. Repentance means knowing our sin. Repentance means grieving over our sin, not grieving over getting caught, not grieving over getting embarrassed, not grieving over the consequences, but grieving over our sin. And when we've gotten to the point that it's what we've done that bugs us, not what it costs us, not how embarrassed we are about it, but what bothers us is what we've done, we're getting towards Gospel repentance. . .

Verses 6 to 9 contain a parable, and that parable is about God's suspending judgment against Israel. Israel had not repented and the parable is a parable about God being ready to bring judgment on Israel because she had not repented and she had not brought forth spiritual fruit. And in the parable, the vinedresser intercedes for Israel and begs God not to bring immediate judgment and she is spared for another year in the parable. It's a picture of Israel's last opportunity to repent. Jesus is saying that Israel is facing a turning point in her history with His ministry. She will either repent or she will perish because she deserves God's judgment now. So verses 6 to 9, this parable tells us about the suspended judgment of God. Israel deserved to be judged, but there was suspended judgment.

MacArthur: But all through human history, God punctuates His patience with events that remind us death is around the corner and we don't know when. That's the message. And that's what I said to Larry King that night. The message is, you don't know when you're going to die, but you are going to die and you can't predict it and you can't plan it. You need to be ready. The question in the Old Testament is why did God let all those sinners live? Why does God let a world of sinners live today? Because He's compassionate and He's merciful and He's patient, and He's waiting for sinners to repent. And Spurgeon went on to say, "It is only because He has mercy, not willing that we should perish but that we should come to repentance." That's why He has preserved us from going down to the grave and kept us alive from death. . .

This was... This was such a bitter pill the Jews wouldn't swallow it. Repent? We're the righteous. We're the godly. We're the spiritual. We're the chosen. We're the blessed. What are You talking about, repent? They hated His talk of repentance. They hated it with John the Baptist. They hated it with Jesus. And it was because He called them to repentance that they plotted to murder Him and eventually did. They refused to see themselves as sinners. They refused to see themselves as headed for judgment. It infuriated them to be diagnosed that way; most of all the leaders and then the leaders passed on that infuriated attitude to the people. And our Lord doesn't try to prove they were sinners. He doesn't give some long litany trying to prove they were sinners. They all knew the law of God. And they all knew that the law was summed up in the great commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, your neighbor as yourself." They knew they didn't do that. They knew they were full of hate and animosity and bitterness and wretchedness. They knew. So He didn't bother to prove that they were sinners. They had the law of God, well acquainted with it. He just said to them, "You better repent. Are you prepared when a tower falls on you?"

TEXT: Luke 13:10-17

TITLE: *STANDING TALL*

BIG IDEA:

JESUS BREAKS ALL THE RULES OF LEGALISM AND HYPOCRISY TO SET PEOPLE FREE FROM BONDAGE AND BROKENNESS

INTRODUCTION:

Why were the Pharisees and scribes and synagogue officials deserving of such judgment? This story demonstrates the urgent need for repentance on the part of the spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel that had just been dealt with in **vvs. 1-9**. It also demonstrates the type of division that Jesus had promised He would cause.

Ralph Wilson: When I first read this story I think it is about Jesus' opposition to legalism. Then I re-read it and think it is about Jesus' victory over Satan's oppression. And then I re-read it and see it as a simple story of love. Whatever it is, I find it profoundly moving.

JESUS BREAKS ALL THE RULES OF LEGALISM AND HYPOCRISY TO SET PEOPLE FREE FROM BONDAGE AND BROKENNESS

I. (:10-13) DRAMATIC HEALING ON THE SABBATH – SETTING FREE FROM BONDAGE AND BROKENNESS

A. (:10) Standard Practice = Teaching in Synagogue on Sabbath

“And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.”

Morris: This is the last time Jesus is recorded to have taught in a synagogue or even to have been in one.

B. (:11) Severe Disability Attributed to an Evil Spirit

“And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.”

SermonWriter.com: A posture problem of this magnitude would interfere with everyday tasks and social relationships. It would put a strain on organs of the body, affecting health in various ways. She is forced to spend life looking down at the ground rather than up at the sky. She cannot look people in the eye.

Steven Cole: But in spite of all her years of going to the synagogue, this woman was in bondage to this debilitating illness that Jesus ascribes to Satan. As such, she is a picture of the millions who attend religious services every week for years, but they live in spiritual bondage to sin and to the prince of darkness. They are often sincere people, but they are bent over under the load of sin and guilt. The religious system tolerates their bondage and perhaps even shrugs it off as accepted. But it can't deliver them from it. What they need is what this woman experienced, a personal encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ.

MacArthur: Now all of a sudden she becomes the centerpiece of the whole day. And Jesus puts her front and center and makes her the focal point of everything. And I love this about Him.

He... He reveals His utter indifference to their system of rank and status. He reveals His utter indifference to their perception of privilege. He reveals His complete indifference to their sense...sense of achievement. He had no affection for their honor system. He honors the outcast woman and He humiliates the ruler. He has no affection for their perverted Sabbath. And He supersedes their authority with His own. He has no interest in their self-righteousness, seeking to be elevated. And He elevates one they would seek to sweep away.

C. (:12-13) Spectacular Healing at the Loving Initiative of the Great Physician

1. (:12) Freeing Her From the Sickness

“And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, ‘Woman, you are freed from your sickness.’”

2. (:13a) Restoring Her to Full Health

“And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again,”

Steven Cole: But even though salvation does not always bring instant deliverance from long-term problems, it *always* results in an instantaneous, dramatic change of heart that comes from nothing less than the supernatural power of God. Conversion means that the formerly dead sinner receives new life from God. God changes his heart of stone into a heart of flesh that is warm toward the things of God. The formerly blind sinner’s eyes are opened so that he now can see spiritual truth. The formerly captive sinner is loosed from his chains and set free so that he now can have power over the sin that held him in bondage. All of these biblical metaphors for conversion teach us that it is not merely a human decision to turn over a new leaf. Conversion requires the life-giving power of God in raising the sinner from the dead.

3. (:13b) Glorifying God

“and began glorifying God.”

II. (:14-17) DIFFERENT REACTIONS TO THE HEALING ON THE SABBATH – WILLINGNESS TO BREAK ALL THE RULES OF LEGALISM AND HYPOCRISY

A. (:14) Synagogue Official -- Indignant

“And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, ‘There are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.’”

Geldenhuys: probably the head of the council of ten Jewish men of the vicinity controlling the local synagogue

Lenski: He is indignant with Jesus but dares not attack Jesus in person and so directs his objection to the multitude that crowded the synagogue.

Wiersbe: The bondage of the ruler of the synagogue was worse than that of the woman. Her bondage affected only her body, but his bondage shackled his mind and heart. He was so bound and blinded by tradition that he ended up opposing the Son of God!

William Barclay: To Jesus the Scribes and Pharisees were men who were acting a part. What he meant was this. Their whole idea of religion consisted in outward observances, the wearing of elaborate phylacteries and tassels, the meticulous observance of the rules and regulations of the

Law. But in their hearts there was bitterness and envy and pride and arrogance. To Jesus these Scribes and Pharisees were men who, under a mask of elaborate godliness, concealed hearts in which the most godless feelings and emotions held sway.

B. (:15-16) Jesus

1. (:15) Argument From Jewish Practice Regarding Caring for Animals on the Sabbath

“But the Lord answered him and said, ‘You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him?’”

Donald Miller: hypocritical regard for the Law which objected to an incident that illustrated in deepest purpose – the glory of God.

Morris: The rabbis were greatly concerned that animals be treated well. On the sabbath, animals could be led out by a chain or the like as long as nothing was carried. Water could be drawn for them and poured into a trough, though a man must not hold a bucket for the animal to drink from. If animals may be cared for in such ways, much more may a *daughter of Abraham* be set free from Satan’s bondage on the sabbath.

2. (:16) Argument From the Lesser to the Greater

“And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

David Guzik: Jesus gave several compelling reasons why it was appropriate to show her mercy, and more appropriate than helping a distressed animal.

- 1) She was a **woman**—made in the image of God, and because a woman and not a man, worthy of more care and concern.
- 2) She was a **daughter of Abraham**, a Jewish woman, with a covenant connection to Abraham. This may also indicate that she was a woman of faith, as well as her attendance at synagogue.
- 3) She was **one whom Satan had bound**, and every day is a good day to oppose the work of Satan and to set free his captives.
- 4) She was **afflicted for eighteen years**, long enough to suffer greatly and to draw forth the compassion of Jesus and others.

C. (:17a) Opponents -- Humiliated

“And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated;”

Continuous action

D. (:17b) Multitude -- Rejoicing

“and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.”

Continuous action

Ralph Wilson: When Jesus corrects us we can sometimes feel humiliated, Greek *kataischuno*, "put to shame, humiliated." The synagogue president and his cohorts have set themselves up against Jesus as opponents, Greek *antikeimai*. This also is a compound word, from *anti-* "over against, opposite to," and *keimai*, "to lie." Those who place themselves on a different path than Jesus, those who hold a different philosophy of life than the Master, make themselves his opponents. They are constantly in his way. My friend, we can unwittingly find ourselves as Jesus' opponents. Sometimes we can set our will to do something completely contrary to Jesus' spirit and direction. Then we are his adversaries, and deserving of whatever correction and humiliation that comes with our stubbornness.

The crowd, on the other hand are rejoicing, Greek *chairō*, "to be in a state of happiness and well-being, 'rejoice, be glad.'" Rather than seeing in Jesus' actions an affront to their rules, they see deeds described with the Greek *endoxos*, "glorious, splendid."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Jesus choose to heal on the Sabbath in such a confrontational manner?
- 2) Why does Luke with his medical doctor background point to the connection between the woman's debilitating sickness and the demonic oppression?
- 3) What was the nature of the hypocrisy that Jesus was calling out on this occasion?
- 4) Why was there such a contrast between the opposition of the religious leaders and the rejoicing of the multitudes?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: Why would Israelites reject the Messiah and the new covenant which He came to establish? Why would they prefer the condemnation of the law to the blessings of forgiveness and eternal life in Christ? There is only one answer: These Israelites were self-righteous. They did not regard themselves to be sinners, but rather as those who were righteous before God and thus deserving of His blessings on the basis of their good works. They would, in contemporary terminology, "rather do it themselves."

Steven Cole: Dead Religion Vs. Reality with Jesus

We should avoid dead religion and pursue reality with the living Lord.

1. Dead religion is marked by bondage to Satan, but reality with the Lord frees people from long-term problems.
2. Dead religion is impotent for lasting change, but reality with the Lord is powerful.

3. Dead religion lacks compassion for hurting people, but reality with the Lord results in compassion.
4. Dead religion is joyless and angry, but reality with the Lord is full of joy.
5. Dead religion is hypocritical, but reality with the Lord is truthful and genuine.
6. Dead religion promotes the wrong priorities, but reality with the Lord keeps the right priorities.
7. Dead religion brings glory to men, but reality with the Lord brings glory to Him.

MacArthur: Christ Creates Conflict in the Synagogue

This was a great point for Jesus to establish the truth, that if they were going to come into the kingdom of God and embrace Him as their Messiah and Lord and Savior, they were going to have to let go of the false system they were in. And the Sabbath was sort of the symbol of it all. And so Jesus comes into the synagogue, as He did commonly, this time to teach, as He did frequently, and all of the points of conflict become identified. . .

But let's look, first of all, at His **conflict with error, verse 10**. "*He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.*" That's all it needs to say. You say I don't see any conflict there. I do. You say, "Where's the conflict." The conflict would come in His teaching. Israel was apostate. That is they had defected from the true faith and in the place of the true faith, they had substituted a legalistic system, a system of self-righteousness that Jesus had to confront. That's why they finally killed Him. . .

As soon as we get into **verse 11**, we move from a conflict with error, which is only alluded to in **verse 10**, to a **direct conflict with Satan**. This is the second point of conflict. Whenever you go into an environment of false religion and you bring you the true message of Christ you will engage in a conflict with error and you will engage in a conflict with Satan. And that's exactly what happened in this case. It's symbolized by this woman. She had, for eighteen years, had a sickness caused by a spirit. . .

And so the Lord goes into a synagogue, confronts error with His teaching, confronts a demon with His healing. But the big confrontation was His **conflict with hypocrites**. And this you see in **verses 14-16**. Here's the real conflict that day. **Verse 14**, "*And the synagogue official,*" this would be the ruler of the synagogue, the *archisunagōgos*. This is the ruler. He has a responsibility to oversee the whole operation. He's the religious establishment man. He's the typical legalist who has little or no compassion for people. Know this folks about false religion. False religion can be brutal. It can be brutal. . .

But the synagogue official, he was an establishment man and he was going to wield the club and he was going to make it as tough as he could. Legalists do that you know. They have little or no compassion for the suffering, and legalistic religion is harsh and brutal and merciless and loveless. This is sort of the archetypal legalist. He's just seen a woman, a woman who needed mercy and compassion and tenderness and kindness, released. You would have thought he would have joined in on the chorus and said let's all stand and sing glory to God. But Luke describes him with one word: synagogue official, indignant, *aganakteō* in the Greek text, intense

displeasure. . .

This woman then is a picture of the sovereign work of the Lord in salvation, a picture of the enslaved, oppressed sinner under the burden and bondage of Satan, hiding in the shadows, aware every moment of suffering the weight and the burden of sin hopeless, robbed of dignity, bent over like an animal, the image of God defaced. So is the picture of the sinner shuffling one day into the presence of God to hear the word of God. She is met by the Lord and He out of His sovereign love delivers her, straightens her up. This is the picture of the work of God in salvation. God offers salvation to the outcast, the humbled, those bent over by the weight of sin, who will come and hear Him and He will turn them into true worshipers and He bypasses the curious and the self-righteous.

Mattoon: In this passage we find a wide variety of priorities and attitudes in people that are found in our own lives today. A sick woman, a sensitive Savior, the synagogue's ruler, and a smiling crowd all reveal their priorities by their attitudes, actions, and articulation as a crooked woman was straightened out by Jesus. From all these different personalities, we learn what is truly important and what to avoid. Your priorities will determine the decisions you make each day. Many times they will influence your behavior and how you treat other people. It is for this reason, we need to make sure that we have proper priorities instead of poor ones. From this story, we will gain insight on what is important to God as Jesus straightens out a crooked woman. What is important to the Lord should be important to us.

SermonWriter.com: The hypocrisy of the synagogue leader has to do with his inconsistency:

- The leader believes that the Torah permits helping animals on the Sabbath—but not humans.
- The leader believes that it is acceptable on the Sabbath to free (luei) an animal that has been confined for a few hours but unacceptable to free (luthenai—from the same root word as luei) a woman who has been bound for eighteen years. We should note that the animal would not die if deprived of water for a day. We should also note that it would be possible to fill a trough with water prior to the Sabbath and to tie animals so that they have access to it. Water for the animal is no more a life-and-death issue than this woman's bent back. Nevertheless, this synagogue leader would permit the loosing of an animal on the Sabbath to lessen its discomfort, but criticizes Jesus for extending similar compassion to this woman. We should not imagine that this is discrimination against the woman because of her gender. In the next chapter, Luke will relate a similar controversy when Jesus heals a man who has dropsy (14:1-6).
- The leader presumably believes that it is holy to “love kindness” (Micah 6:8), but not on the holy Sabbath.
- The leader believes that it violates Torah law to free a woman from Satan's bondage on the Sabbath.

Ralph Wilson: Medically, this disease is probably what physician's today would call Ankylosing Spondylitis, or Marie-Strümpell Disease, a fusion of the spinal bones. But this time the disease has a spiritual cause rather than just an organic cause. According to The Merck Manual, Ankylosing Spondylitis is a chronic progressive form of arthritis distinguished by inflammation and stiffness -- and in some patients even ossification of joints -- especially in the lower spine. Onset is usually in people aged 10 to 30 years, usually men, though 10% of patients are women.

Treatment focuses on relieving back and joint pain, and preventing or correcting spinal deformities. Even today we don't have any medicines that can actually cure this condition.

Early in the course of the disease, sufferers often find that the pain is relieved somewhat when they lean forward. So they often go through the day leaning slightly forward, and gradually their spine begins to fuse. The more they lean in order to relieve the pain, the greater the angle, until a patient might be bent almost double, as the lady in our story.

This disease had been progressing in the lady for 18 years. What began with lower back pain has ended with a horrible, permanent deformity. Whereas she used to be able to straighten up with effort, now she is no longer able. She is bound with invisible chains, chains of calcium now hardened in her spine -- in her case the work of an evil spirit. Though we don't fully understand the demonic element in sickness, Jesus found that some who need healing also need deliverance from demonic involvement.

SermonNotebook.org:

I. V. 11, 16 **THE TORMENT SHE ENDURED**

- A. **She Was Afflicted Physically** - This was a woman who was in severe physical pain. Her body was bent double at the waste. Surely, every day was a struggle for her. She found herself in a physical condition that prevented her from looking up. She could not, by her own power, overcome her condition. Sadly, many have found themselves in a spiritual state in which they cannot look up either! Totally unable to see past the torment they are experiencing in their lives. (**Note**: If you are the Lord's, even your afflictions are part of His plan for your life, **Rom. 8:28**.)
- B. **She Was Attacked Spiritually** - Verse 16 lets us know that this woman was an Israelite and a believer. Yet, she is under the attack of the devil! Satan has bound her and has caused her body to be broken by her affliction. (**Note**: Even saved people can be attacked by the devil. Now, we need to understand that no saint of God can be demon possessed! Jesus did not cast out any demons here. He merely spoke to her condition. She was not demon possessed, she was demon oppressed! Most of the time, our illnesses are just that which is part and parcel of the human experience. Let's not blame every cold on the devil. The point here is that believers can come under the attack of the enemy. He will seek for ways to bind our lives and to hinder us from being all that God wants us to be. What has you bound this morning? *Sin? Bitterness? Temptation? Hatred? Unforgiveness? Guilt? Addiction? Lust? Envy? Greed? Religion? Fear? Worry? Finances?* The list could go on forever, but the fact is, anything and everything, even the good things of life will be used by the enemy to bind, hinder and devastate our lives, if we allow him to!)
- C. **She Was Affected Socially** - No doubt, because of her condition, this woman was considered to be a freak. She was an oddity to be laughed at and imitated by children. She was an outcast and was probably unwanted, unloved and uncared for. She was the kind of person you would avoid on the street. She was a social pariah! (**Note**: She knew the pain of rejection! Some of you are afflicted in that manner this morning. Beware that you do

not allow your rejections to become bitterness! The enemy will use that to trap you and bind you, if he is allowed to!)

(Note: before we move on in this passage, I want to point out something about this woman. To me, she is one of the most powerful pictures of faith and faithfulness in the New Testament. She has been in this condition for 18 years! If she has been to the synagogue every Sabbath for those 18 years, she has attended some 1,000 meetings there. She has been sick for 18 years. She has not been healed, still she believes in God! She prays, but even when it seems like God isn't going to answer, she remains faithful. She comes to the services, in spite of the fact that no one would think a thing about her if she did not. She had suffered for years while God had only watched, still she remained faithful! What a rebuke she is to the mentality that abounds today! If we have a headache, we run to the medicine bottle and knock ourselves out. She was bent double, yet she came to the house of God to worship! We allow the slightest bump in the road of life to derail us and cause us to want to throw in the towel. She persisted in her faith, even when life didn't go her way, because she loved the Lord her God! I think she continued faithful because she knew that God knew best. I think she still believed in her heart that God would one day answer her prayer. I think she knew the truth that God was worthy of her worship, whether He even touched her or not! She loved Him and she would worship Him in spite of the obstacles she faced. She was committed to the Lord! Are we that committed?)

II. V. 12-17 **THE TOUCH SHE EXPERIENCED**

(III. This woman wasn't the only one who came to the synagogue to worship. Jesus Christ was in attendance that day and He came to worship as well. The Bible says, **verse 12**, "**He saw her**". Jesus went to the House of God to worship. He knew that genuine worship involved more than merely sitting in one's place. **Worship was more than an experience of the head. It was an experience of the heart that found reaction in His hands!** You see, too many come to church, sit in the pew, shift their brain into neutral and glide through the service, neither moving or being moved by what they experience. Genuine worship occurs when our belief moves from our head, down to our hearts and then out through our hands, **James 1:27**. Time spent in church that doesn't move your heart and motivate your hands is not worship, it is just time spent in church!)

A. **She Received A Compassionate Word** - When Jesus saw her, He called her to come to Him. When she had struggled her way to where He was, He spoke to her. He called her "**Woman**". What a word of compassion! Here was a woman whose beauty had long since faded. People did not see her as a woman, but as a freak, an object of mockery, pity and probably disgust. Yet, Jesus saw her as a woman! Others may not have recognized her significance, but Jesus did. He loved her like she was! **(Note:** No one around you might recognize your value, but Jesus does! He doesn't see you for the problems you bear. He doesn't see you in light of your past, your troubles or your scars. He sees you for what you can become through His matchless grace! He sees what He can do in, to and through you. He sees you as significant, special and honorable in His sight.) Then He spoke the words that must have thrilled her soul, "**Thou art loosed from thine infirmity**". What she had tried and failed to do, Jesus did with a word! What she or anyone could never have accomplished, Jesus did with a word! **(Note:** I don't know what has you bound this

morning. I don't know what kind of past you are fighting. I don't know what kind of emotional demons that haunt you day by day. I don't know about the valleys and the burdens, but I know Who does! I know that if you will come to Him at His call, **Matt. 11:28**, He can speak the word of liberty that will set you free from all that encumbers you. He didn't save you to leave you in bondage. He saved you to set you free, **John 8:36.**)

B. She Received A Comprehensive Work - This miracle that Jesus performed for this woman was *Speedy, Perfect, Public, Permanent* and it was *Internalized!* It was hard to deny!

1. **He Affected The Cure** - After Jesus spoke, He touched her and immediately she stood ramrod straight! No longer was she forced to shuffle about from place to place, never able to look up, see the stars, look at the sky. No longer was she deformed and freakish. No longer would she be the brunt of jokes and an object of mockery. She had been healed! (**Note:** What Jesus did for her, He has the power to do for you! He can break the bonds that hold you down and set you free! You need His touch in your life! You need to get to Him and look to Him for deliverance!)
2. **He Attacked The Cause** - This woman's affliction was caused by Satan. Jesus rebuked the influence of the devil in her life and set her free! (**Note:** Friend, He waits to do the same thing for you today! He wants to deliver you from the bondage of your hurts. He wants to heal your emotional scars. He wants to set you free from the pain and isolation you feel. Our enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil all delight in keeping us in bondage. Because, when we are bound, we are useless to the Lord and cannot contribute to the kingdom work of the Savior. Jesus has a plan to set you free. You need to get to Him!)
3. **He Addressed The Critics** - When this miracle occurred, the people in the synagogue began to rejoice, as well they should have, **verse 17**. However, the ruler of the synagogue told the people that they could be healed any of the other six days of the week. He was implying that the Sabbath was more important than the needs of the people! Jesus rebuked this idea and merely told this man that he was placing the needs of animals above the needs of people! In fact, Jesus tells him that he is a hypocrite! He loves his religion more than he loved God, or God's people! (**Note:** When this man went to the house of God, he was concerned about his religion and his reputation. When Jesus went, Jesus saw others and their needs. The ruler of the synagogue was determined to carry out his religion without being distracted by the needs around him. Jesus, on the other hand, was always looking for how He could help those around Him. He was about the Father's business, **John 5:19-20.**)

(**Note:** The thing to remember, is that Jesus Christ still has the same power in His touch this morning! If you are lost, He still has the power to save you! If you are hurting, whether it be emotionally, spiritually, or physically, He still has the power to heal you. If you are bound this morning by the many things that come against God's children. He has the power to touch you and to set you free!)

III. V. 13 **THE TRANSFORMATION SHE ENJOYED**

- A. **She Was Healed Externally** - Life would never be the same for her again! Her condition had forever been changed! She was whole she was straight and she was free from the bondage of her condition. (**Note:** That is the power of His touch! It is life changing and it is powerful! When He touches you, straightens out what is wrong and gives you His healing, you will never be the same again! You see, when Jesus heals the heart, it always affects the outer man as well, **Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:3-5**. By the way, it is in the mind that real change is effected! When the inner man is made whole the outer man shows the fruit of that work!)
- B. **She Was Healed Emotionally** - This poor, shamed, broken woman stood up straight and began to praise the name of Jesus Christ. Her pain had been replaced with His praise! Her shame had been replaced with His shout! He had touched her and now she was free! The verb here indicates that her praise was on going in nature. She just kept on lifting up her voice in praise to God above! (**Note:** What grace that can replace our bondage with the glorious freedom to be found in Jesus! When we experience His touch, when He breaks the bonds that hold us, when He sets us free from the scars, pain and trials of life, He replaces our gloom with His glory. When the Lord sets you free, don't you worry about it, you just give Him the praise He deserves!)

TEXT: Luke 13:18-30

TITLE: KINGDOM SURPRISES

BIG IDEA:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD WILL PROVE TO BE BOTH BROAD AND NARROW

INTRODUCTION:

The juxtaposition of these two short parables with Jesus' teaching on entrance into the Kingdom of God provides a dramatic contrast as well as some interesting surprises relating to the Kingdom. How can the Kingdom be both broad and narrow at the same time? Jesus shows how that is possible. How can the Jewish religious leaders have such false expectations of their membership in the Kingdom? Jesus points to some surprising aspects of who it is that will end up in this Kingdom before Judgment day closes the door on new members. But at the end of the day Jesus continues the thread He has been developing regarding the urgency of repentance and the need to be authentic as a true disciple.

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus in these two stories shows how something that looks small can become great. Something that looks insignificant, but is in fact very significant; something that looks almost insubstantial can permeate everything. And He's telling these stories to encourage His disciples because He is perfectly aware of what the response to His ministry is and what the response to their ministries will be.

They are being called to preach Christ and his gospel in a world and into a culture that will overwhelmingly reject those realities. And if they view the kingdom by the measure of their contemporaries' acceptance or rejection of Christ, by their contemporaries' acceptance or rejection of their message, they will be discouraged because though they will see amazing things just like in Jesus' ministry we saw amazing things. We saw amazing crowds follow Jesus' ministry from time to time and we saw amazing responses of faith to Jesus' ministry from time to time, and though the disciples, there will be days like the day of Pentecost when thousands come to trust in Christ, but there will be an overwhelming either yawn or rejection of their ministry, of their message, and of their mission by their contemporaries.

I. (:18-21) KINGDOM OF GOD CHARACTERIZED BY EXPLOSIVE GROWTH – 2 METAPHORS

A. (:18-19) Outwardly and Visibly - Like a Mustard Seed

1. (:18) Key Question Regarding Nature and Composition of the Kingdom of God

“Therefore He was saying, ‘What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?’”

2. (:19) Visible Impressive Manifestation

“It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree; and the birds of the air nested in its branches.”

The kingdom will be universal and extend to the end of the earth; it will be broad enough to encompass all nations; Despite humble beginnings and fierce opposition, it will be victorious and outwardly impressive

B. (:20-21) Inwardly and Invisibly - Like Leaven

1. (:20) Key Question Regarding Nature and Composition of the Kingdom of God

“And again He said, ‘To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?’”

2. (:21) Invisible Transforming Power

“It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened.”

The transforming power of the kingdom will be impressive

Steven Cole: So the meaning here is parallel to the meaning of the small mustard seed. The smallness of the pinch of leaven is not a problem even though the lump is large. The smallness of Jesus and His ragtag band of followers is no problem with regard to the worldwide spread of the gospel. The power does not depend on Jesus’ followers, but on the power of God through the gospel.

Geldenhuys: Through these two parables Jesus teaches that the kingdom of God, of which He is the Founder and Representative, will outwardly as well as inwardly come to perfect development notwithstanding its insignificant beginning and the opposition that will be offered it. Nothing will be able to stop its growth and full development.

Mattoon: Leaven is normally used to illustrate the influence of sin in the Bible, but here, it is used to illustrate the spreading influence of God's kingdom. The leaven starts out small, but then it changes the entire nature of the dough. That is what Christ does in us as we yield to Him. We are new creatures in Christ. Paul said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (**2 Corinthians 5:17**)." As we yield to Christ in our heart and mind, we change and become more like Him as He works in us. Paul spoke of this surrender and the resulting transformation in us. (cf **Ro 12:1-2**). The effect of leaven may go unnoticed, but it is working, changing the nature of the dough. God's working in our lives may go unseen at first, but He is working in our hearts. (cf **Php 1:6**). As the leaven does its work on the inside of the dough, our Lord works in our heart, changing us on the inside, which in turn, effects our behavior on the outside. We have no power to change ourselves. We are incapable, incompetent, inept, and ineffective in cleaning up our wicked heart. The power to change our ways, conquer sinful habits, and conform to the image of Christ must come from the Lord, who works within our heart and soul when our faith and trust are in Him. Without Him, we are helpless. (See **Jn 1:12, Jn 15:5**)

II. (:22-30) KINGDOM OF GOD LIMITED TO A NARROW CORE OF MAINLY GENTILE GENUINE BELIEVERS

A. (:22) Context – Heading to Jerusalem

“And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.”

B. (:23a) Key Question = How Many Will Be Saved? Many or Just a Few?

“And someone said to Him, ‘Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?’”

Interesting question in light of the preceding two metaphors that spoke of such rapid and widespread growth of the Kingdom of God when viewed externally

Steven Cole: Somewhere in some village some unnamed person in the crowd asked Jesus an interesting theological question: “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” I don’t know the man’s motives for asking the question. Perhaps he saw the increasing opposition from the religious leaders and he could sense that the crowds, although superficially interested in Jesus’ message, tended to side with their leaders. But he asked this question, “Are there just a few who are being saved?” Most of us have wondered about that question as we look at the billions of pagans compared with the few committed Christians. It would have made for an interesting theological discussion. But Jesus did not answer the question directly. Instead, He directed the question away from abstract theological speculation and toward specific application for each person in the crowd. The man had asked, “Will the saved be few?” Jesus turned it around to ask, “Will the saved be you?” Remember, Jesus was speaking to a crowd made up mostly of religious Jews. Almost to a person they believed in the one true God. They were not agnostics or polytheists. They believed in the Hebrew Scriptures and lived in basic accordance with them. In giving His answer, Jesus was not addressing a pagan audience. He was talking to the “church” crowd, most of whom assumed that they would go to heaven because they were good Jews. And He gives us church folks some important and practical lessons on the subject of salvation: Salvation requires our earnest effort, our urgent attention, and our careful self-examination. It requires our earnest effort because the door is narrow. It requires our urgent attention because the door is soon to be closed. It requires our careful self-examination because once it is closed, the door will be eternally-closed.

C. (:23b-24) Key Principle = The Door to the Kingdom is Narrow

“And He said to them, ‘Strive to enter by the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.’”

Focus on your own salvation – don’t get all caught up in what will happen to others

Donald Miller: Obviously, the questioner assumed that he was numbered among the saved. Jesus sought to shake him loose by insisting that no one is saved by the accident of birth into the Jewish nation, nor by the achievement of keeping the Law. The door into salvation is narrow (**vs. 24**). Jesus himself is the Door (**John 10:7-9**). Repentance and faith in him are the only striving that counts.

Morris: *Strive* is a word denoting wholehearted action. It is a technical term for competing in the Games, and from it we get our word “agonize”. It point to no half-hearted effort. This does not mean that human achievement merits entrance into the kingdom: it is the attitude that is in mind.

D. (:25-27) Don’t Presume You Have a Free Pass

1. (:25) Once the Door Closes It Is Too Late -- Urgency

“Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’

then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’”

2. (:26-27) Superficial Contact with Jesus Won't Cut It -- Authenticity

"Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets';

and He will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.'"

Geldenhuys: Though they may plead to be admitted on the strength of the fact that they have seen and heard Him and knew Him outwardly, He will reject them inexorably because they never came into intimate personal communion with Him and continued to live in unrighteousness, although they had the fullest opportunity to learn to know Him as their Redeemer.

E. (:28-30) Transition From Jewish to Gentle Orientation

1. (:28) Rejection of the Jews

"There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth there when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being cast out."

Anyabwile: Everybody talkin' bout heaven ain't goin'

Deffinbaugh: Notice that the Israelites who miss out on the kingdom by failing to pass through the narrow gate are very conscious of what they have lost, and what others have gained. This is the basis for great torment, for "weeping and gnashing of teeth." Hell is no joy. Hell is being separated from God, and wishing you were not. Hell is being separated from God, knowing that you could not have been, but refused, and watching others enjoy it. Hell includes conscious torment, the knowledge of what could have been.

2. (:29) Inclusion of the Gentiles

"And they will come from east and west, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God."

Morris: There is double mortification: being excluded themselves and seeing the despised Gentiles included.

3. (:30) Surprising Reversal

"And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last."

Lenski: Some people have all the means of salvation but fail to use them and are lost, others are destitute of these means in the beginning, yet the moment they get them they make full use of them and thus obtain salvation. This fact is beyond dispute, and it is used here as a warning.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is it discouraging to hear the door to the Kingdom of God described as narrow?
- 2) How can the NT sometimes use heaven in a positive sense and other times in a negative

sense?

3) How can salvation be a free gift and yet we are exhorted to *strive* to enter the door of salvation?

4) What motivations do you find in this passage to support the overall theme of the urgency of repentance?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: If you're not already on Jesus' side, these two parables should alarm you because you are opposed to that which inevitably will prevail. You need to cross the line by trusting in Christ as your Savior and Lord. If you are on Jesus' side, these parables should encourage you to sow the seed of the gospel, because God will powerfully use it for the conversion of sinners and the fulfillment of His purpose of being glorified in all the earth. You want to be on Jesus' side because ultimately He will triumph over all.

Deffinbaugh: The gift is free. Man does not work for righteousness, so that he can be good enough to get in. Neither does any person have some kind of automatic membership in God's kingdom. Those who are to be in the kingdom must recognize both the value of this gift and the need to diligently strive to enter into the marvelous blessings it offers. The urgency of the issue, the greatness of the reward, and the shortness of the time all necessitate a purposed, diligent seeking of that kingdom, and of getting through that narrow door, so as to receive the free Gift of salvation.

J. C. Ryle: Christianity is a religion which at first seems so feeble and helpless and powerless that it could not live. Its first founder was one who was poor in this world and He ended His life by dying the death of a malefactor on the cross. Its first adherence were a little company whose number probably did not exceed a thousand when the Lord Jesus left this world. Its first preachers were a few fishermen and publicans who were most of them unlearned and ignorant men. Its first starting point was a despised corner of the earth called Judea, a petty tributary province of the vast empire of Rome. Its first doctrine was eminently calculated to call forth the enmity of the natural heart, Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks, foolishness. Its first movements brought down on its friends persecution from all quarters. Pharisees and Sadducees and Jews and Gentiles, ignorant idolaters and self-conceited philosophers all agreed in hating and opposing Christianity. It was a sect everywhere spoken against. These are no empty assertions. They're simple historical facts which no one can deny. If ever there was a religion that was a little grain of seed at its beginning that religion was the gospel, but the progress of the gospel is great and steady and continuous.

Hughes: These growth parables...have been subject to over interpretation. This was especially true in the nineteenth century when it was commonly taught that the gospel would keep spreading until the world was Christianized and the kingdom was ushered in. For example, toward the end of that century **Sidney Gulick** wrote a book entitled *The Growth of the Kingdom of God*. The book's argument was that Christianity is inexorably spreading and will ultimately take over the world—so why not convert now?...Those who imagine that the kingdom can be brought in by the preaching of the gospel neglect the teaching of the mystery parables of

Matthew 13, such as “the sower” (Mt 13:3–23) and “the weeds” (Mt 13:24–30), which demonstrate that the church and its rule will be neither universal nor perfect. What really put an end to such un-Biblical (though noble) dreams were the great wars—and sins—of the so-called “Christian nations.”...The Biblical realism in these two parables does not teach triumphalism (the view that one religion will displace all others), but rather the effective growth of the church and the authentic transforming power of Christ’s Gospel.

Darrell Bock: Whatever (specific species of) tree is meant, Jesus is saying that **the kingdom will start out small but end up big**....The point is that the kingdom will end up with significant stature and will be a place where people of all races can reside comfortably....Jesus makes the point that the kingdom comes in a surprising form, not the one anticipated. That is why **Matt. 13** has this parable in his “mystery” section. But the surprising humble form of the kingdom’s coming should not deceive anyone. The kingdom will still end up being a place of comfort and shelter under the protective shade of the Almighty. In fact, the shrub shall transform itself into a tree. This point is important: Jewish expectation had been of the magnificent arrival of a grand kingdom all at once (this is why the disciples wondered what role they would have in ruling). Jesus says that the kingdom comes now, but it starts out small and will gradually assume the grand scale they expected. That is why the parallels speak of the mystery of the kingdom in such texts. It is still kingdom truth, but it is a fresh element added alongside the OT picture.

TEXT: Luke 13:31-35

TITLE: MINISTERING IN A CLIMATE OF HATE AND PHYSICAL THREATS

BIG IDEA:

THE LOVE AND COMPASSION AND RESOLVE OF JESUS KEPT HIS MINISTRY ON TRACK DESPITE POTENTIAL DERAILMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Today's ministry climate in America is certainly one of hate and all types of threats. The cultural divide has never been more volatile. There are serious issues on all sides – racial tension, social injustice, demonstrations and looting, anarchy and lawlessness – the list goes on. It is a difficult atmosphere to hold meaningful dialogue. One side shouts the other down with very little constructive interaction. Jesus can teach us a lot about ministering in a climate of hate and physical threats.

J. Ligon Duncan: He's surrounded by people who want to kill Him. Herod wants Him dead. Most of the Pharisees want Him dead. Eventually, large crowds in Jerusalem will scream out, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Jesus had to know how to live when there were people who wanted Him dead and His example is important for us, not just when we face circumstances where we are persecuted.

I. (:31-33) THE RESOLVE OF JESUS KEPT HIS MINISTRY ON TRACK DESPITE POTENTIAL DERAILMENT – THE REPORTED THREAT FROM HEROD

A. (:31) Reported Threat = Potential Derailment

“Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him, ‘Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.’”

Geldenhuis: In Trans-Jordan, where Jesus most probably was at this time, the Jewish authorities did not have much power. The northern part was ruled by Philip and the southern part by Herod Antipas.

Steven Cole: We don't know the Pharisees' motives for warning Jesus, but given their hostility toward Him, perhaps they wanted to use Herod's threat to scare Jesus out of Galilee (Herod's jurisdiction) and toward Jerusalem, where they could deal with Him.

B. (:32-33) Response of Jesus – Resolve to Maintain His Ministry Course That Will Take Him to Death in Jerusalem = Ministry of Jesus Staying on Track

1. (:32) I Will Fulfill My Ministry

“And He said to them, ‘Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.’”

Morris: God, not Herod, will determine when He is to die.

Geldenhuis quoting **T. W. Manson:** “Fox” in Jewish use has a double sense. It typifies low cunning as opposed to straightforward dealings, and it is used in contrast to “lion” to describe an insignificant third-rate person as opposed to a person of real power and greatness. To call Herod

“*that fox*” is as much as to say he is neither a great man nor a straight man; he has neither majesty nor honour.

Bruce Hurt: It speaks of journeying on, continuing the miraculous (signs) ministry without interruption or detours! Jesus is simply saying He would continue doing what He set out to do until He was finished, regardless of travel recommendations from the Pharisees or death threats from Herod. He would continue unperturbed and unhindered. His miracles would continue to attest to His power and authority over both the supernatural (casting out demons) and the natural world (healing) and were evidence that the Kingdom of God had come upon them (**Lk 11:20, Mt 12:28**).

Hughes: in the wider context of Luke, this was a cryptic reference to Jesus' death and resurrection being under divine control. King Jesus had addressed Herod, the petty monarch, with regal contempt and kingly confidence. This was sovereign premeditation! As the Master said on another occasion when he affirmed that he would lay down his life for his sheep, "*No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again*" (**John 10:18**).

2. (:33) I Will Die in Jerusalem

“Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.”

Deffinbaugh: Jesus made it clear that He knew He would die in Jerusalem. He was not naive of the danger. He was not oblivious to the pain and the persecution which was ahead. He was conscious that this was His calling.

J. Ligon Duncan: And you see what Jesus' response is in **verse 32**. He says, “I'm going to Jerusalem to die on purpose. I'm not scared that Herod wants to kill Me. And by the way, Herod can't lay a finger on Me because I'm not going to die one minute before God wants Me to die. My job is to perform cures and to proclaim the Gospel and I will do that this day and tomorrow and the next day and then I will go to Jerusalem to die. My life is in God's hands. God is providentially watching over Me. He has a purpose in My life and My purpose is to die, so I'm not afraid of death threats! I was born to die, but I won't die here at the hand of Herod in Galilee. I'm going to Jerusalem. It's in Jerusalem that I'm going to die.” The confidence of Jesus in the face of the threat of Herod, and perhaps the veiled threats of the Pharisees, is astounding. Why? Because He trusts in His Father's providence. He's not afraid. He knows the purpose of His life. He is unafraid.

II. (:34-35) THE LOVE AND COMPASSION OF JESUS KEPT HIS MINISTRY ON TRACK DESPITE POTENTIAL DERAILMENT— LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM'S DEMISE

Lament - A lament or lamentation is a passionate expression of grief, often in music, poetry, or song form. The grief is most often born of regret, or mourning. Laments can also be expressed in a verbal manner, where the participant would lament about something they regret or someone they've lost, usually accompanied by wailing, moaning and/or crying. Laments constitute some of the oldest forms of writing and examples are present across human cultures. Many of the oldest and most lasting poems in human history have been laments. ([Wikipedia](#))

A. (:34) Rejection of Jesus' Love and Compassion by Jerusalem = Potential Derailment

1. History of Jerusalem Rejecting God's Prophets

*"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets
and stones those sent to her!"*

Morris: It is possible that Luke records the lament over Jerusalem at this point simply because of its kinship with the subject-matter. It seems more probably that it occurred as Jesus approached the city, as Matthew says it did. The alternative is that Jesus uttered the words twice, which does not seem likely.

Lenski: These words are full of deepest pathos. The Pharisees are cold and hard, but the heart of Jesus is surcharged with deepest sadness because of their obduracy and the coming judgment. There is no "reverberating thunder" in the repetition "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem!*" All we need to do is to compare these repetitions as they are found elsewhere . . . These repetitions voice tender love and concern.

2. Persistent Longing of Jesus to Protect and Shepherd

*"How often I wanted to gather your children together,
just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings,"*

Steven Cole: If God is sovereign and desires that all people be saved, then why are all people not saved? I hope that you have your thinking caps in place, because our text plunges us into one of the most difficult subjects in God's Word: the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility. In approaching a difficult subject like this, we must avoid the tendency to keep it on an intellectual level.

3. Stubborn Rejection of Jesus by Jerusalem

"and you would not have it!"

MacArthur: That's why God in, as Paul puts it, in **Romans 10:21**, says, "*I have stretched out my hands all day long to a disobedient and obstinate people.*" And he's quoting Isaiah. All day long I reached out. All day long I put my wings out to catch you. You didn't want it. All day long I wanted to gather you and protect you and you would not. That's the word *thelō*, which means to want or to will or to desire. You didn't want it. That's the issue. Listen, beloved, that is always the issue with sinners, people who perish, perish because they don't want it. The gospel gives no place to absolute determinism. While we believe in divine election and sovereign election and that those who are saved are saved by the will and the power and the sovereign choice of God, at the same time, we believe the Bible is crystal clear on teaching that people perish and go to hell because they refuse to believe. They make that choice. Now if you don't understand how those two harmonize, join the human race. Nobody understands that, but you can't change that. The Bible is filled with those kinds of invitations and those kinds of statements which hold the sinner completely responsible.

Steven Cole: These verses show us God's great compassion toward sinners and the responsibility of sinners for their own judgment. We also see that sinners who reject the Lord do not in any way thwart His sovereign purpose. Someday there will be a multitude in Israel who will say in response to Jesus, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." . . .

In our text, we see Jesus' heart of compassion for the disobedient nation of Israel, which had repeatedly killed the prophets and stoned those whom God had sent to her. Even after Jerusalem's horrible history of returning evil in response to God's grace, here again Jesus calls out to her, telling her how much He wanted to gather her children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.

James Smith -- THIS lament was over a guilty city, and reveals—

1. A Gracious Purpose. Not judgment, but salvation. "*As a hen gathereth.*"
2. Infinite Mercy. Gathered under His wings. Persecutors, murderers, etc.
3. Almighty Power. "*How often would I.*"
4. Longsuffering Compassion. "*How often.*"
5. Heart - Rending Anguish. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.*"
6. Willful Resistance "*But ye would not.*"
7. Wounded Love. "*Your house is left to you desolate*"

B. (:35) Consequences of Rejecting Love and Compassion of Jesus = Ministry of Jesus Staying on Track

1. Devastation

"Behold, your house is left to you desolate;"

2. Delay in Enjoying Kingdom Blessings

"and I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'"

Steven Cole: Jesus not only issues a warning, but also a promise, that the nation would see Him again and this next time they will say, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord*" (a quote from the messianic **Psalm 118:26**). As Paul argues in **Romans 11:11-32**, although God has set Israel aside in judgment during the present time of the Gentiles, when this period is fulfilled, Israel will experience a great turning back to God just before the second coming of Jesus the Messiah. At that time the prophecy of **Zechariah 12:10** will be fulfilled, "*And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.*"

Anyabwile: We need Jeremiahs among us – weeping prophets. We ought to ask the Lord to examine our hearts to see if we are either too hard and uncaring or too brash in a worldly boldness. May the Lord by his Spirit give us the correct temper of brokenness and boldness to declare the gospel.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do you respond to pressures to forsake your ministry or give up on people?
- 2) What types of things threaten to derail or distract us from the resolve we should have to follow through on completing our assigned ministry?

- 3) How difficult was it for Jesus to face the prospect of the coming devastation of Jerusalem?
- 4) What type of anticipation do we have for the Second Coming of Christ?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The real danger of death for Jesus, however, lay with the religious leaders in Jerusalem (**vs. 33**). Jerusalem had almost a monopoly on killing prophets (**II Kings 21:16; II Chron. 24:20-21; Jer. 26:20-23**). Since Jesus must go on to make his final Messianic claim in the capital city, it was there that he would meet his fate. He had been there before, on visits not recorded by Luke (John 2:12), and had found only opposition and rejection (**vs. 34**). After their final rejection of him in the Crucifixion, God would reject them. Jerusalem would no longer be his city. It would be theirs alone! (**vs. 35a**). The final destruction of which the prophets spoke would come (**Jer. 12:7; 22:5-9; Micah 3:12**). But there is grace even in God's judgment. Although Jerusalem will be utterly rejected and destroyed, there will yet come a time in the future when at least some of God's ancient people, the Jews, will recognize in Jesus their Messiah, and bless him who has come in the name of the Lord (**vs. 35b; Rom. 11:25-32**).

MacArthur: This is essentially what covenant theology is. And what they say is that all of the curses that God promised, starting way back in the law of Moses, back in **Deuteronomy 27, 28, 29**, all of the curses that God promised to Israel if they disobeyed are definitely Israel's. We know that historically. They all came to pass on Israel explicitly the way they are described in that portion of Scripture. You can read **Deuteronomy 27-30**. You can read it all right there. God said this is what going...what's going to happen if you disobey me and dishonor me and that's exactly what happened. All the curses they say did come to pass literally on Israel.

However, they say, all the promises are forfeited by Israel because of their rejection of the prophets and the messengers of God and because of their rejection of the Messiah. And so all the promises are now **fulfilled spiritually in the church**. There's no future land for Israel. There's no future kingdom for Israel as a nation. They'll never get what was originally promised to them in Abraham. They're not going to have an actual king and an actual kingdom, an actual millennial glory. They're not going to really rule the world as the Messiah rules through them. That's all cancelled out and goes from being, as it appears originally, literal prophecies to come to pass historically, as well as spiritually to the nation Israel, to figurative sort of allegorical things that are fulfilled spiritually in the church.

And you have to ask the question: Well, how did you come to that conclusion? Because if you just read the Bible that's not what it says. But they feel that because Israel rejected the Messiah the church takes Israel's place, receives all the promises to Israel spiritualized or allegorized and God cancels out everything and there is no future for Israel. Now this is certainly inconsistent, because if you're going to take a passage of Scripture and you're going to say all the curses are literal, actually happened to Israel and you're going to take promises in the same context, the same passage, the same speaker, the same period of time, the same day, the same event and say they're all going to be fulfilled spiritually and allegorically in the church, you have arbitrarily split your hermeneutics, your principles in interpretation, and the question has to be asked: Why would you do that?

There's only one answer. You would do that because you don't like the outcome, so you change the rules. You have to go at it presuppositionally and start by saying well, we don't think that God is going to fulfill His promises to Israel; therefore, we have to make this mean something else. I have read a lot of that literature through the years. I remember reading one particular writer — there are a number who say this — but on particular writer who said, "We have to change the rules of interpretation when we come to these prophetic passages or else we're going to end up with a real future for Israel."

Now that's a strange way to approach the word of God. To decide what your conclusion has to be and then fix or rig the process to get you what you want. We know that judgments have come to pass, are coming to pass and will continue to come to pass on Israel in a literal fashion. I gave you the whole history of that in our opening message on this. There is nothing in the Scripture in the Old Testament anywhere that even talks about the church. The church doesn't even appear in the Old Testament. And there is no justification to allegorize or spiritualize, that is to say, take those promises out of the literal category and put them into some figurative realm arbitrarily, and you go back to the same old principle. If the Bible doesn't mean exactly what it says, if we say it doesn't mean what it says, then to what authority do we turn to find out what it does mean? . . .

God promised it again and again, **Isaiah 59, Isaiah 60, 61, 62**. In fact, in **Isaiah 62, verses 6-7** it pictures God in heaven eager, waiting, full of anticipation, having sent out watchmen who are called upon to report to Him and report to Him and report to Him because He is waiting for this glorious moment. It says in **Isaiah 62:7**, "*He has no rest until He establishes and makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.*" God will never rest until Israel is saved. God will never rest until Jerusalem is righteous. God will never rest until the Abrahamic, Davidic promises are fulfilled through the New Covenant. He will never rest until the millennial glory arrives.

His word is at stake, His promise. In this time, in this age, Jew and Gentile we can come to the gospel and come to faith in Christ. The same gospel saves Jew and Gentile. In fact, in Christ, there's neither, what? Jew nor Gentile. But how wonderful it is to know that in the future all Israel will be saved! God keeps His covenant. And so we can trust Him for all His promises to us.

Vance Havner: Go, Tell That Fox

When the Pharisees tried to frighten our Lord with a threat from Herod our Lord gave an amazing answer, found only in Luke. He said in effect, "*I have a life work to do and a ministry to perform and I will complete it*" (**Luke 13:32**). When man sets out to do the will of God he will hear from the Pharisees and the "foxes," to use our Lord's word for Herod, who intends to divert and destroy it. But this passage is just another way of saying that when we are in God's work and will we are immortal until our work is done.

When the Pharisees and the foxes try to confuse and discourage us with their predictions and warnings, let us tell them we are on God's schedule and He who has begun a good work in us will finish it. The man who has set out to do the will of God in his life is linked up with heaven, and nothing that happens on earth can defeat him unless he himself departs from what God called him to do and be.

Jesus was often saying, "*My time is not yet come.*" Then on the night of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane He said, "*This is your hour, and the power of darkness*" (**Luke 22:53**). His hour

and the Jewish leaders' hour met in a head-on collision. It looked like Jesus lost, but He won through death and resurrection. Whoever lives for Christ is immortal; he lives until his work is finished on earth, and he then continues life in heaven.

Book: He sees himself functioning as a prophet (a major Lucan theme: **Luke 7:16, 39; 24:19; Acts 3:22–23; 7:37**; Ernst 1977: 432). He is ready to assume the role of a suffering sent one, a righteous messenger rejected and wronged (also a common theme in Luke: **4:24; 11:50–53**; Ellis 1974: 191; Lohse, TDNT 7:329). Jesus knows that his destiny is tied to Jerusalem by divine necessity (so *teleiouvmai*, I finish my course] in **13:32** and [*dei*, it is necessary] here). Jesus is determined to carry out what God has sent him to do—and that includes suffering. This is the second time he has predicted his death in the journey section (**12:50**) and the fourth prediction overall (**Lk 9:21–22, 44**).

Rod Mattoon: Why do People Reject the Lord?

1. They Detest His Authority and Word

Isaiah 5:24— *Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.*

Jeremiah 6:19— *Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.*

1 Samuel 8:7— *And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*

2. They Doubt His Promises and Power

At the Promised Land, Israel would not enter because they focused on the size of their enemies instead of the power of God and His promises. For the next 40 years, they wandered in the wilderness. They did not believe God's promises and power to enable them to defeat their enemies. Doubt and unbelief cause people to reject the Lord and His Word today.

Romans 3:3— *For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?*

3. The Domination and Direction of the Wrong Crowd

The nation of Israel eventually rejected God's rule over their nation and wanted a king to rule over them because they wanted to be like the other nations around them.

1 Samuel 10:19— *And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes, and by your thousands.*

4. The Desire for Sinful, Wasteful Living

People also reject the Lord because they have a greater love for their sin than for Him.

2 Kings 17:15— *And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them.*

Isaiah 66:4— *I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them; because when I called, none did answer; when I spake, they did not hear: but they did evil before mine eyes, and chose that in which I delighted not.*

5. Determination to Live Life One's Own Way and Not be Disrupted

Some folks reject the Lord because they are determined to live their own way. In spite of the truth that is presented to them, they willfully and deliberately reject Christ. These folks refuse to trust in Him. They want to live their life any way they wish with no one telling them what to do and how to live. Their attitude is, "I want NO disruptions." When Christ removed the demons and sent them into the pigs, He disrupted the 58 lives of the people, who in turn, rejected Him and commanded Him to leave.

Matthew 8:34— *And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.*

1 Samuel 15:23— *For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.*

John 15:24— *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.*

Isaiah 65:12— *Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not.*

6. Deception

The deceptions of sinful living cause people to reject the Lord. People believe they won't get hurt or make light of their sin. They develop habits that eventually enslave them and their family.

Amos 2:4— *Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked:*

People also reject the Lord because they have deceived themselves into thinking they don't need Him or there is nothing wrong with them. The Jews rejected Christ because they thought they were righteous and had no need for a Savior.

Acts 13:46— *Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.*

7. The Deduction that Christ and the Cross are Foolish and Not Important

The message of Christ and the cross are foolish to those who are headed for destruction! Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would be rejected because He would be considered not important at all. This is why folks reject Him today. Jesus is not important to them.

Isaiah 53:2b-3... *For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. [3] He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

Notice what Paul said.

1 Corinthians 1:18— *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.*

1 Corinthians 1:23— *But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness;*

8. Dissatisfaction with God's Plan

God's plan was to provide His people with manna in the wilderness. Eventually, they became dissatisfied with this food. They griped and complained and longed for the days in Egypt. Their ungratefulness led to bitterness toward the Lord.

Numbers 11:20— *But even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you: because that ye have despised the Lord which is among you, and have wept before him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?*

9. Defects and Discrepancies in the Lives of Christians

Unfortunately, some folks will reject Jesus Christ because of the sinful or rude behavior of Christians. People watch what we do and how we live. Any flaw or weakness in your life will be magnified in the eyes of people looking for your mistakes. When we are inconsistent, indifferent, immoral, inconsiderate, ill-mannered, intolerable, and impossible to reason with, we flat-out turn people off. They reject our Lord because they reject us.

Christians are ambassadors of Christ. God uses His people to reach out to others.

2 Corinthians 5:20— *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Sad to say, some do a lousy job in representing Him! We are warned about being a stumbling block to others.

Romans 14:13— *Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.*

1 Corinthians 8:9— *But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak.*

TEXT: Luke 14:1-6

TITLE: SABBATH CONTROVERSY

BIG IDEA:

**HYPOCRITICAL HEARTS CANNOT REFUTE THE LEGITIMACY OF
COMPASSION AND MERCY TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING**

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus never shied away from controversy. He took advantage of confrontational situations to expose hypocrisy and demonstrate His love and compassion and mercy towards those who were suffering. He was particularly skillful at applying His wisdom to shut the mouths of His opponents who could offer no response to His devastating arguments or irrefutable illustrations. This just intensified the opposition on the part of the proud self-righteous religious leaders who were embarrassed by their inability to stand their ground with Jesus. They were always forced to retreat publicly and then regroup in private to try to come up with new ways to attack Jesus. When is it appropriate to show compassion and mercy towards those who are suffering? As Jesus had taught earlier in the Parable of the Good Samaritan, it is always our responsibility to take action when confronted personally with such suffering.

I. (:1-2) CONTROVERSIAL CONFRONTATION WITH HYPOCRITICAL HEARTS

A. (:1) Context of Scrutiny

“And it came about when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching Him closely.”

Morris: Jesus’ host was an important man. The Greek may mean a *ruler* (perhaps a member of the Sanhedrin) who was also a member of the Pharisaic party. Or it can signify “*a leading Pharisee.*” Either way he was an important figure. Dinner on the Sabbath seems often to have been a rather special meal (the food having all been prepared beforehand) and it was common to invite guests.

J. Ligon Duncan: “*They were watching Him carefully.*” Who were they watching carefully? The man in need? No, they were watching Jesus. They were watching Jesus not out of reverence or respect. They were not watching Jesus because they were hanging on every word and they were ready to do His bidding and every wish as His command. They were watching Him because they suspected Him. They did not trust His teaching or His practice, especially on the issue of the Sabbath Day.

J. C. Ryle: He always said the right thing, at the right time, and in the right way. He never forgot, for a moment, who He was and where He was. The example of Christ in this passage deserves the close attention of all Christians, and specially of ministers of the Gospel. It throws strong light on some most difficult points,—our intercourse with unconverted people,—the extent to which we should carry it,—the manner in which we should behave when we are with them. Our Lord has left us a pattern for our conduct in this chapter. It will be our wisdom to endeavor to walk in His steps. We ought not to withdraw entirely from all intercourse with unconverted people. It would be cowardice and indolence to do so, even if it were possible. It would shut us out from many opportunities of doing good. But we ought to go into their society moderately,

watchfully, and prayerfully, and with a firm resolution to carry our Master and our Master's business with us.

B. (:2) Compassion Towards Suffering

“And there, in front of Him was a certain man suffering from dropsy.”

Was this trap situation staged by the Pharisees?

Steven Cole: Dropsy, also called edema, is a swelling of the joints or the whole body, often due to a faulty heart or to diseased kidneys or liver. Jesus could have told the man, “Come back after sundown and I'll heal you,” thus avoiding a confrontation with the Pharisees. But He didn't do that; He healed the man and then verbally confronted His critics.

MacArthur: Dropsy is edema. Dropsy was water retention. Accumulation of serous fluids in a tissue and in the body cavity, bloating. In itself it's not a disease, but a symptom of a disease. It could be a number of things, serious compromises in the liver or the kidneys or the heart or all three. It's kind of a bloating, indicates perhaps congestive heart failure. It could be liver disease. Alcoholism was a reality in ancient days and alcoholism can fill the abdomen with gallons of fluid. When pumped out they will return.

II. (:3-4a) CONTROVERSIAL QUESTION POINTING TO THE LEGITIMACY OF COMPASSION AND MERCY TOWARDS THOSE WHO ARE SUFFERING

A. (:3) Question: Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?

“And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?’”

No problem addressing the elephant in the room

Morris: The clear implication of all this is that deeds of mercy are in order on the Sabbath.

Lenski: The question is simplicity itself, and men like these ought evidently to be able to answer it at once. Surely they knew whether it was in harmony with the law or in conflict with it to heal (aorist: actually heal) on the Sabbath. *“But they were quiet,”* which is stronger than just silent. Strange, indeed; no one spoke up, no one came forward to do so, there is no whispering even among themselves – all are motionless, their eyes are fixed on Jesus. The situation became dramatic as the Lord looked around and waited for a reply, waited until it was clear that he would get none.

Deffinbaugh: Here was a touchy matter. Their traditions, their teachings, clearly forbade such healing. The Law of Moses, however, did not forbid healing on the Sabbath. Indeed, if the Sabbath was made for man, for his benefit and blessing, how could one refrain from healing on the Sabbath, if he had the ability to do so?

J. C. Ryle: Let us notice in this passage, how our Lord asserts the lawfulness of doing deeds of mercy on the Sabbath day. The qualification which our Lord here puts on the requirements of the fourth commandment is evidently based on Scripture, reason, and common sense. The Sabbath was made for man, for his benefit, not for his harm – for his advantage, not for his disadvantage. Interpreting God's law about the Sabbath was never meant to impinge on charity,

kindness and the real needs of human nature. Our Lord shows that deeds of necessity and mercy do not break the observance of the Sabbath.

B. (:4a) Response: Silence

“But they kept silent.”

Afraid to get into any type of debate with Jesus

J. Ligon Duncan: Now, why do you think they remained silent? One reason is this, my friends — they could not point to a single verse or word in the Law of Moses that forbade the healing of a person on the Sabbath. Not one verse of the Old Testament would substantiate a prohibition on Jesus, the Lord of Glory, healing someone on the Sabbath or of anyone being healed on the Sabbath. And yet, they believed that Jesus’ ministry practice compromised the Sabbath and so they were locked in on Him. And yet when He challenges them — “Is it right or not?” — nobody speaks up because they can’t quote the Bible. Now this is important because Jesus is not saying what the Bible says about the Sabbath is unimportant to the Pharisees. He is saying, “You have added to the Bible, and thus, you have diminished the authority of the Bible.” Jesus makes it clear that our place for final spiritual authority in faith and practice is found in the Bible, not in the doctrines and commandments of men, not in the additions that people come up with. However pious those ideas are, whatever the good motivations are for coming up with those extra things, we are not to burden the people of God with extra added commandments. This is one of the points of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees.

III. (:4b-6) CONTROVERSIAL HEALING THAT SILENCES ANY POSSIBLE REFUTATION OF SHOWING COMPASSION AND MERCY

A. (:4b) Dramatic Action

“And He took hold of him, and healed him, and sent him away.”

1. Took Hold of Him

2. Healed Him

3. Sent Him Away

Deffinbaugh: Frankly, this man’s infirmity had been “used” by the Pharisees. Jesus graciously healed the man, but He would not leave him there to be humiliated. But how would he be humiliated? Jesus had already drawn attention to the error of the teaching of the Pharisees as it related to healing on the Sabbath. Jesus was now about to show them their hypocrisy in terms of their own practice. I believe that Jesus did not want this man to be among those who were about to be rebuked, and perhaps even shamed for using one who was infirmed, and so He sent him away. This is an act of mercy and grace, just as the healing had been.

B. (:5) Irrefutable Justification

“And He said to them, ‘Which one of you shall have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?’”

Geldenhuys: From this it is evident that they also recognized the principle that cases of real emergency pushed the ceremonial Sabbath laws aside. So they are hypocritical if they censure

Him for healing on Sabbath days the sick who are in physical or spiritual distress. Although in most cases there is no immediate peril of their lives, their suffering and the distressing condition in which they find themselves (a condition also affecting the families of the sick people as well as the whole community) are such that love demands their being healed without delay.

Lenski: Jesus implies that such a deed, whatever strenuous work it required, would be perfectly lawful. Shall the same love, which require no labor at all, be denied a fellow man?

C. (:6) Response: Silence

“And they could make no reply to this.”

Wiersbe: Jesus exposed the false piety of the Pharisees and the scribes. They claimed to be defending God’s Sabbath laws, when in reality they were denying God by the way they abused people and accused the Saviour. There is a big difference between protecting God’s truth and promoting man’s traditions.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we increase our level of interaction with unbelievers so that we are in a position to confront them with the truth of God?
- 2) Does our heart automatically respond to suffering with compassion and a desire to show mercy as the heart of our Savior does here?
- 3) What types of questions could we ask those who are looking to find fault with Christianity to disarm them and gain a hearing for the gospel?
- 4) Where do we see religious traditions in our day exposed as hypocrisy and excuses to avoid the heart of religion which is showing mercy and doing justice?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: There are far more characteristics of hypocrites than those listed here, but note these five from our text:

(1) Hypocrites study the Word for ammunition against others, but they don’t apply it to themselves. These men knew their Bibles. They knew the Law of Moses frontward and backward. They were the guardians of the faith, waiting to catch someone else in an error. Their aim in knowing the Word was not to confront themselves, but to have the ammo to use against others. They were watching Jesus closely, but they weren’t watching themselves closely. They were waiting for Him to violate their rules, so that they could pounce on Him. But they weren’t applying the Law to themselves. . .

(2) Hypocrites target and try to bring down anyone who confronts their sin with the Word. Why

did this Pharisee invite Jesus to dinner? What was his motive? From the evidence we have, I suggest that it was not to learn from Jesus. It was not to find out if possibly he was wrong and Jesus was right. He invited Jesus to dinner to try to set Him up and bring Him down. He and his cronies were watching Jesus to try to trip Him up. . .

(3) Hypocrites care more about their manmade rules than about people being right before God in their hearts. These Pharisees couldn't care less about this hurting man. So what if he was suffering? Jesus was breaking their rules! Hypocrites usually care more about external conformity than about inward righteousness. They aren't concerned about whether they please God in their thought-lives; they just want everyone to follow the rules about how you look and what you do. If Jesus had just observed their Sabbath rules, they would have been content to leave Him alone. But Jesus always dealt with heart issues, like having a pure thought life, being free from anger, and being forgiving from the heart toward those who have wronged you.

(4) Hypocrites bend the rules for their own purposes, but they apply them rigidly to others. These men would do what they had to do, Sabbath or no Sabbath. There were ways to get around the rules when you needed to. A Sabbath-day's journey could be extended if you knew how to do it, so that you could travel where you wanted to go. They would get their own son or ox out of a pit on the Sabbath. But, *no healing allowed on the Sabbath!* I wonder what Jesus' host would have done if Jesus had healed the host's wife or son on the Sabbath? Probably, that would have been allowed!

(5) Hypocrites often ignore overwhelming evidence in order to persist in their sin. Jesus powerfully and miraculously heals this man, but the Pharisees ignored that evidence. And, this wasn't the first time this sort of thing had happened! Jesus had cast a demon out of a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and the report of that had spread widely (4:31-37). He healed Simon's mother-in-law on the Sabbath (4:38-39). He healed the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, but the Pharisees responded with rage (6:6-11). On the Sabbath He healed the woman bent over for 18 years, but the synagogue official was indignant (13:10-17). How much more evidence did they need to wake up and say, "Maybe we're wrong and Jesus is right?" This shows us how deeply entrenched this sin of religious hypocrisy is and how diligent we must be to root it out of ourselves when Jesus confronts it! If you're not careful, you can build a case to defend your point-of-view and ignore overwhelming biblical evidence that convicts you of your sin.

Deffinbaugh: No matter what these Pharisees taught and demanded of others, they made exceptions for themselves. Let one of their sons, or even one of their oxen fall into a well on the Sabbath and they would "work" to get it out. They would do so immediately, without any hesitation or agonizing reflection. If, then, they would come to the aid of their son or their stock, why should Jesus not be allowed to heal the infirmed? Pharisaical hypocrisy was showing, again. The silence which results is the silence of sullen willfulness. If there was no willingness to discuss the matter, neither is there any intention of acknowledging their hypocrisy. Silence is the passive form of rebellion, but it is rebellion none the less.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now what are the things we learn from this? One of the things we learn from this is that showing mercy is always right. We should never ever use the excuse of religious observance to exempt us from showing mercy. One of the things that the Old Testament prophets repeatedly said and that Jesus picks up on in His teaching is what? To obey is better than sacrifice, or to sum up, to love mercy and do justly and walk humbly with our God, that's the

sum of religion. It's not merely ceremonial observances. And the Pharisees were using ceremonial observances as excuses not to show mercy. Well, we can fall into that too, even though we're not under the ceremonial law anymore. Even though we haven't been under the ceremonial law for two thousand years, we can still use religious observances to exempt us from having a heart of mercy. But the Old Testament prophets and Jesus both make it clear to us that our ethical conduct is more important than ceremonial obedience.

MacArthur: The Healing Savior vs the Hypocritical System

They took the Scriptures to the people and taught and explained it. And they were against any corrupted form for Judaism such as Sadducees, and Zealots and even then Essenes. Summing it up, they were characterized by strong doctrine; strong doctrine. When they engaged in questions with Jesus, they were questions about doctrine. Which is the greatest commandment? Their questions were doctrinal questions. In fact, they were so committed to the teaching of the law of God and its doctrine, that in Matthew 23, where Jesus denounces them, He begins by saying, "*The scribes and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses.*"

They've taken the posture, the authoritative posture regarding the law; they are strong on the law. Therefore all they tell you do and observe. When they tell you what Moses said, when they tell you the law of Moses, you observe it. You do it. Their doctrine was strong and Jesus' theology was closer to theirs than anybody else's. Not only were they strong in doctrine, but committed to scriptural authority. They didn't equivocate on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. In fact, every time a synagogue meeting occurred, somebody read the word of God. It was taken out, it was unrolled, it was handed to someone, it was read and then the teacher sat down, the rabbi sat down, and explained it. That's what they did. It was about the authority of the word of God. They were also committed to moral living. Strong doctrine, scriptural authority and moral living; they had a righteousness. They had a level of morality. Paul says according to his own life measuring it against the law of God, he was blameless, at least externally. . .

So the basic rabbinical rule was that you could only be doctored, you could only be cared for, you could only be cured or ministered to if you're going to die immediately on the Sabbath. But if it's not death imminent, wait till the Sabbath is over. So they...but they know Jesus has no regard for that silliness, that lack of compassion, that folly, that legalism. They also know He declared Himself to be the Lord of the Sabbath, which was the most extreme statement in their minds that He ever made, because the Sabbath was the purest representation of the dominant law of God. It all came into its pinnacle there. And for Him to say He's Lord of the Sabbath that was unmistakably a claim to be God.

TEXT: Luke 14:7-24

TITLE: DINNER ETIQUETTE FOR THE ESCHATOLOGICAL MESSIANIC FEAST

BIG IDEA:

3 SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS RELATED TO PARTICIPATION AT THE ESCHATOLOGICAL MESSIANIC FEAST – DON'T SEEK PROMINENCE, PAYBACK OR PRIVILEGE

INTRODUCTION:

Christ is once again striking at the self-righteousness of the hypocritical Pharisees who think too highly of themselves, who try to work to earn God's favor, and who are self-assured about their own standing in the kingdom of God. These 3 parables are closely tied together both by the setting of a major feast and by the motivations and ambitions of those invited or in attendance.

There is also much insight to be gained into the synergy between the sovereignty of God in salvation and human responsibility to respond to the call of the gospel.

I. (:7-11) HUMBLE YOURSELF RATHER THAN EXALTING YOURSELF – DON'T SEEK PROMINENCE – Don't think too highly of yourself

A. (:7) Scrambling for Positions of Prominence

“And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table; saying to them,”

B. (:8-10) Seating Protocol

1. (:8-9) Do Not Take the Place of Honor – Potential for Disgrace

“When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him, and he who invited you both shall come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.”

MacArthur: Typically the table would be in the middle. It would be a long table. And around the table would be people seated in a U-shaped fashion. There was only one head of the table and then down both sides to the far end. It could be a long table or a series of tables so that it could be a long way. The host would sit in the middle at the head of the table and then in importance the guests would sit on his right and his left and then it would begin to flow all the way down to the least important people being way down at the other end.

That's pretty much how it still is at important events. The places of honor were not marked with a sign. They were determined by the host. But the nearer you were to the host, the more honor you had. And honor was a big thing for them. I mean, they lived in an honor-shame kind of world and that was a part of the culture itself, but in particular was a part of their perspective because they were desperately desirous of being elevated in the eyes of men. . .

Reciprocity basically ruled the ethics and the action of the social structure of the Pharisees. It was a gift obligation system. It was a kind of currency as I said. Every gift had strings. To accept an invitation was to agree to an equal obligation, which controlled who was invited. You

didn't invite somebody who couldn't reciprocate. Only those who could reciprocate were invited and the better and more lavish could be the reciprocation, the closer they sat to the host. And the lowly, my, the poor and the crippled, the lame and the blind had no capacity to reciprocate. And even if you invited them, they wouldn't accept an invitation because they would know they would then be obligated and be unable to perform. And so it would be too embarrassing to ever accept that kind of invitation.

2. (:10) Taking the Last Place – Potential for Honor

“But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.”

Lenski: It was this worldly pride of the Jews, this unspiritual holiness superiority of the Pharisees especially, that made them despise a Messiah who was as humble as Jesus was. In spite of all the humiliation the Jews have suffered they to this day deem themselves the cream of the human race and attempt to come before God in this pride. And they have hosts of others who are as presumptuous and as arrogant as they are, especially over against the gospel and its way of salvation through repentance.

C. (:11) Spiritual Lesson = Exaltation Rather Than Humiliation

“For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”

Donald Miller: The “marriage feast” is a parable of the Messianic Feast, the time of salvation, when those delivered by God would banquet with the Messiah (**14:15**). The principle that he who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted, indicates that in the Kingdom of God all values of this present order will be completely upset (**vs. 11; 1:52; 15:18-32; 18:9-14; I Peter 5:5-6**). Those whom God delights to honor confess that they have no right to status before God, and cast themselves wholly on him for mercy.

Geldenhuis: a place of honour in the kingdom of heaven does not depend on self-assertiveness or on al man’s opinion of himself but on the righteous judgment of God.

J. C. Ryle: Humility may well be called the queen of the Christian graces. To know our own sinfulness and weakness and to feel our need of Christ is the very beginning of saving religion. It is a grace which has always been the distinguishing feature in the character of every true Christian. All do not have money to give away. All do not have time and opportunities for working directly for Christ. All do not have gifts of speech or tact or knowledge in order to do great good in this world. But all converted people should labor to adorn the doctrine they profess by humility. If they can do nothing else, they can strive to be humble. . .

What is the root and spring of humility? Where does humility come from? How do you get humble?

One word describes it. The root of humility is knowledge, **right knowledge**. The man who really knows himself and his own heart, who knows God and His infinite majesty and holiness, who knows Christ and the price at which He was redeemed, that man will never be a proud man. He will count himself like Jacob, unworthy of the least of all God's mercies. He will say of himself like Job, ‘I am vile.’ He will cry like Paul, ‘I am a chief of sinners.’ He will think anything good

enough for him and in lowliness of mind he will esteem everyone else at better than himself. Ignorance, nothing but sheer ignorance, ignorance of self, of God, of Christ, that is the real secret of pride. From that miserable self-ignorance, may we daily pray to be delivered. He is the wise man who knows himself, and he who knows himself will find nothing within him to make him proud.

II. (:12-14) SHOW HOSPITALITY TO THE NEEDY RATHER THAN FRIENDS – DON'T SEEK PAYBACK – Don't try to earn God's favor

“And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him,”

A. (:12-13) Selection Criteria for Hospitality Invitations

1. (:12) Not Based on Reciprocation

“When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and repayment come to you.”

2. (:13) Based on Real Need

“But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,”

Be unselfish and generous with your hospitality

Morris: Such people cannot repay their hosts. To give them a feast is an act of pure generosity. This kind of thing will be recognized at the resurrection of the just, not the conviviality that arises from celebrations among boon companions.

B. (:14) Spiritual Lesson = Eternal Reward for Blessing the Needy

“and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Donald Miller: Pharisaism was a religion of merit, of salvation by works. By dint of human effort one earned what Paul called “*a righteousness of my own, based on law*” (**Phil. 3:9**). Good works were presented to God for an equivalent reward. Offering entertainment to others that they might invite one in return and thus repay the kindness, was an illustration of the Pharisees' relation to God. Jesus countered this by insisting that members of his Kingdom should act toward others as God had acted toward them (**vss. 13-14**). God gives to those who cannot requite him. His kindness goes out to those who can offer him nothing in return – but love. To act this way toward one's fellow man is to enter into the spirit and purpose of God, and is to be richly blessed at the final Judgment (**vs. 14**).

III. (:15-24) THE DINNER PARTY MIGHT SURPRISE YOU – DON'T SEEK PRIVILEGE – Don't be self assured about your spiritual standing

A. (:15) Self Assured Can Be Self Deceived

“And when one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, ‘Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!’”

Donald Miller: The tone of his remark suggested that there was no doubt that he and his companions would be numbered among the guests! Jesus sought to shatter his complacency and

self-righteousness by the parable of the Banquet.

Presumption about your spiritual state can be a dangerous thing

Steven Cole: The unstated question that lies behind our text is, “What sort of person will be in the kingdom of God?” The Jewish leaders assumed, “People just like us will be in the kingdom, of course: good Jews who keep the Law of Moses, who follow the traditions of the elders, who keep themselves from ceremonial defilement.” If you had asked them, “What sort of people will be excluded from the kingdom?” they would have responded, “Gentile dogs, the immoral, the greedy, dishonest tax collectors—those kinds of scum will not be in the kingdom.” But Jesus yanks the rug out from under their self-righteous assumptions by telling a parable.

B. (:16-18a) Spurning God’s Gracious Invitation

1. (:16) Invitations Initially Extended and Received

“But He said to him, ‘A certain man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;’”

2. (:17) Confirmation Attempted as Dinner Hour Draws Near

“and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’”

3. (:18a) Universal Pattern of Rejection

“But they all alike began to make excuses.”

Donald Miller: It was customary in the East to have two invitations, one announcing the occasion ahead of time, the other reminding the guests at the appointed hour. . . The first invitation given was that of God’s prophets, who had been announcing the coming of the Kingdom for generations. The final invitation, indicating that the Messianic Banquet was now ready, was the coming of Jesus.

Geldenhuis: these 3 excuses were merely “pretexts”. They do not adduce any real reasons why they are unable to go. Their excuses are false and valueless – for one does not first buy a piece of ground and only afterwards goes to see what it looks like; and if one has already bought a yoke of oxen it is useless to go only then to try them (for the sale is completed); the fact that one has got married is certainly not a sound reason why he should not go to the supper to which he has been invited. In the same way the Pharisees and most of the other Jews also make all kinds of excuses for not accepting Jesus’ invitation to become true members of His kingdom. They are too much attached to worldly and visible things, and therefore they reject Him. Through the cares of this world and the temptation of riches (**Matt. xiii.22**) and the pleasures of life (**Luke viii.14**), they are deaf to the invitation of God which He brings.

C. (:18b-20) Specific Excuses Reflecting Priority Decisions

1. (:18b) Priority of Possessions

“The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’”

2. (:19) Priority of Business

“And another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’”

3. (:20) Priority of Relationships

“And another one said, 'I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’”

D. (:21-23)

1. (:21a) Disappointing Report of Rejection

“And the slave came back and reported this to his master.”

2. (:21b) Replacements Solicited

“Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’”

Anyabwile: The broken enter the kingdom, not the healthy. The more we admit our brokenness and need, the closer we get to the kingdom of God. The more we deny our brokenness and need, the further away we get from the kingdom of God.

MacArthur: So he came back, reports, the household head is angry. God has been dishonored. God has been scorned. God has been affronted. His goodness and His generosity and His kindness have been treated with contempt. This is a righteous, just anger and they know it. They would have said it in their minds. Whoa, that man has every right to be angry, and so does God have every right to be angry with those who reject His Son. The story seemed, at first, to be ridiculous, but the very ones amused by it were the ones who now see themselves under the anger of God. **John 3:36**, *"He who believes in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on Him."*

3. (:22) More Room Available

“And the slave said, 'Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’”

Matthew Henry: Though many have been brought in to partake of the benefits of the gospel, yet still there is room for more; for the riches of Christ are unsearchable and inexhaustible; there is in him enough for all, and enough for each; and the gospel excludes none that do not exclude themselves.

4. (:23) Drastic Measures to Ensure Full Capacity

“And the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.’”

The streets and lanes of the city might refer to extending the invitation to the common Jewish people (as opposed to the religious elite like the Pharisees). Then the highways and byways would reference extending the invitation to Gentiles as well.

Geldenhuys: Because such persons consider themselves unworthy and unprepared to go to the feast, they must be “*compelled*” to go – not by outward violence but by the instant urgency of the invitation. The master of the house demands that every place at the feast shall be filled.

J. Ligon Duncan: So what's Jesus saying in the passage? He's saying, “Don't miss the party.”

Don't miss the party.” Those who are invited missed the party because they cared about their own party more than the party that God is going to throw in His kingdom. And the people that ended up being there, frankly they didn't deserve to have an invitation to the party, but they cared more about God's party than anything else.

E. (:24) Spiritual Lesson – Kingdom Focus Switching to the Non-Privileged

“For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.”

Morris: The parable concludes with a somber verdict on those who were first invited and who made their excuses. There would be no second chance for them. They had squandered their opportunity and they would get no other. Once again we see Jesus stressing the urgency of the situation. God is gracious and will receive all who come to Him. But men may not dilly-dally. Those first invited might not take up the invitation but others would both Jew and Gentile. God’s purpose may be resisted, but it cannot be overthrown.

Manson: The two essential points in His teaching are that no man can enter the Kingdom without the invitation of God, and that no man can remain outside it but by his own deliberate choice. Man cannot save himself; but he can damn himself. And it is this latter fact that makes the preaching of Jesus so urgent.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what ways do we see Christian leaders today seeking prominence?
- 2) Evaluate what types of individuals you tend to invite over for a meal. Could you reach out more to the needy and to those who have no way to reciprocate your generosity?
- 3) How can salvation depend on the invitation of God and yet there is room for all who will respond in repentance and faith?
- 4) What does it say about God that He can be so angry with the nation of Israel for rejecting their Promised Messiah, yet still remain faithful to His promises to give them a future of salvation when He returns?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: When Jesus addresses the religious, the proud, the wealthy, and the presuming, he is not simply shaming people over small sins. Each of those attitudes is a major, damnable sin.

- The **hypocrite** – the Lord hates hypocrisy. *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in” (Matt 23:13). Vv. 1-6*
- The **proud** – God hates pride. *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (Jas 4:6). Vv. 7-11*

- The **wealthy** – money can be an idol. God hates idols. “*No servant can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money*” (**Luke 16:13**). Vv. 12-14
- The **presuming** – without repentance you cannot enter the kingdom. “*Therefore produce fruit consistent with repentance. And don’t presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father”*” (**Mat 3:8-9**). Vv. 15-24

Steven Cole: How to Have Dinner With Jesus

To have dinner with Jesus in His kingdom, you must respond personally to His invitation.

1. The nature of God’s invitation: It is broad, free, and ample.

We commit a great error when we make the church an exclusive club for the religiously inclined. Have you ever looked at someone and thought, “That person would not be interested in the gospel because he lives a very ungodly life”? Or, you see someone who looks like he belongs to a motorcycle gang and you think, “That person doesn’t look like a good candidate for a Christian!” Or perhaps we see a person whose attire identifies her as a Hindu or a Muslim. We think, “She has her own religion and way of life. The gospel is not for her.” Whenever we think like that (and we all have), we’re limiting God’s broad invitation of the gospel. His gospel will transform every sinner from every background who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. To every person on this planet the Lord says, “Come, for everything is ready now.” . .

2. The responses to God’s invitation: Some refuse with excuses, while others personally accept it.

Deffinbaugh: These invited guests—Israelites—whom God invited and who appeared to be planning on participation in the kingdom of God, failed to accept the invitation when it actually arrived. They had other, better, more important things, to do. In response, God now offers the blessings of participation in His kingdom to those who would not have been considered acceptable guests, the very ones (the poor, crippled, blind, and lame (verse 21)) whom God has told His host to consider inviting to a feast (**verse 13**). But not just the rejected, lower, classes of Israel are invited, but even those unsuitable people along the by-ways are compelled to come. God will not take “no” for an answer from them. It is not that they have chosen to be a part of God’s kingdom, but that God has chosen to make them a part of that kingdom. It is God’s sovereign purpose that has prevailed, not some superior wisdom on the part of Gentiles. Thus, there is no basis for pride. . .

Everything which is said here is said at or near the dinner table, and about the dinner table. But there is an “internal glue” which should be recognized as well, providing us with an even deeper unity. That “silver thread” is the concept of **self-interest**. Think about the ways in which self-interest can be found at the heart of every sin which our Lord condemns in these verses.

In **verses 1-6**, self-interest is at the heart of the sinful actions and attitudes of the Pharisees. Self-interest caused the Pharisees to reject Jesus, angry that He spent great amounts of time and energy with “sinners” and the unsuitable people, rather than with them. Self-interest caused the Pharisees to want Jesus out of the way, lest He overthrow their system, and prevent them from

all the “perks” which it afforded them. Self-interest was undoubtedly the motivation for their asking Jesus to dinner, and for “using” a sick man’s ailment in an effort to entrap Jesus in some technical legal infraction. So, too, it was self-interest that enabled the hypocritical Pharisees to excuse their acts of labor (pulling their son or ox from the well) on the Sabbath.

It was also self-interest which motivated each person to seek to sit in the places of honor at the dinner table (**verses 7-11**), which very likely left Jesus at the place of lowest honor, in a way fittingly appropriate, given the teaching of Philippians chapter 2 pertaining to the humiliation of Christ, leading to the cross.

Once again, self-interest is the culprit, a root evil, in **verses 12-14**. The reason why we are tempted to invite our friends, relatives, and the affluent, to our feasts, is that they can be counted on to return the favor. Self-interest will always invite those who can pay us back, reciprocate, rather than to “waste” a meal on someone too poor or unable to return the favor.

Finally, in **verses 15-24**, it was self-interest that caused the Israelites of Jesus’ day to reject Him as Messiah. In the parable which Jesus told (**vv. 16-24**), three individuals are said to have accepted (by inference, at least) the invitation to attend the feast, and yet the excuses for not attending were all matter of self (selfish, if you prefer) interest.

It is self-interest which keeps men from coming to Christ for salvation. Men wish to enter into the kingdom, but do not wish to create any pain, displeasure, or sacrifice for themselves. Thus, self-interest plays a prominent role in keeping men from Christ and thus from His banquet table, the kingdom of God.

Our culture is perhaps more permeated by self-interest than any other people at any other time in history. We have a magazine on the rack at the grocery store entitled “Self.” We may laugh at the antics through which the Pharisees went to get the best places at the dinner table, but we also sign up for classes which teach us how to assert ourselves, so that we can be more successful. Nearly every problem which man experiences today is now linked (in some mysterious way) to a poor self-concept. That which plagues the world is not self-seeking, but rather the lack of self-love and self-assertion. We are truly a self-oriented society, just as Paul described the culture of those in the last days (**2 Timothy 3:1-5**).

MacArthur: Like the guests in the illustration, Israel said yes to God’s original invitation, and no to the second invitation; they said yes to God’s promises, but no to His Son. Uninterested, indifferent, and self-satisfied, they clung tightly to the deceitfulness of riches and the cares of this world (**Lk 8:14; cf. Mt. 13:22; Mk 4:18–19**) and missed God’s heavenly banquet. As a result, **God was angry** with them and abandoned them to judgment, leaving their house to them desolate (**Lk 13:35**). Spiritual judgment comes on all unbelievers at death. Physical judgment fell on that generation in A.D. 70 when the Romans massacred tens of thousands of Jews and destroyed the temple. Judgment continues to fall on all who reject God’s invitation to salvation in Jesus and thus dishonor His Son. In **Jn 3:36** John the Baptist warned, “*He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.*” ...Instead of experiencing God as gracious host, those who reject His invitation to the heavenly banquet will one day face Him as sovereign judge and forever be shut out of His heaven (**Rev. 20:10–15**).

TEXT: Luke 14:25-35

TITLE: DISCIPLESHIP DEMANDS

BIG IDEA:

**THE WHOLE-HEARTED DEMANDS OF GENUINE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP
DEMOLISH SUPERFICIAL EASY-BELIEVISM**

INTRODUCTION:

For some reason, Christians seem to think that the most effective way to present the gospel message and the call to Christian discipleship is to make the commitment sound as easy as we can. That is not the gospel invitation delivered by Jesus. Yes, faith is a free gift. Yes, salvation is not something we work for or earn. But following Jesus involves a big-time commitment. Here we see the way that the Lord Jesus presents His discipleship demands.

Donald Miller: The Kingdom makes demands. It is the Kingdom of the Suffering Servant. Membership in it, therefore, means sharing Christ's suffering and living as his servant. Jesus was on the way to the Cross. Those who followed him would have to be willing to bear a cross.

(:25) SETTING

"Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,"

Geldenhuys: Ordinary human leaders take a delight in having the masses to follow them. Jesus, however, does not accept a superficial following of Him on the part of the masses, but subjects those who desire to follow Him to the most severe sifting process through the tremendous demands made by Him

I. (:26-33) THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP = TOTAL COMMITMENT

A. (:26) Supreme Loyalty

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

MacArthur: Now, the key to this passage is to notice three times the simple designation "My disciple." You see it in **verse 26**, you see it in **verse 27** and you see it again in **verse 33**. "You cannot be My disciple," "you cannot be My disciple" and then "can be My disciple." This is about being a disciple of Jesus, not a peripheral disciple, but being one who truly belongs to Him. That is the intent of the personal pronoun "My." This is not about a disciple or a would-be disciple or a potential disciple; this is about one who is "My disciple," that is one who truly belongs to Me. That is what Jesus is calling for in this text.

Darrell Bock: Discipleship is fundamentally a call to allegiance. Jesus is to have first place over all, including family....Following Jesus is to be the disciple's "first love." This pursuit is to have priority over any family member and one's own life, which means that other concerns are to take second place to following Jesus

Morris: Discipleship means giving one's first loyalty. . . hating can mean something like loving

less (Gn. 29:31, 33; Dt. 21:15, where the Hebrew means “hated” and not “disliked”, as RSV). . . . Devotion to Christ cannot be anything less than whole-hearted.

Look at how each of these areas of focus correspond to rebutting the excuses that were just offered in the previous section of this chapter.

Anyabwile: for the Christian the family cannot be an idol. We care for our family, yes. We provide for them as a demonstration of faith (**1 Tim 5:8**) But discipleship will call you to leave family and to reprioritize them in ways completely contrary to the world’s system. We must count that cost.

Deffinbaugh: When Jesus speaks of one’s family as a possession, it, like all other possessions, does something for us. What is it that family is believed to provide, about which Jesus warns?

Think for a moment about all those things which a Jewish family provided for a Jew.

(1) The Jewish family provided status. To be a child of Abraham was to be a cut above all others—at least a cut, but probably more. Being a Jew made one vastly superior to a Gentile. Thus, family gave the Jews status.

(2) The Jewish family was also mistakenly supposed to give one salvation. To the Jew, being a “*descendant of Abraham*” assured him of having a place in the kingdom of God. This is one of the false conceptions about which John the Baptist warned the Israelites (**Luke 3:8**). Paul, too, strongly insisted that not all physical descendants of Israel were true Israelites (**Romans 9:6**). If one’s family could get one to heaven, one would surely have a great sense of dependence upon his family. When an Israelite repented, he was also baptized, indicating a decisive break with all of this mistaken dependence upon his identity as a Jew. Paul, too, shows how his salvation turned his “gold-plated” family pride to “dung.” There were certain elements of Judaism which Paul retained, but there was no dependence upon Judaism for his standing with God, his salvation (cf. **Philippians 3:1-11**).

(3) The Jewish family also offered one security. An Israelite of Jesus’ day did not measure his future security in terms of his insurance policies, or his Social Security, or even his bank account; he measured it in terms of his family (cf. **Psalms 127:3-5**).

I believe that when our Lord demands that His disciples must “*hate*” their family He means that they must give up their **dependence** upon family, and must depend totally upon Him. To be His disciple is not only to love Him more than anyone or anything else, it is to depend upon Him. Independence of God is at the core of sin, and dependence on Him is at the core of discipleship.

B. (:27-33) Self-Denial

1. (:27) Cross Bearing

“Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”

Steven Cole: The cross was an implement of slow, tortuous death. Jesus here is looking at the process of daily death to selfish desires and of the willingness to bear reproach for His name’s sake. Since our Savior suffered the rejection and agony of the cross, if we follow after Him, we must be prepared for the same treatment. If people revile us for being Christians, we must bless

them in return (**Rom. 12:14**). We should never do anything to provoke persecution, but if we suffer for the sake of righteousness, we must entrust our souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right (**1 Pet. 4:19**).

Anyabwile: Jesus means we must join him in suffering. Every disciple has a cross to bear. We must pick it up and carry it daily. That cross is our dying. It's our self-denial. It's joining the Savior in his suffering so that we advance his kingdom. Jesus teaches that cross-carrying is essential – not incidental – to the Christian life.

Geldenhuys: He meant thereby that whosoever desires to follow Him must be willing to hate his own life (**verse 26**) and even to be crucified by the Roman authorities for the sake of his fidelity to Him. So in a wider sense this pronouncement of Jesus means that only that person who for the sake of His service surrenders all self-seeking and abandons all striving after his own interests can be His disciple.

Wiersbe: What does it mean to "carry the cross"? It means daily identification with Christ in shame, suffering, and surrender to God's will. It means death to self, to our own plans and ambitions, and a willingness to serve Him as He directs (**John 12:23-28**). A "cross" is something we willingly accept from God as part of His will for our lives.

2. (:28-32) Counting the Cost – Only God's Grace Can Provide Necessary Resources

Lenski: Discipleship is no small thing. Jesus magnifies it when he describes it as undertaking to build not less than a grand tower – not merely an ordinary house of shed. He magnifies it again when he describes it as a great war campaign, fighting a king with an army that is twice the size of our own.

We cannot trust in our own resources or we will never commit to the building project or to fighting the war. This is more about coming to grips with our own bankruptcy and our need for the grace of God than it is counting the cost and determining that we have what it takes.

a. (:28-30) Cost to Build Large Structures

“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'”

If you can only afford to build the foundation, don't bother committing to the project. Before making a major commitment, make sure that you have the resources and the resolve to follow through on it.

Will you persevere to the end or give up half way through?

b. (:31-32) Strength to Wage War

“Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace.”

Are you willing to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ?

Steven Cole: Our Lord is not trying to get these followers to muster up enough commitment to become His disciples, but to reckon with the reality that no one has the resources to follow Him, apart from His enablement. Discipleship, then, is not following Christ with sufficient means to do what He commands, but with utter dependence upon Him to enable us to do His will. Both the willing and the doing come from Him, and not from us. The whole concept of the “company of the committed” collapses, simply because no one is that capable or that committed. The key element of discipleship is not obedience, for we are incapable of that in and of ourselves, but dependence, for without Him, we can do nothing.

3. (:33) Consecration of Everything

“So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

Geldenhuys: This does not mean that he must sell all his possessions or give away all his money or desert his dear ones and become a hermit or beggar or wanderer, but it means that he must give Christ full control over his whole life with everything that he is and all that he possesses, and that under His guidance and in His service he should deal with his possessions in the manner that is best. . . The important thing is that whosoever desires to follow Him must be inwardly free from worldly-mindedness, covetousness and selfishness and wholly devoted to Him.

Lenski: Jesus now tells his hearers to renounce everything, literally everything they have in and of themselves, because it will all, however much of it there may be, ever get beyond the foundation of a tower, beyond 10,000 against 20,000 troops. They must get what will take them through, clean through from the first clash to a complete victory in the war. When they come to Jesus absolutely empty of anything in and of themselves, then they can truly be his disciples; then he can fill them with his possessions, and with them the tower can and will be built, the battle can and will be won. . . Discipleship and salvation are so great things that nothing of our own can avail in securing them.

Anyabwile: The point is not to count the costs and turn away if it’s too costly; it is to count the costs and embrace them because it is worth it. As someone has said, “Salvation is free, but it will cost you everything.” If we continue, then we are his disciples. If we turn back, then we never knew him. In summary, following Jesus requires we **renounce everything** we have: our relationships, our desires, our lives, our possessions, everything. None of it will have a hold on us – only Christ. None of it will command our top loyalty – only Christ. None of it will keep us from serving Christ. Our death in discipleship is really our life in Christ. To follow Jesus as a disciple means we exchange the entire world for that kingdom to come.

MacArthur: Jesus is not advocating socialism, or getting rid of everything and living a life of poverty. His point is that those who would be His disciples must recognize that they are stewards of everything and owners of nothing. And if the Lord asked them to give up all they would be willing, because loving obedience is their highest duty and joy

II. (:34-35a) THE VALUE OF SALT = MAINTAIN ITS INTEGRITY

A. (:34) Lack of Integrity Cannot Be Restored

“Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?”

Geldenhuys: Salt is valuable only when it possesses its special quality of saltiness. So a follower of Jesus is of use and a blessing only when he possesses the particular character natural to a true disciple, and from the foregoing it is clear that the characteristic attribute of true followers of Jesus is absolute unselfishness and self-sacrificing loyalty towards Him.

Lenski: Once the saltiness is gone out of salt [impossible in nature], nothing can restore the saltiness to that salt again. Both ideas are beyond nature – salt losing its saltiness and having it restored. Yet Jesus speaks of both as if men had found the former and had tried the latter. . . The renegade disciple is worse and meets a worse fate than the pagan.

B. (:35a) Lack of Integrity Renders Salt Useless

“It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out.”

Donald Miller: Discipleship means total renunciation of self, the readiness to offer up every precious thing if it is demanded in his service (**vs. 33**). This spirit of self-sacrifice for the sake of Jesus is the “salt” which preserves and sweetens society. Followers of Jesus who do not continue in a spirit of total commitment to him are worse than useless (**vss. 34-35**).

(:35b) EPILOGUE – LISTEN AND APPLY

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why are we afraid to present these requirements of discipleship as part of our evangelistic message? Why do we think we have to make it as easy as possible for people to come to saving faith?
- 2) When have you experienced conflict in your loyalty and devotion to a family member compared to the call of Christ on your life?
- 3) What do you have trouble giving up for the cause of following Christ?
- 4) How does the illustration related to salt highlight the need for perseverance along the pathway of discipleship?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The Cost of Discipleship

To truly follow Jesus Christ, we must consider the cost and put Him above everything else.

There are many in evangelical circles who draw a sharp distinction between salvation and discipleship. Salvation, they say, is God's free gift, but discipleship is costly. They would also say that while every believer ought to pursue discipleship, it is not linked to saving faith. In other words, there are some who are truly saved, but who never commit themselves to being disciples. They say that it is possible to receive Jesus as Savior, but not to follow Him as Lord.

I cannot find any basis for such teaching in the New Testament, and I can find many Scriptures to refute such teaching. To believe in Jesus Christ as Savior necessarily entails following Him as Lord. Salvation is not just a decision that a man makes, but it is the mighty power of God in raising a dead soul to eternal life. God, who began that good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus (**Phil. 1:6**). The new life God imparts inevitably results in a new way of life in accord with its nature, namely growth in holiness. The seed of the Word will bear fruit unto eternal life.

MacArthur: I want you to see three things in this text, one, this morning and two, next time, three great truths. One, being Christ's disciple demands **abandonment of past priorities**. It demands abandonment of past priorities. It also demands, secondly, **assessment of present powers**. And, thirdly, it demands **allegiance to future potential**. You take a completely different worldview, past, present and future. . .

The extreme character of discipleship: The language is unmistakably absolute, definitive, severe, you might say. But this is not anyone speaking other than God Himself, God incarnate, the Lord, Jesus Christ. He establishes the standards of discipleship. He determines the character of true repentance and saving faith. And it seems, when you study the words of Jesus, that instead of making it easy, He always seemed to make it hard. In fact, by most human assessments He makes it virtually impossible. We're good in our culture at making things easy. Simplify, simplify we're told. Make it as easy as possible. And this even finds its way into the church where we want to devise a gospel or a message that is easy to receive and easy to accept and easy to believe. This is not what Jesus did. . .

No one could ever accuse Jesus of giving anyone an easy way and, therefore, contributing to a false confidence, a false sense of salvation. He made extreme demands. They were not unwarranted. After all, He is God. He is the Sovereign of the universe and He has a right to be adored and worshipped and loved and served and obeyed. In fact, the Old Testament tells us that the commandments are all summed up in one great commandment, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.*" And that's what Jesus is calling for, a dominating love, a surpassing love, a love beyond all other loves, a supreme love. And He is thwarting superficiality. Here we have, in this text, a sample of His call to salvation. For those of us who've been going through Luke for a long time, we've heard this before. This is not new. This is what Jesus preached from town to town and village to village and house to house. He's calling people to salvation. . .

If the Spirit of God is at work in your life, nothing will stop you from making this commitment. You have nothing to fear in telling someone that. You have nothing to fear in saying to someone, "I want you to think about this, I want you to consider the cost carefully." You have nothing to fear. What you're doing is stopping people from superficial, non-saving delusion. You're backing them off and saying, let's find out whether this is really the work of the Spirit of God and what is happening in your life is not a momentary, emotional thing, but what is happening in your life is the true, regenerating work of the Holy Spirit producing an unrelenting

repentance and an undying faith that will go through every barrier. You do all the important things in life by calculating carefully. This is the most important thing you'll ever do. This is more important than any tower you'll ever build, more important than any enemy you'll ever meet. And so the Lord says, you want to be My disciple, do you? Well, you have to abandon your past priorities and you have to assess your present powers. . .

Don't start following Me until you're ready to let go of the past, affirm that the repentance and faith of your heart will see this thing through to the full commitment and issue in a long-term life of loyal service, committing yourself to future, privileged service to be salt in a decaying, rotting world. You're placing everything in the Lord's hands: past, present and future. Do we keep all these promises? Oh, look, our lives are filled with moments of failure aren't they? Moments when family dominates over the Lord's will. Moments when self dominates over the Lord's will. Moments when stuff dominates over the Lord's will. There are times when we wonder whether our faith is all that it should be and whether we do have what it takes to finish. There are times when we begin, even as salt, to lose our influence because of sin in our lives. Moments of failure do not, however, invalidate the direction of the heart. And we grieve over those moments. We know they're going to be there as long as we're still in our human flesh but they don't invalidate the heart's desires. If this is what you desire, if eternal life in Jesus Christ is what you long for to the point where it's a total takeover of past, present and future, then Jesus says you can be My disciple.

J. C. Ryle: It costs something to be a true Christian. Let that never be forgotten. To be a mere nominal Christian, and go to church, is cheap and easy work. But to hear Christ's voice, and follow Christ, and believe in Christ, and confess Christ, requires much self-denial. It will cost us our sins, and our self-righteousness, and our ease, and our worldliness. All—all must be given up. We must fight an enemy who comes against us with twenty thousand followers. We must build a tower in troublous times. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have us thoroughly understand this. He bids us "count the cost."

Now, why did our Lord use this language? Did He wish to discourage men from becoming His disciples? Did He mean to make the gate of life appear more narrow than it is? It is not difficult to find an answer to these questions. Our Lord spoke as He did to prevent men following Him lightly and inconsiderately, from mere animal feeling or temporary excitement, who in time of temptation would fall away. He knew that nothing does so much harm to the cause of true religion as backsliding, and that nothing causes so much backsliding as enlisting disciples without letting them know what they take in hand. He had no desire to swell the number of His followers by admitting soldiers who would fail in the hour of need. For this reason He raises a warning voice. He bids all who think of taking service with Him count the cost before they begin.

Well would it be for the Church and the world if the ministers of Christ would always remember their Master's conduct in this passage. Often,—far too often,—people are built up in self-deception, and encouraged to think they are converted when in reality they are not converted at all. Feelings are supposed to be faith. Convictions are supposed to be grace. These things ought not so to be. By all means let us encourage the first beginnings of religion in a soul. But never let us urge people forward without telling them what true Christianity entails. Never let us hide from them the battle and the toil. Let us say to them "come with us,"—but let us also say, "*count the cost.*"

Gregg Allen: But if the salt should ever lose its saltiness - if it becomes flat and flavorless - then it becomes absolutely useless for any of these things. You can't 'resalt' salt. It has lost all its potential. It can't be used. It's good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled on the ground. This is the picture of a man or woman who seeks to be a follower of Jesus, but who won't pay the price of following. It's a picture of people who call themselves Jesus' 'disciples'; but who still loves other people more than they love Him, and who still exalt their own concerns over His, and who still cling to the things of this world more than they cling to Him. As far as He is concerned, such would-be followers are as useless to the cause of discipleship as salt is that has lost its saltiness. They are good for nothing. They cannot - according to Jesus' own words - be His disciples. Now that's a 'hard saying', isn't it? But then, I didn't say it. The very Jesus - whom we propose to follow - is the One who said it. Jesus Himself closes with these words: "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*" May we hear these words - hard as they may be!

TEXT: Luke 15:1-32

TITLE: JOY IN FINDING REPENTANT SINNERS

BIG IDEA:

THE KINGDOM OF GOD VALUES NOT THE SELF RIGHTEOUS BUT LOST SINNERS WHO REPENT

INTRODUCTION:

The hard-hearted, self-righteous Pharisees would have found it easy to identify with the elder son in the Parable of the Prodigal Son. They were all about working hard and finding their security in earning favor from their father. They imagined the fatted calf was reserved for their feasting. They should be in the place of privilege. They were offended by the concept of free grace – especially grace extended to obvious sinners. They could not understand how Jesus could tolerate the company of tax-gatherers and sinners. Jesus ties these 3 parables together in brilliant fashion to expose their self-righteousness. The Son of God came to call sinners to repentance and joy in the kingdom is focused on the salvation of sinners.

(:1-2) OCCASION = ASSOCIATION OF JESUS WITH CROWDS OF SINNERS

A. (:1) Curious Needy Sinners – The Context

“Now all the tax-gatherers and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.”

Morris: We should not let the modern chapter division make us miss an important point. Jesus has just made an uncompromising demand for whole-heartedness as he showed what following him meant. He finished with ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear’. Luke’s very next words tell us that these sinners came near to hear him. Whatever the case with the Pharisees and their like, these sinners had been challenged. They knew what discipleship meant. They were called on to hear. And they heard.

B. (:2) Critical Self-Righteous Scholars – The Complaint

“And both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’”

On the contrary, God seeks out sinners to show them His love and mercy once they repent.

Gary Inrig: Jesus didn’t merely tolerate their presence. “This man welcomes sinners.” They felt comfortable in His presence! “And eats with them.” In a culture where sharing a meal meant acceptance and even approval, how could a good man behave like this? How could He enjoy their company and have them enjoy His? “That tells us all we need to know about Jesus. You can tell a man by the company He keeps, and since He’s not with good people, He’s obviously not a good man.”

I. (:3-7) PARABLE OF THE PRIORITY OF THE LOST SHEEP

(:3) *“And He told them this parable, saying,”*

A. (:4) Story: Priority of Diligently Searching for the Lost Sheep

“What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it?”

Donald Miller: Diligence of the search – If one is lost it cannot be because God has not found him, but because he has refused to be taken back.

Geldenhuys: the shepherd considers no trouble, sacrifice and suffering too great to find the lost sheep and bring it back. In spite of all hardships during the long search among forests, cliffs and gorges, the shepherd continues to seek until he has found the lost sheep. . . In no other religion in the whole world does one come to know God as the One who in His love **seeks** the lost person to save him through His grace.

Steven Cole: Sinners are lost until God finds them. The biblical description of those who do not know Jesus Christ is not *“unsaved,”* but *lost*. It’s an empty, hopeless word when used in reference to things or to animals, but it’s an especially bleak word when it is used in reference to people. **Eph. 2:12 . . .**

No, the glad fact is, you are not secure in your salvation because of your grip on the Good Shepherd, but rather because of His grip on you. He chose you as His own before time began. He sent His Son to secure your redemption by His blood. He sent the Holy Spirit to pursue you with the good news that Christ died for your sins. He sought after you until He found you and rescued you from your hopeless condition. Do you think that now He will let you go back into your sins and be lost again? Impossible! If the Good Shepherd has saved you, He will keep you from falling.

MacArthur: Lost sheep get the attention of the shepherd. Lost sheep, by the way, are in grave danger. Sheep are stupid. They are defenseless. Do you know a sheep has no self-defense mechanism? None, zero. If they fall over on their side, they can't get up by themselves. They are hopeless and helpless. So the sheep that's wandered off would be in danger from predators, in danger from a fall, from exhaustion, from dehydration. The land is rugged. It is demanding. Rocks are everywhere. All kinds of potential issues could beset that lost sheep. We're told by people who work with sheep in the Middle East that when sheep become afraid — and they do, they get very nervous and very fearful — they lie down and die. That's right. They can't get up. They become so despondent and discouraged. The Pharisees knew all that. And they knew the shepherd had to go and do whatever was necessary. It wouldn't be easy. Sheep look a lot like rocks. A dirty sheep is about the same color as rocks in the land of Israel and there are so many of those the rabbi said when God distributed the rocks He made a mistake and dumped them all in Israel. So the Pharisees and the scribes would buy into the story and they would understand the necessity of the action that the shepherd took.

B. (:5-6) Response: Joy on Earth Upon Finding the Lost Sheep

1. (:5) Personal Joy

“And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”

Donald Miller: The tenderness of the shepherd – **Is. 40:11**

2. (:6) Shared Joy

“And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’”

C. (:7) Application: Joy in Heaven Over the Sinner Who Repents

“I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents, than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

MacArthur: This is a very clear implication and a very clear application. Nobody could miss it. It was just too obvious. The whole story is about the joy of God when a lost sinner is sought and found and recovered. And the point is, how is it that God can be so eager, that God can be so desirous, that God can be so concerned to seek and save the lost, and you, who claim to be God's representatives on earth only despise the lost? How can that be? Another way to say that was: You couldn't be further from the heart of God. You despise the lost and God rejoices over them. You don't want to go near the lost and God pursues and finds and carries them back. And how is it that you can respect the shepherd, an unclean shepherd, who goes out to find an unclean animal and bring it back? How is it that you can take the lofty, ethical posture on the fact that he did the right thing and condemn Me for rescuing eternal souls? How warped are you? You are far from the heart of God and you are caught up in superficiality and triviality while souls all around you are perishing.

II. (:8-10) PARABLE OF THE PRIORITY OF THE LOST COIN

A. (:8) Story: Priority of Diligently Searching for the Lost Coin

“Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?”

MacArthur: Four little points: **lost, sought, found, celebrated.**

B. (:9) Response: Joy on Earth Upon Finding the Lost Coin

1. Shared Joy

“And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors,”

2. Personal Joy

“saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’”

C. (:10) Application: Joy in Heaven Over the Sinner Who Repents

“In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

MacArthur: The angels have a great interest in redemption. Why? Because they share in the joy of God. These Pharisees and these scribes and anybody else who has no interest in lost sinners being recovered don't even understand the joy of God or the joy of the angels or the joy of the redeemed. The angels even have an interest in judgment according to Revelation 14:10. They're going to be around when God does His judgment on those who refused His Son.

III. (:11-32) PARABLE OF THE PRIORITY OF THE LOST SON

Donald Miller: really a story of a father who lost two sons. Both boys, the one who strayed and the one who stayed, were lost to his love. It is possible that the one who stayed was the more lost.

A. (:11-19) Story: Lost Son Broken to the Point of Repentance

1. (:11-12) Demands Premature Inheritance – Wants His Independence

“And He said, 'A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' And he divided his wealth between them.”

Geldenhuys: The son lost no time going and enjoying his newly found freedom and goods in selfish indulgence. He tears himself away from the parental home and goes to a distant land in order to be as far away as possible from the watchful eye of his father so that he may be able to live as he likes without restraint. The result was that he soon wasted his substance in riotous living with others. He had fled in order to be outside the sphere of influence of his father and to be free and independent, but in the distant country he had come under influences that caused him to fall into the worst form of bondage – the fetters of sin had bound him in their deadly toils. He had exchanged the real freedom which consisted in obedience to his father’s loving will for the servitude of sinful profligacy, and together with the precious treasure which he had received as a gift from his father he lost his character too.

2. (:13a) Departs for Distant Country -- Becomes the Lost Son

“And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country,”

3. (:13b) Drains His Wealth in Decadent Living – Becomes Destitute

“and there he squandered his estate with loose living.”

Deffinbaugh: there is no attempt to minimize the seriousness or the foolishness of the sins of the younger son.

4. (:14-16) Degrades His Living Conditions = Of Less Value Than Pigs

“Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be in need. And he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he was longing to fill his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.”

Subsistence = just having enough food to stay alive

Morris: Two disasters struck him simultaneously – he ran out of money and he ran into a famine. The first was entirely his fault. It does not need vast experience to know that when capital is expended without return it must eventually be dissipated. The famine was not his fault but it increased his difficulties. People who might have helped him would find their own circumstances more straitened. Food was short and consequently would be high priced. It gave people the perfect excuse for refusing to help. So the young man began to be in want. He lacked even the necessities of life.

For a Jew no occupation could have been more distasteful. A rabbinic saying runs, “Cursed be the man who would breed swine” (Baba Kamma 82b). The pig was unclean (Lv. 11:7) and the Jew under normal circumstances would have nothing to do with it at all. The young man must have been in desperate straits even to consider this job.

5. (:17-19) Determines to Return Home and Plead for Mercy

“But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.’”

He finally comes to his senses

B. (:20-30) Response: Joy on Earth Upon Finding the Lost Sheep

1. (:20) Personal Joy

“And he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him, and kissed him.”

2. (:21) Expression of Repentance

“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”

3. (:22-24) Shared Joy

“But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and be merry; or this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found.’ And they began to be merry.”

Donald Miller: Forgiveness means not only the lifting of punishment and the setting aside of guilt; it means also full restoration to sonship (**Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14**).

4. (:25-30) Bitterness of Older Son

“Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things might be. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’ But he became angry, and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began entreating him. But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you, and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a kid, that I might be merry with my friends; but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.’”

Morris: the proud and the self-righteous always feel that they are not treated as well as they deserve. He cannot even refer to the prodigal as his brother but as this son of yours. . . It is a

common human failing to think that we are not appreciated as we should be, that people do not give us credit for what we have done. And whether we be religious or irreligious, we are usually somewhat censorious towards those we see as having failed to live up to our standards, even if our standards are not theirs.

MacArthur: What do you see in the story? Two kinds of sinners. The profligate, debauched, open, immoral, irreligious sinner and the hypocrite in the house, around the church, religious, superficially moral, and both are extreme sinners. And a father who entreats both, who offers both everything he has. And the point is this - young people, listen to me. The extreme sinner falls within the purview of God's grace. Not everybody is that extreme on either end, but that's good news for all of us in between.

C. (:31-32) Application: Priority of Rejoicing Over the Sinner Who Repents

“And he said to him, 'My child, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to be merry and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'”

Steven Cole: Each of the three parables illustrates God's abundant mercy toward repentant sinners and His great joy when they are reconciled to Him. But while they all illustrate the same truth, there are different emphases. The first two parables focus on God's seeking lost sinners and rescuing them and on His great joy in saving them. The emphasis in the parable of the prodigal son is on God's great love and mercy, but also on the necessary human response to experience His mercy, namely, repentance. Each of the three main characters reflects different lessons. The prodigal shows us the devastating effects of sin and the nature of true repentance. The father shows us God's great mercy toward repentant sinners. The older brother shows us the ugliness and danger of the self-righteous pride that lurks in every human heart. The entire parable teaches us that ...

There's a supreme irony in this story. The brother who was outside comes home and is welcomed inside to a feast. The brother who had never strayed, but who is probably hungry after working all day, remains outside, sulking. Everything that he needed was inside the house, but his anger and self-righteous pride kept him from the bounty and joy of the father's table. So, the first has become last and the last, first.

God welcomes repentant sinners with abundant mercy, but the self-righteous exclude themselves from His mercy.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How could the Pharisees value the recovered sheep and the recovered coin more than the value of the redeemed lost soul who repented?
- 2) What type of people were attracted to the preaching ministry of Jesus?
- 3) What characteristics of our Heavenly Father can you learn from these 3 parables?

4) How much joy do we get in the salvation of just one sinner?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: Six Reasons to Confess Our Sin and Repent (15:3-24)

A. Repent because we are of great worth in God's sight (:3-7).

Do you think the Pharisees really valued the people who were coming to Jesus? No. As far as the Pharisees were concerned, there were already enough people in their religious club – the right kind of people. . .

The value God attaches to the sinner's soul is seen in the cross and the blood of the Son of God.

B. Repent because our repentance brings joy to God (:8-10).

Heaven rejoices over every repentant sinner. Christians do too. Pharisees don't.

C. Repent because sin destroys our lives (:11-16).

A sinful life is a riches-to-rags story. His life slides deep into squalor and loneliness. If you live for yourself, you'll soon live by yourself. He doesn't have a friend in the world to help him (v. 16). . .

Sinners want all the goodness of God's creation and all the enjoyment of God's blessings, but they do not want God himself. They do not understand his fatherhood. They refuse to return his love. Unless God restrains the sinner, they squander their lives and waste away as they chase every desire of the flesh.

D. Repent because sin is a kind of insanity (:17-20).

A man cannot repent until he sees the insanity of sin in light of God's goodness. Living apart from God and God's gracious rule amounts to craziness, depravity.

E. Repent because God will still be a loving Father to us (:22-23).

See the excellent qualities that shine forth from the father. The father recognized the son's sin and destruction long before the young man did. He saw the folly coming. He also saw his son coming home from a distance (v. 20). There is compassion. There is tenderness in his embrace and his kisses. There is adoption and generosity. The father receives his son as a son. He places a robe and ring on him, signs of his sonship (v. 22). And there is that joy again – kill the fatted calf and let's celebrate!

F. Repent because repentance reflects the miracle of the new birth (:24).

Heaven finds repentance beautiful because it brings back to life those whom sin had killed. There is never any downside to repentance. We may sometimes feel our confessions and repentance will result in our loss, more pain, or something worse. These parables challenge us not to think that way. Though we find ourselves in the pig trough, the reward of coming back to God will be far and away greater than anything we risk losing from that trough! If we repent, God will be our Father. And unlike our human fathers, who have sometimes failed us, God will be the perfect Father who will never fail us, never forsake us, never punishes for his own convenience, but cloth us, love us, and rejoice over us. There's no father like this Father,. So come to God ready to be loved!

Deffinbaugh: It is my contention that the first two parables are a pair, emphasizing the same truth. The second parable begins with the expression, “*Or suppose,*” indicating that the second parable is like unto the first. The third parable is to be seen as distinct, focusing attention on a different area. Note with me the following characteristics of the first two parables, which is a key to our understanding what Jesus meant to be understood by them, as well as the basis upon which the third parable can be interpreted.

- (1) In both parables, sinfulness is not stressed (in going astray, getting lost), but lostness.
- (2) In both parables, the owner takes the initiative, seeking the lost.
- (3) In both cases, the owner seeks diligently and persistently.
- (4) In both cases, the owner rejoices and invites and expects his neighbors to do likewise.
- (5) In both cases, the rejoicing of the one who has found the lost item is likened to the rejoicing of heaven to the salvation of one sinner.
- (6) In both cases, it is not men who are lost, but things, and it is man (generically speaking, for there is both a man and a woman) that seeks diligently to find what is lost.
- (7) In both cases, I believe, the parable is not primarily intended as a picture of God’s seeking after lost men, but of men seeking after lost things.

This last observation is the most crucial one for us. Earlier, it was my understanding that the first two parables described God’s heart for the lost. This cannot be the case, for several reasons. First, Jesus begins the first parable with the words, “Which one of you, if . . .” Jesus was not describing God’s response to that which is lost, but their own. The Pharisees could easily agree that if they lost one sheep or one coin, they would diligently seek to find it, and they would greatly rejoice in finding it. Second, the over-zealous attitude of the Pharisees toward finding that which was lost or the extreme joy at finding it is explained. Should one abandon the 99 sheep, leaving them vulnerable to getting lost or to attack by wild animals? Is it not abnormal to notify all of one’s neighbors as to the finding of but one sheep, and to expect them to celebrate this with him? This over-zealousness is not characteristic of God, but it is believable in men. Third, the joyful response of heaven is likened to that of heaven, but in a way that suggests similarities and contrasts to the actions and attitudes of the Pharisees in seeking that which was lost. Fourth, the first two parables speak of men’s zeal in searching for and finding lost possessions, not lost people. The Pharisees were “lovers of money” (Luke 16:14), and it is therefore not hard to see how they would leave 99 sheep to seek one lost sheep, or to turn the house upside-down to find one lost coin. A materialist would easily identify with the mental torment of losing even one out of 100 sheep or one out of 10 coins. A materialist can’t stand to lose anything, and he (or she) would rejoice in finding what was lost.

The Pharisees were like Jesus in that they did have compassion, as can be seen in the tenderness of the shepherd toward the lost sheep, which he placed over his shoulders. The Pharisees cared very much for that which was lost, and they rejoiced greatly concerning the recovery of what was lost. The critical difference between Jesus and the Pharisees is that they cared about possessions, while Jesus cared about people. The Pharisees were hypocrites. They grumbled that Jesus could gladly receive back repentant sinners and rejoice in their salvation, yet they would

diligently search for lost possessions and celebrate when they found them. The first two parables, then, expose the misplaced compassion of the Pharisees. They also contrast the “love for that which was lost” in the Pharisees with that of the Lord Jesus.

The Pharisees were “out of sync” with heaven. Why were they unwilling to seek to save sinners and unable to rejoice at their repentance? Why were they unwilling to associate with them? This is what the third parable will tell us. The third parable depicts the loving and forgiving heart of God (in the father), the repentance of the sinner (in the younger brother), and the sullen joylessness of the Pharisees (in the older brother). . .

The words of **the older son** are the key to understanding his desires and attitudes. Give attention to those things which this son mentioned to his father, which are the basis of his actions, his anger, and his protest:

(1) I have worked hard, but you gave me no banquet. The older brother was at work in the field when his younger brother returned home. It would seem that this older brother thought that the basis for obtaining his father’s favor was his works. The father’s answer suggests the opposite. As a son, the older brother possessed all that his father had. He did not need to work to win his father’s approval or blessing, he need only be a son. This emphasis on works is the error of the Pharisees as well. They were “hard at work” with respect to keeping the law, as they interpreted it, supposing that this was what would win God’s approval and blessing.

(2) You have given your other son a banquet, when all he did was to sin. This is, of course, the flip side of the first protest. The older brother expected to be rewarded on the basis of his works, and he would likewise have expected his younger brother to have been disowned due to his works (sins). It was not the younger brother’s sins which resulted in the father’s celebration, but in his repentance and return. The older brother not only failed to comprehend grace, but he resented it. There are many similarities between the prophet Jonah in the Old Testament and this older brother.

(3) I have never neglected a command of yours. Not only does this son think that his works should have merited his father’s blessings, he also is so arrogant as to assume that he has never sinned. How could he say that he had never neglected a command of his father when, moments before, his father had commanded that there be a celebration, and the older brother had refused to take part? Is this not disobedience? The Pharisees, too, thought of themselves as having perfectly kept God’s commandments.

The problem of the older brother, then, is self-righteousness. His self-righteousness is such that he expects, even demands God’s approval and blessings. His self-righteousness is so strong that he resents the grace of God and refuses to rejoice in it. The older brother failed to see that he was a sinner, and he also failed to understand that God has provided salvation for all sinners who truly repent. What the older brother did not think he needed (repentance and salvation) he resisted and resented in others, and thus he could not, he would not share in the celebration. . .

The message which these three parables brought home to the Pharisees and scribes is painfully clear: they had too much compassion on their own lost possessions, but they cared little for lost people. This is why they could not rejoice at the repentance of lost sinners. But there is even more than this. It isn’t that the Pharisees and scribes found it impossible to rejoice; they actively resisted—they grumbled. The bottom line was that the Pharisees wrongly believed that it was

good works which merited God's favor, rather than His grace manifested toward sinners. The older brother was angry with the father because he felt he did not get what he deserved (a banquet), while the younger brother got what he didn't deserve (a banquet). The older brother's works didn't work, but the younger brother's repentance did. That is the way God's grace works—it is bestowed on unworthy people, sinners, who do not trust in their good works, but in God's grace.

Roy Zuck: Parables, allegories, and fables require special attention in Bible study. A **parable** is a form of figurative language involving comparisons. But rather than using a single word or phrase to make the comparison or analogy, as in a simile, metaphor, or *hypocatastasis*, a parable is an extended analogy in story form. A parable is a true-to-life story to illustrate or illuminate a truth. It is true to life though it may not have actually occurred in all details as the story is presented. Historic events may serve as illustrations; but parables are special stories, not necessarily historic events, that are told to teach a particular truth. Since parables are true to life, they differ from allegories and fables....

The word parable comes from the Greek *para* ("beside or alongside") and *ballein* ("to throw"). Thus the story is thrown alongside the truth to illustrate the truth. Hearers and readers, by sensing the comparison or analogy between the story and their own situation, are prodded to think. In interpreting parables we need to ask, What is the point of the story? What spiritual truth is being illustrated? What analogy is being made? Parables are sometimes unusual and startling, but never unlikelike or fictitious. Besides referring to stories the Greek word *parabolē* also refers to short statements (sometimes called similitudes) and to proverbs. Similitudes normally refer to customary habits, stated in the present tense, whereas the story parable records a specific instance, using the past tense (e.g., "*A farmer went out to sow his seed*," **Matt. 13:3**)....

Parables were an effective form of communication because, as stories, they immediately sparked interest in the hearers. As the people heard Jesus' stories, all of which were true-to-life, they were immediately drawn into the stories with Him. Their curiosity was aroused as they wondered how the stories would develop and conclude. Parables encouraged people to think. By drawing analogies Jesus wanted His hearers "to pass a judgment on things on which they were well-acquainted, and then to compel them to transfer that judgment to something to whose significance they had been blind." Jesus did not narrate the parables simply to entertain audiences with stories. He relayed the parables so that those for whom they were intended would "apply them, even if resentfully or reluctantly, to themselves." His parables were thus often disarming.... In interpreting the parables it is important to keep in mind that they all refer in some way to the **kingdom of God**.... If Bible students do not recognize the emphasis on the kingdom in the parables, they overlook an important key to understanding those stories and why Jesus told them.

Ray Pritchard: In 1937 the American Tract Society sponsored a contest in which they offered a prize of \$1,000 for the best new book written on one of the "essential evangelical doctrines of the Christian faith." Sixty-one years ago, \$1,000 was a lot of money and a great many well-known Christian authors entered the contest hoping to win the prize. A committee representing six denominations judged the entries. The judges unanimously chose a book written by a man whose name I have mentioned before—**Dr. Harry Ironside**, who for many years served as pastor of the famous Moody Memorial Church in downtown Chicago. The book he wrote is entitled *Except Ye Repent*. The title is taken from the King James Version of Luke 13:3 where Jesus said to the men of his day, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Let me quote the first sentence from Dr. Ironside's introduction: "Fully convinced in my own mind that the doctrine of repentance is the missing note in many otherwise orthodox and fundamentally sound circles today, I have penned this volume out of a full heart." Repentance, he says, is the missing note in many otherwise sound churches. If it was so in 1937, how much more it must be true in 1998.

In our day, and in our circles, the doctrine of repentance is not preached very often. There are several reasons for this. First, we live in a superficial age and any preaching of repentance is bound to cut through the superficiality. This is one point on which both liberals and conservatives share unspoken agreement—no one wants to go to church and hear hard truth from the pulpit, and repentance is the ultimate hard truth. Second, some evangelicals fear the preaching of repentance because they think it somehow opposes the gospel of grace. Their fears are justified if repentance is made to equal penance, the act whereby a man atones for his own sin. But that is not true biblical repentance. Where true repentance is preached, it actually promotes the grace of God.

TEXT: Luke 16:1-13

TITLE: PARABLE OF THE IRRESPONSIBLE BUT SHREWD STEWARD

BIG IDEA:

STEWARD YOUR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS SHREWDLY AND FAITHFULLY SO THAT THEY DON'T RULE OVER YOU BUT SERVE GOD'S KINGDOM PURPOSES

INTRODUCTION:

The entirety of Chapter 16 revolves around money issues. Jesus had a lot to say about money and material possessions. This topic follows naturally from what was presented in the previous chapter.

Donald Miller: The outstanding symptom of the prodigal's independence of his father was the selfish use of possessions (15:13). For Kingdom members, therefore, the central mark of whose life should be obedience to God's will, the unselfish use of possessions for the good of others is demanded. This is set forth in an unusual but effective way in Jesus' story of the Unfaithful Steward.

The concepts of stewardship of possessions, of faithfulness in small things translating to faithfulness in greater things, of investing for eternity – all converge in this interesting story of the irresponsible but shrewd steward. The bottom line conclusion drawn by Jesus is that we are loyal either to God or to money ... but not to both.

I. (:1-8) 2 KEY INSIGHTS REGARDING THE CHRISTIAN AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

“Now He was also saying to the disciples,”

A. (:1-2) Steward Your Material Possessions Faithfully In Light of Eternal Accountability

1. (:1) Report of Unfaithful Stewardship

“There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this steward was reported to him as squandering his possessions.”

Morris: The nature of his job made it easy for him to misappropriate funds for his own purposes.

Deffinbaugh: I take it that this means he must have helped himself to too much that belonged to his master. I can imagine that in our culture this would mean padded expense accounts, lavish meals and accommodations, a limousine, and the like. This man was consuming much of his master's wealth, but producing very little. He was not working for his master, but for himself. Unlike Joseph, who saw his stewardship as a sacred trust, and who thus refused to “use” his master's wife, this steward seems to have helped himself to everything that was within his reach.

2. (:2) Report of Accountability

“And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.’”

Geldenhuys: The owner apparently did not suspect the steward of conscious dishonesty, but

thought that he had merely been irresponsible and extravagant in his management. So he did not have him forthwith arrested and punished for deceit or theft, but only informed him that he could no longer be his steward.

MacArthur: Can I tell you something about business, a little hint? This is a bad way to do business. If you're going to fire someone for mismanagement they're gone today. They're gone today, because if they would treat your possessions that way when there's accountability, responsibility, and a price to pay, you don't want to give them any extra time to do more damage when you have no recourse. If you're fired, you need to be out of there. If it's for malfeasance, irresponsibility, embezzlement, etc., if you have cause to fire someone it's over the day you fire them. Otherwise if they hang around they're going to use their inside opportunity for vengeance or more personal gain.

B. (:3-8) Steward Your Material Possessions Shrewdly to Make Friends for Eternity

1. (:3-4) Strategic Dilemma – I Need a Game Plan

a. (:3) I Need to Develop a Creative Strategy – Think Outside of the Box

“And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg.’”

Lenski: He at once eliminates two distasteful courses. To earn his living by digging and downright hard labor is out of the question because he has not the physical strength for that; to go begging and to eke out an existence in that way are also out of consideration because he is ashamed to come down so low after his prominence for a long time.

b. (:4) I Need to Develop a Long Term Strategy – To Ensure Future Security

“I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the stewardship, they will receive me into their homes.”

2. (:5-7) Shrewd Scheming – Let's Make a Deal

a. (:5-6) Cut a Deal for 50% Return

“And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he began saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’”

It was crucial to deal with each debtor individually and in secret so that the appropriate deal could be cut without the sharing of percentages with one another

b. (:7) Cut a Deal for 80% Return

“Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.’”

3. (:8) Summary Evaluation

“And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.”

Donald Miller: wise use of present opportunities in a way which resulted in his future welfare.

Morris: Jesus' followers must use their money for their spiritual purposes just as wisely as the children of this world do for their material alms. As our goal is "*treasure in heaven*", we should use money for purposes such as almsgiving. This will gain us friends and it will stand us in good stead when money fails, i.e. when we die and money is of no more use.

Now in true chiasmic structure fashion (abba), Jesus takes these same 2 insights and turns them around to make 2 key applications

II. (:9-12) 2 KEY APPLICATIONS REGARDING THE CHRISTIAN AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

A. (:9) Steward Your Material Possessions Shrewdly to Make Friends for Eternity

"And I say to you, 'make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.'"

B. (:10-12) Steward Your Material Possessions Faithfully In Light of Eternal Accountability

1. (:10) Extrapolating Your Degree of Faithfulness/Unfaithfulness in Your Stewardship

a. Degree of Faithfulness

"He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much;"

b. Degree of Unfaithfulness

"and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much."

2. (:11-12) Explaining the Ramifications of Lack of Faithfulness in Your Stewardship

a. (:11) You Will Not Be Trusted with Stewardship of True Riches

"If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?"

Donald Miller: God tests our fitness for the "*true riches*" of heaven in our use of material possessions (**vss. 10-12**). Our use of money is a good test of our acceptance of his Lordship. If we allow money to rule us, and make it a rival lord, it is evident that God's Lordship has not been wholly accepted (**vs. 13**). Since God is God, he can brook no rivals.

Morris: Faithfulness is no accident: it arises out of what a man is through and through. What a man does with the small things of life he does also in the big things. His faithfulness or his dishonesty appears throughout. Life is a unity.

b. (:12) You Will Not Be Trusted with Ownership

"And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?"

III. (:13) KEY CONCLUSION = DON'T ALLOW YOUR MATERIAL POSSESSIONS TO RULE OVER YOU, BUT SERVE GOD INSTEAD

*“No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon.**”*

Powerful finishing statement

Geldenhuis: In order to be able to serve and love God truly, man must be free from the servility accompanying avarice and attachment to material possessions. For although worldlings may labour under the delusion that they are free and independent, everyone who makes the accumulation and enjoyment of earthly goods the main object of his life is under the dominating power thereof and is every day performing servile labour for Mammon.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What qualifications would you look for in hiring a good financial manager of your money and possessions?
- 2) Why does Jesus refer to money and possessions as “*unrighteous mammon*”?
- 3) Will there be people to receive us in eternity ready to testify to how we have used our money unselfishly for their benefit?
- 4) What types of practical decisions do you need to make differently with your money and possessions in order to better serve God and make sure that money does not rule over you as a rival god?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Morris: We should understand the parable in the light of commercial practices of the day. Jews were forbidden to take interest from fellow-Jews when they lent them money (**Ex. 22:25/ Lv. 25:36; Dt. 23:19**). Those who wished to make money from loans evaded this by reason that the law was concerned to prohibit the exploitation of the poor. It was not meant to forbid innocent transactions that were mutually beneficial and where the payment of interest amounted to the sharing of the profits. If a man had even a little of a given commodity he was not destitute and thus lending to him was not exploitation. As almost everyone had a little oil and little wheat, the way was open for widespread use of a legal fiction. Whatever was borrowed was given a value in oil or wheat (say, eighty measures of wheat), the interest added on (say, twenty measures), and the bond made out for the repayment of the total in terms of wheat or oil (in this case one hundred measures). The transaction was usurious, but the bond gave no indication of this. Commonly these transactions were carried on by stewards, ostensibly without the owners’ knowledge. Understood in this way, the parable presents us with a steward who, faced with the loss of his employment, protected his future by calling in the bonds and getting the debtors to rewrite them so that they no longer carried interest. He looked to their gratitude to express itself

by their taking him into their homes. His action put the owner in a difficult position. He would have the greatest difficulty in establishing his claim to the original amounts now that the first bonds were destroyed. In any case he could not repudiate the steward's action without convicting himself of taking usury. It would be extremely difficult to obtain his legal rights and in the process he would convict himself of acting impiously. So he put the best face possible on the situation and "commended" the man. Thus he secured an undeserved reputation for piety. The steward was now conforming to the law of God and the owner was seen as applauding it. Both were acting decisively in a difficult situation.

Lenski: Earthly wealth not only tends to unrighteousness in its use and leads us to place a false estimate upon it, it would also make us its slave and at the same time lead us to think that we could also be slaves to God. Hence the resistance needed by every disciple against both being enslaved and being deceived by mammon. . . The underlying thought is that no man is his own master; it is our very nature that our heart, will, and work are governed by another. The only question is who this shall be.

Steven Cole: How to Be Truly Rich

A faithful steward will use his Master's money shrewdly to provide true riches for eternity.

1. Faithful versus unrighteous: Be faithful, not unrighteous, in financial matters.

Implicit in Jesus' teaching, both here and elsewhere, is that God owns everything and we are stewards or managers of what He has entrusted to us. We are stewards of our time, our abilities, and our possessions and money. In the parable, the steward was squandering his master's possessions (16:1). There is much debate over whether his action of reducing the bills of his master's debtors was illegal or legal. Some argue that his master had cleverly violated the Jewish laws against charging interest, and that the steward was rectifying the situation and putting the master in the awkward position of going along with the adjusted bills or else openly being guilty of charging interest. Others say that the steward was giving up his own commission on the sales. Others say that the steward was stealing from his master. We can't know for sure, but it seems to me that the steward was not doing anything illegal or the master would have prosecuted him.

And yet, while staying within the letter of the law and acting within the authority given to him, the steward was not acting in his master's best interests, but in his own. Even though the master lost a lot of money through the steward's actions, he grudgingly had to praise him for his shrewdness. But the fact is, although shrewd, the steward was still unrighteous or unfaithful because he was using his master's money for his own selfish ends, not for the master's profit.

One of the key concepts of being a steward is that the steward does not own what the master or owner has entrusted to him. He merely manages it for the owner's purposes. If the steward begins to act as if he owns it, spending the owner's resources for his personal betterment rather than for the owner's benefit, he is an unrighteous, not a faithful, steward.

The principle of stewardship is a fundamental concept of Christian living. When you keep it in focus, it radically affects how you live. Paul says, "It is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy," or faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). To be faithful as a steward, you must keep in mind at all times that you do not own your money; God does. You do not own your car; God does. You do not own your house; God does. You do not own your own life; God does. To forget or ignore God's purposes and to live as if what we have is ours to use for our purposes is to abuse our

stewardship by being unfaithful.

Now I am going to make a radical statement. I believe that the concept of tithing has fostered the erroneous notion that ten percent belongs to God and the rest is ours to use as we please. . .

2. Temporal versus eternal: Lay up treasures in heaven.

The second contrast consists of three contrasts that all point to the same thing, namely the temporal versus the eternal. Jesus contrasts “*a very little thing*” with “*much*” (16:10); “*unrighteous mammon*” with “*true riches*” (16:11); and, “*that which is another’s*” with “*that which is your own*” (16:12). The “*very little thing*,” “*unrighteous mammon*,” and “*that which is another’s*” all refer to temporal resources, or money. It belongs to another, namely, to God, as we have seen. “*Much*,” “*the true riches*,” and “*that which is your own*” all refer to eternal treasures laid up in heaven, which no man can take from you (thus you truly possess them [Matt. 6:20]). Thus Jesus is saying that the faithful steward will provide true riches for eternity in contrast to this unrighteous steward who provided himself only with temporal provisions. . .

3. God versus Mammon: Choose your Master.

In verse 13, Jesus draws the third contrast, that we either can serve God or mammon (money), but not both. So we must make a basic decision as to our choice of masters. Clearly, the unrighteous steward was living for money, but disciples of Jesus should be serving God. It is a delusion to think that you can own money. That is not one of the choices. Either God owns you, including your money, or your money (mammon) owns you. Those are the only choices.

4. Shrewd or stupid: Use present opportunities to provide for inevitable future realities.

In the fourth contrast, the unrighteous steward got it right and the sons of light tend to get it wrong. Jesus is saying that unbelievers are often more shrewd in figuring out how to secure *temporal* wealth than believers are in figuring out how to secure *eternal* riches. By shrewd, Jesus does not mean dishonest, but rather, as Webster defines it, “clever, discerning awareness; practical, hardheaded cleverness and judgment” (*Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* [Merriam-Webster], p. 1091).

How was the unrighteous steward shrewd? In at least two ways. First, *he was shrewd in that he seized an opportunity while he still had time to act*. He saw the handwriting on the wall: his days were numbered! He was going to get fired. So he quickly went into action, using his authority while he still had time, to get on the good side of his master’s debtors.

The application for us is, if we hear of a window of opportunity for the gospel, we should do all we can to seize it while we can. If we hear of a good investment opportunity that is reasonably certain to earn a decent profit and we have the funds to invest, we would probably jump at the chance. In the same way, if we hear of an opportunity for the gospel and God has given us funds to invest, we should go for it. I was so encouraged at the way the church responded to the recent opportunity in Egypt, raising over \$16,000 to provide evangelistic materials for the summer outreach! That’s the idea here! Invest in eternity while you can.

Second, *the unrighteous steward was shrewd in that he used his present resources to provide for his inevitable future realities*. He knew that he was going to be fired. While many would have

despaired, he went into action, using what he had to provide for his future security.

MacArthur: Investing Earthly Finances with an Eternal Focus

No sense in trying to turn this guy into a good guy to save the Lord from being embarrassed by using a bad man as an illustration of a good point. It's not possible. He is a bad man. He is a wasteful, deceitful, thieving, selfish, conniving guy. And we are shocked as the audience of disciples would be when the master praises him. Punish him? We would understand that. Beat him publicly? We would understand that. They would understand that, but commend him? That's the surprise ending, ah but that's the whole point of the story.

And it's really not unusual for Jesus to teach this way. Frequently Jesus followed a rabbinical pattern of teaching and the rabbis loved to teach from the lesser to the greater. The little phrase, "how much more," if an unjust judge will do this what will God who is a just judge do? If an irritated man will open the door just to get rid of you what will a God who loves you do when you knock on His door with a need? If a wicked, evil man is shrewd in the use of money that he has access to what will you do? It's from the lesser to the greater and the rabbis love to teach that way and so did Jesus. How much more, how much more? We have read that phrase many times. . .

He commends him not for his irresponsibility but for his shrewdness. By the way, he acted shrewdly. It's an adverb, *phronims*. He acted providently. He acted advantageously. He took careful advantage of his opportunity. He worked the situation. He manipulated what resources were in his power to get his ends. How did he do it? He reduces the debt. They're all indebted to him. He has done them immense good. They are profoundly obligated. Each of them is obligated to him, and since they have this great obligation to him because of his great generosity they all owe him big time and he's going to claim that when he leaves this master and picks out of those debtors the situation that looks the best to him. He's got a lot of options. And he did it for everybody, not just one, in order to create a wide range of options. The point's pretty direct isn't it? A typical, sinful, self-protective, conniving, maneuvering businessman acts for his own future benefit in a very clever and ingenious way, using resources at his disposal with shrewdness to secure the future that he wants. Impressive stuff, clever! . . .

How wise are we in using financial resources, money, possessions, and wealth to secure our future, which isn't a few years? It's forever; this age, this generation, this world very brief. James says it's a vapor that appears for a little time, vanishes away, but people in this generation work so hard to guarantee their little, brief future will be what they want it to be. What about us? What about the sons of light, those of us whose life is in the age to come are looking for that city whose architect and builder is God? What about us who live in the realm of salvation, the kingdom of light, the realm of righteousness and holiness, those of us whose home is in heaven, whose citizenship is in heaven, whose inheritance is in heaven, whose reward is in heaven? How can the sons of light be so foolish in their preparation for a future that lasts forever? . . .

Calvin said, "Where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost His authority."

A.W. Pink wrote this: "These two are diametrically opposed, God and money. One commands you to walk by faith, the other to walk by sight; one to be humble, the other to be proud; one to set your affection on things above, the other to set them on the things that are on the earth; one to look at the things that are unseen and eternal, the other to look at the things that are seen and temporal; one to have your conversation in heaven, the other to cleave to the dust; one to be

careful for nothing, the other to be all anxiety; one to be content with such things as you have, the other enlarge your desires; one to be ready to distribute, the other to withhold; one to look at the things of others, the other to look at only one's own things; one to seek happiness in the Creator, the other to seek happiness in the creature. Is it not plain," he says, "You can't serve two such masters."

TEXT: Luke 16:14-18

TITLE: GOD KNOWS YOUR HEART

BIG IDEA:

LEGALISTS JUSTIFY LOOPHOLE LIVING BUT STAND CONDEMNED BEFORE GOD WHO SEES THE HEART

INTRODUCTION:

The interaction between Jesus and the legalistic religious leaders of His day intensifies as His ministry approaches its culmination. Despite all of their scheming and insidious plots and lies and treachery, their wicked hearts are exposed time and again. That should come as no surprise because God sees the hearts. He knows the inner thoughts and motivations behind external actions. This short section bridges the gap between the previous section highlighting their love of money and failure to be a good steward for God and the section that will follow contrasting the rich man and Lazarus.

Deffinbaugh: The unity of the entire chapter is evident in many ways. The thread which unifies the chapter is money. The unjust steward used his master's money to serve his own interests, rather than to serve his master. The rich man will also use his money for his own interests, ignoring the needs of Lazarus, who lay at his gate. Both parables begin with virtually the same expression: "*There was a certain rich man ...*" (vv. 1, 19). Verses 14-18 enable us to understand the evil of these two rich men, which was descriptive of the wickedness of the Pharisees, by showing the source of their sin.

Brian Evans: Through these kinds of practices [teachers grading on a curve], we can grow up expecting the standard to be adjusted to us rather than us conforming to the standard. God's Law, found in the Old Testament, is the standard. We must be very careful to work with God and conform to His standard rather than adjusting the Laws of God to conform to us. God does not grade on a curve.

Today, we're shown a group of religious people who were grading themselves on a curve. It's one thing when someone else grades you on a curve but it gets infinitely worse when you begin to grade yourself that way. When this happens, the sky is the limit. There are no boundaries set and you create for yourself a license to sin and you can reason by way of this curve that God even approves it.

I. (:14-17) LEGALISTS JUSTIFY THEMSELVES AND MISS THE POINT OF GOD'S REVELATION

A. (:14) Legalists Reject the Application of Truth to Their Hearts

"Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him."

They hated Christ's charge that they were actually serving mammon and not God; they boasted in their wealth as a sign of God's favor, as something that distinguished them from the poor; at their heart they were "*lovers of money*"

Donald Miller: The Pharisees looked upon wealth as the reward for righteousness, for keeping the Law, rather than as a danger. . . Their religious praise of wealth was an effort to cover up hearts filled with greed (**vs. 15; 20:47**).

Deffinbaugh: But what, specifically, were the Pharisees scoffing about? The text does not tell us exactly, and perhaps we would do best to leave it at that. Given the Lord's words in response to their scoffing, we might conjecture what they would be scoffing about. They judged on appearances. Jesus was talking a great deal about money, and how to use it. They could well have said to themselves and others, "Who is this expert on money, anyway? Who does He think He is? How much money does He possess? He is so poor that He has to have women of means accompany Him, to provide for His needs!" They may very well have mocked Jesus' teaching, based upon His poverty.

MacArthur: Jesus felt much more comfortable, much more at home hanging around sinners and tax collectors than He did around Pharisees. Why? Because it wasn't the sinners and tax collectors who were the architects of the satanic opposition; it was the false religious leaders. Lovers of money with corrupt and impure motives antagonistic to the commands of God, hostile to the word of God, purveyors of a kind of self-righteous system where you make a contribution to your own salvation by your good works, and seekers of honor from people. That's what marked the Pharisees. And that's what set them in contrast to Jesus. They are outside the kingdom clearly.

Wayne Barber: lovers of Money = "prosperity seekers" – they pursue and cherish money. A person working overtime to get wealthy qualifies as a lover of money. It doesn't matter if you are wealthy or not. The key is what is your motivation and how you got there. A lover of self will love money because money is what does for self what humanly speaking nothing else can do. Whereas Christianity seeks to put self on the Cross, money builds self up in the world's eyes

B. (:15a) Legalists Justify Themselves Based on External Behavior

"And He said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men,'"

Perfect description of the Pharisees – tried to look good to others by performing external acts of supposed righteousness

Geldenhuis: The great question is not whether they are honoured by men on account of their wealth and outward piety [i.e. alms giving], but whether God esteems them.

Lenski: the present participle makes this self-justification their outstanding characteristic. They condemned others without mercy as if their judgment were divine. In their own cases they ignored and set aside God and his verdict and, like a supreme court, acquitted themselves.

Deffinbaugh: the underlying problem of the Pharisees was that they were seeking their approval from the wrong source, and they were seeking to be judged according to the wrong standard. They were striving to be justified by men, and their standard had to be that which men could see and evaluate—outward appearances.

C. (:15b) Legalists Are Exposed Before God Who Hates Their Hypocrisy

*"but God knows your hearts;
for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God. "*

Killer blow to Legalists! It is all about heart motivation; you can't fool God

1 Sam. 16:7

Anyabwile: What's striking about **verse 15** is how often you hear people saying "God knows my heart" as a way of **excusing** their sin. It's their way of saying, "God will be OK with me. God understands and accepts my sin." But when Jesus talks about God knowing our hearts, it's to make it plain that we can't fool God. His judgment will be perfect. He will see our thoughts, our motives, our desires, our feelings, and everything else that is under the surface of all our pretending. We should tremble when we read, "*God knows your hearts.*"

D. (:16) Legalists Miss the Heart of the Gospel Message -- the Fulfillment of the OT
*"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John;
since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached,
and everyone is forcing his way into it."*

The authoritative revelation of God must be viewed as a consistent unit – not as if the NT contradicts the OT; the OT anticipates the NT which is its fulfillment; the two must be seen together as a consistent whole

Donald Miller: the thought that men could be justified by keeping the Law had lost validity since the preaching of John. Repentance and belief in the good news of the Kingdom were the means of being justified before God. Now everyone, be he Pharisee or tax collector, scribe or harlot, could enter the Kingdom if he desired to press into it (**vs. 16**).

Geldenhuys: The appearance of John formed the transition from the dispensation of the Old Testament to the dispensation of the New Testament. He had begun and Jesus and His disciples had continued to proclaim that the kingly rule of God had come in Christ, and everyone who listens to Him in faith (like many "*publicans*" and sinners) presses with the greatest earnestness, self-denial and determination, as though with spiritual violence, into the kingdom – the sphere within which the kingly dominion of God is revealed. They strive hard to enter by the strait gate. But meanwhile most of the Pharisees refuse to believe in Him, and they deride Him. Thus they exclude themselves from the kingdom.

Lenski: asking the Pharisees why, when the law and the prophets to which they claimed to hold are now receiving their fulfillment in the good news of the kingdom, they, too, did not develop energy to press into it.

MacArthur: And so this is why it's called forcing your way into the kingdom and this is repeated in other passages in the gospels. There's a certain seizing of the kingdom. There's a tremendous battle that goes on in the human sinful soul to bring the person...to crush the pride and the self-will and to bring the person to total penitence. Oh, they had no interest in this. They were not interested in the hard work of repentance. They were not interested in reassessing themselves as wretched sinners. And it was this kind of language on the part of Jesus that was so hateful to them. But those who were willing to do that were applying all the necessary force aided by the regenerating power of the Spirit of God to overcome the strength of their sinfulness. You're not willing to force your way. You're not willing to do the hard work of repentance to come into the kingdom of God. So they rejected the gospel of the kingdom

Darrell Bock: Here are the two basic eras as far as Luke is concerned. There is the era of promise and the era of preaching of the good news of fulfillment. The dividing line is John. He prepared a people (**Lk 1:15–17**), and now the new era is being preached. Jesus' arrival means the new era's arrival. The way of God is found in his kingdom preaching. Thus it is not the Pharisees' scoffing that carries authority, but Jesus' exhortations about how to walk with God.

(:17) Aside: Progressive Revelation is Not a Minimization of the Validity of the Law

“But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail.”

Donald Miller: This was not to say that the will of God expressed in the Law was set aside. Rather, it was fulfilled at a higher level (**vs. 17; Matt. 5:17**).

Geldenhuys: But although it is a fact that with His advent a new order, a new dispensation, is entered upon, this does not mean that the revelation of God under the Old Covenant is set aside or rejected. Although it is of a preparatory nature, it remains (naturally in a moral and spiritual sense and in the full light of the divine revelation in and through Jesus) absolutely authoritative.

Anyabwile: Nothing God has ever said and written in his Word has an expiration date. No requirement of God for his people has “void” written on it as if it were a cancelled check.

II. (:18) LOOPHOLE LIVING OF LEGALISTS CONDEMNED --- ONE CASE STUDY: DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

A. The Case of the One Divorcing His Wife and Remarrying = Adultery

“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery;”

You could look at the Sermon on the Mount to see similar case studies that would have the same intention of elevating heart righteousness and exposing external legalistic observance of the law with all of its loopholes

B. The Case of the One Remarrying the Divorced Woman = Adultery

“and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.”

Not going to give an exposition on marriage and divorce here – this is just offered up by way of supporting illustration as another loophole strategy of those who try to dodge the application of God's truth to their hearts

Donald Miller: Their efforts, therefore, to avoid the moral implications of God's Law by keeping the letter of it, as their divorce practices illustrated, were proof that riches in their case were no sign of God's approval (**vs. 18**).

Geldenhuys: The moral laws, e.g., may not be violated – adultery continues to be adultery, even although the time of preparation is superseded by the time of fulfillment.

Lenski: they manipulate the Word of God in order to permit its open violation, their most famous teachers [rabbis] showing them the way. But here, too, one single letter of the Word can be abrogated. God will judge also these sins according to that authoritative Word, never according

to the Pharisaic perversions of that Word. . . To understand the wickedness of their love of money they must understand this same wickedness in its workings also in other directions. Jesus rips away their defenses and drives hard at their conscience.

MacArthur: By the way, hypocrites are usually pretty careful about how they select their zones of operation and these guys were no different. He picked out one of their favorite Old Testament commands to ignore. "Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery." You know what He's saying to them? You're a bunch of adulterers. Divorce was pretty rampant among the Pharisees. Well, of course, we wouldn't expect them to live pure lives, would we? Because false religion can't restrain the flesh. Being a legalist is pretty hard stuff. They didn't commit adultery. They just dumped their wives and went with the woman they preferred and then when they didn't prefer her, they dumped her and went with somebody else they preferred. That was their M.O., so He's addressing them as adulterers. He's saying, "You're standing before Me and you have divorced your wives and you've married somebody else. Who are you to tell Me I'm depreciating the law? Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery."

William Luck: Our Lord's primary teaching on divorce was in His great Sermon preached on a mountain to his disciples (**Matthew 5**). The focus of that was that men who treacherously divorce their wives in order to marry other woman or who are a party to breaking up someone else's marriage in order to claim the newly released woman are guilty of adultery in the eyes of His father. Subsequent to that He had an interchange with the Pharisees (**Luke 16**) in which He reaffirmed those teachings in **an illustration showing to the religious leaders that they were poor stewards of God's Law, especially as it related to its divorce teachings.**

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can you determine if someone is a lover of money?
- 2) What are the ways in which you try to justify yourself in front of men?
- 3) How do you respond to the truth that God knows your heart?
- 4) How would you describe the relationship between the OT and the NT?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: To paraphrase and give the flow of thought in **16:14-18**, Jesus is saying, "You Pharisees pride yourselves on keeping the Law, but God knows your hypocritical hearts. What you're missing is that the old dispensation came to a climax in John's ministry, since he introduced the good news of the coming of God's king and kingdom. Ironically, while you are scoffing at Me and My kingdom, the very ones you despise—the poor and the notoriously sinful—are stampeding to get in. When I say that there has been a transition from the Law to the

Gospel, I don't mean that the Law is set aside. Rather, it has been fulfilled in Me. For example, I uphold the true intent of God's Law regarding divorce and remarriage, but you Pharisees neatly set it aside with your liberal interpretations."

So the issue is Jesus' authority versus the self-proclaimed authority of the Pharisees, who were scoffing at Him. The message for us is:

Since God's kingdom comes in the person of Jesus, we must submit to His authority, not scoff at it. . .

The relationship between the Old Testament law and the present age of grace is complicated and difficult. Some, such as Lewis Sperry Chafer (*Grace* [Dunham]), argue that Paul's pronouncement that we are not under law, but under grace (**Rom. 6:14**), means that no part of the Old Testament law applies directly to believers today. Thus he would not view the Ten Commandments as binding on Christians (p. 105). Others (called Theonomists or Reconstructionists) go to the opposite extreme of saying that we are obligated to live under the law, even those laws that pertained directly to the nation Israel. I think that both of these views are out of balance.

I would go along with the general Reformed view ("The Westminster Confession of Faith," Chapter XIX) that the moral law of God stems from His holy nature and thus is eternally in force. The ceremonial aspects of the Jewish law pointed ahead to Christ, who fulfilled them in His person and work. The civil aspects of the law applied specifically to the theocratic nation, Israel. While there may be principles for secular government that can be derived from those laws, they are not binding on nations today. . .

Thus the first thing our text proclaims is that God's kingdom comes in the person of Jesus the King. Christianity is not a matter of following a bunch of outward standards. It is a matter of submitting ourselves to His authority, down to the heart level.

J. Ligon Duncan: What the Law Shows About Our Hearts

And there are three things in particular that I want you to see in this passage as we look at it briefly this morning. The first is that the Law shows us **our idolatry**. The Law will show us **what we're worshipping** if we'll look at it. Secondly, that the Law shows us **our need** if we will look at it. But finally, that the Law does not give the solution that we need for that need. The Law shows us our idol, it shows us our need, but it does not give us the solution for our need.

- They overvalued money
- They undervalued Jesus
- They wanted to appear righteous
- They were not right with God in their own hearts
- They loved what God abominated

I. Howard Marshall: Jesus' teaching did not appeal to those who tried to combine the pursuit of wealth with piety, and He warned the Pharisees that, while they may have given the appearance of piety to men, in fact the secret avarice of their hearts made them an abomination to God.

vv. 16-18 present an antidote to the antinomian attitude which argued that the message of Jesus made the OT law and its moral demands out of date; Jesus stated that this was not so, and that

men would find God's will still expressed in the OT (v. 29). It was true that the era of the law and prophets had ended, and now the new era of the kingdom had come. But this did not mean that the law had been countermanded. For example, divorce followed by remarriage is adultery. This particular example in fact sharpened the law; the Jews thought of adultery as a sin by a woman against her husband or by one man against another; Jesus taught that a man may commit adultery against a woman.

Brian Evans: Here's the picture of what was going on with the Pharisees: They had committed a crime and removed the true judge from the bench and placed themselves as judge. The true judge would have declared their guilt and sentenced them appropriately. However, in their system, they had removed the Law of God by reducing it to manmade rules whereby they could acquit themselves of all charges.

Their guilt was manipulating the Law of God by not teaching it correctly and by finding loopholes for their own benefit. In so doing they had placed themselves over God and His Law and declared themselves sovereign.

Jesus nails it down for us when He very accurately declares that the very things they loved so dearly...namely, money, worldly wealth and fame, and self justification God absolutely detests... *For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.*

Abomination— Hatred of an extreme nature. If there are degrees to God's hatred of sin, these things are way at the end of the scale.

These religious leaders were opposed to God. What they loved, God hated, namely, idolatry and self-justification and what God loved, they hated, namely justification by grace through faith. . .

The Pharisees had distanced themselves from the very Law they claimed to uphold. They failed in wealth...they loved money more than God. They failed in Fornication as they divorced their wives and taught others to do the same. Both of these are called an abomination before God. Their hearts chased after the things God called an abomination. They grumbled when heaven rejoiced. And they ridiculed the very Son of God as He called men and women to repentance.

The great irony of it all we'll see in Chapter 18 when in the temple what the Pharisee thanks God because he is not like other men, are the very things Jesus condemns them for.

They were guilty of exchanging God's Law for man-made rules. God's Law was to drive worshippers to repentance and faith which were what the tax collectors and sinners were doing, but man-made rules were a form of religion that served as a made up or pretend way man could keep rules in order to be justified before man.

TEXT: Luke 16:19-31

TITLE: THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

BIG IDEA:

THE ETERNAL DIVIDE BETWEEN SERVING GOD AND SERVING WEALTH BRINGS COMFORTING RELIEF OR UNRELENTING TORMENT

INTRODUCTION:

Unrelenting torment in Hell for all of eternity is not one of the more popular sermon topics in today's populist culture. But Jesus does not shy away from condemning the legalistic Pharisees for their love of money and their unwillingness to help in tangible, practical ways those who are suffering right before their eyes. They might enjoy privilege and luxury in this life, but in the life to come it will be a completely different story. Don't deceive yourself into thinking that your wealth is an indication of some type of secure status in God's kingdom. There will be a complete reversal from what men esteem when God intervenes to bring final judgment.

This story illustrates a number of points Jesus had just made previously:

- **13:30** – “*some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.*”
- **14:33** – “*none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.*”
- **16:9** – “*make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.*”
- **16:13** – “*You cannot serve God and wealth.*”
- **16:15** – “*that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God*”

I. (:19-21) DISPARITY IN LIFE – CONTRAST BETWEEN THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR MAN – BETWEEN SERVING WEALTH AND SERVING GOD

A. (:19) Condition of the Rich Man = Privilege and Luxury

“Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day.”

The Sin of the Rich Man: Failure to use his wealth as a good steward to assist those in need such as Lazarus who was suffering tremendously right at his gate

Deffinbaugh: And if Lazarus was painfully aware of the bounty and blessings of the rich man, but evidently not a sharer in them, so, too, the rich man had to have been aware of the pathetic plight of Lazarus. He would have had to walk past Lazarus every time he left or entered his house. This means that he would have had to have consciously chosen to ignore his need. The rich man thus used his wealth to indulge himself, but not to minister to the needy. This was a clear violation of the Old Testament standard of righteousness

Donald Miller: Possessions are given by God in trust, to be used as an expression of his concern for the needy. If one does not do this, it is clear that possessions, rather than God, are his lord.

Lenski: His being rich is nothing that could be reckoned against him, for Abraham, too, was rich and appears in this very parable.

B. (:20-21) Condition of the Poor Man - Lazarus = Deprivation and Suffering

“And a certain poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.”

The righteousness of the Poor Man: Maintained his faith in God without complaint despite his difficult physical circumstances and poor health

Anyabwile: The rich man remains anonymous, but the poor man is named, perhaps a hint at God's particular care for the poor and oppressed.

II. (:22-23) DISPARITY IN DEATH – CONTRAST BETWEEN THE POOR MAN AND THE RICH MAN – RESULTING FROM SERVING GOD VS SERVING WEALTH

A. (:22a) Destiny of the Poor Man = Comfort in Abraham's Bosom

“Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom;”

Only 2 destinations in the afterlife; no temporary purgatory where you can move from one state to the other

B. (:22b-23) Destiny of the Rich Man = Torment in Hades

“and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

Anyabwile: The rich man remains fully conscious of his suffering and torment. Hell is not a dream or a place without feeling. The Bible does not present the afterlife as sleep or as annihilation without suffering. It's a place of intense suffering because God has removed even that common grace that we so much enjoyed in this life even if we are not Christians. Being utterly removed from grace leaves only misery and sorrow. We cannot imagine what horrible, horrible suffering is the removal of God's love and mercy.

Geldenhuyts: The rich man, like the sick beggar, also died – neither his multitude of possessions nor his influence among men could protect him against the inevitability of death. In the hereafter his condition, owing to his sinful life of selfishness and heartlessness, enjoys full blessedness with Father Abraham, he who during his life had despised and neglected the beggar at his gate endured the utmost torment.

III. (:24-26) DESTINY IS FIXED BASED ON SERVING GOD VS SERVING WEALTH

A. (:24) Desperate Cry for Personal Relief From Torment

“And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’”

Lenski: He whose tongue daily tasted the finest wines and the most delectable cooling drinks now burns with ceaseless flame. Pitiless are the final judgments of God, and this is the

illustration. Let men ignore them or rave against them now and say they cannot believe in such a God, the facts stand as they are depicted here.

B. (:25) Destiny is Justified

“But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.’”

Geldenhuys: Lazarus, when he was on earth, had, without uttering a single word of hate or bitterness against the rich man or against God, accepted the painful trials that had come upon him. He had not allowed suffering to drive him away from God, but had remained a true child of Abraham – a God-fearing sufferer such as Job had been. Thus he had gathered for himself treasures in heaven, and therefore it is just and right that he should now live in blessedness. His choice in life was, above all, to receive true life from God, and now he has been given that which he had chosen.

C. (:26) Divide is Final

“And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.”

IV. (:27-31) DEBATE OVER THE ROOT PROBLEM OF THIS ETERNAL DIVIDE

A. (:27-28) Is the Issue More Information?

“And he said, ‘Then I beg you, Father, that you send him to my father's house—for I have five brothers-- that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment.’”

Morris: He implies that he had not been treated fairly. If he had really been given all the information he needed, he would have acted differently.

B. (:29) No – Look to the Sufficiency of the OT Scriptures

“But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’”

C. (:30) Is the Issue the Need for a Spectacular Sign?

“But he said, ‘No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’”

Donald Miller: Verse 25 must not be mechanically interpreted to mean that all the rich in this life suffer in the next and that all the poor in this life are blessed in the next. He is condemned purely because he failed to use his wealth in the service of God by concerning himself with the sufferings of his fellow men. . . The rich man's desire that his brothers “repent” (vss. 27-30) indicates that he had discovered that he was in hell not because he was rich, but because he had failed to repent of self-lordship and place himself under the Lordship of God.

Steven Cole: Sometimes when you're witnessing, the person will say, “If I could just see a miracle, I'd believe.” That is just a smokescreen. The Bible bears witness of many miracles, first and foremost the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. There is sufficient evidence to

believe the apostolic witness of the resurrection. If a person won't read and believe the Bible, then he has a deeper problem, namely, a moral problem.

Repentance is a Moral Issue, not an Intellectual One.

D. (:31) No – The Source of the Root Problem = Wicked Heart of Unbelief

“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.’”

Morris: The parable concludes with Abraham’s solemn affirmation that the appearance of one risen from the dead [Lazarus in this context] will bring no conviction to those who refuse to accept Scripture. “If a man (says Jesus) cannot be humane with the Old Testament in his hand and Lazarus on his doorstep, nothing – neither a visitant from the other world nor a revelation of the horrors of Hell – will teach him otherwise.” (A. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables*, p. 84).

Geldenhuys: These last words of the parable were undoubtedly uttered by the Savior with a view to His own resurrection. The sign for which the Jews had so often asked would be given by His resurrection, but He knew that even this would not move the worldly-minded to a saving faith in Him. And this was abundantly proved by the actual course of events.

Deffinbaugh: Man’s failure to believe is not due to any lack of evidence, but due to a closed heart, determined to disbelieve any amount of evidence. The problem, to put it differently, was not a lack of external evidence (appearances), but a willful rebellion of the heart against God. The hearts of this man and his five brothers were unbelieving. Such unbelief was not solved by a preponderance of the evidence, but only by a change in the heart. Once again, the outward appearances are not the issue, but the heart is.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What makes it so difficult for rich people to enter the kingdom of God?
- 2) How is your approach to witnessing impacted by the realization that the root problem you are addressing is not intellectual but moral?
- 3) How would you answer a person who said, “I think that God is cruel if He torments people for eternity in hell”?
- 4) What are your convictions about the reality of suffering in Hell and how does that impact your evangelism?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: There are three popular views that we must reject. The first is *universalism*, the view that everyone will eventually be saved. The universalist says, “A good and loving God could not condemn anyone to hell. There is some good in even the worst of people. God will take

that into account, so that no one will be condemned.” But the universalist underestimates both the awful sinfulness of the human heart and the absolute holiness of God. The rich man in the parable was not an evil man in human terms. He wasn’t a mass murderer or child molester. He wasn’t deliberately hurting people. He was a just living for himself, oblivious to the poor man at his gate. And yet here he is in the place of eternal torment! Clearly, Jesus did not teach that everyone, let alone everyone who isn’t terribly evil, would be in heaven.

The second popular view we must reject is *annihilationism*. This is the view that God will destroy the unrepentant sinner, so that he ceases to exist. In other words, the soul is not immortal. Perhaps God will punish the person for a time, proportionate to his sin. But at some point, God will say, “That’s enough,” and the person will not suffer eternally. God will annihilate the person’s soul. Several professing evangelicals, most notably John Stott, have suggested if not embraced this idea. The Seventh Day Adventists teach this doctrine.

Frankly, the idea sounds humane and appealing. But I cannot dodge **Matthew 25:46**, where Jesus uses the same word “*eternal*” in the same verse to refer to eternal punishment and eternal life. If life is eternal, then so is punishment. Also, **Revelation 20:10** states that the devil, the beast, and the false prophet will be tormented in the lake of fire and brimstone “*day and night forever and ever*.” Then, just a few verses later (**20:15**), it states that all of those whose names are not found written in the book of life are also thrown into the lake of fire. “*Day and night forever and ever*” sure sounds eternal! The best defense of eternal punishment that I’ve read is Jonathan Edwards’ sermon, “The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners.” He argues that since any sin is against the infinite God, it is worthy of infinite punishment.

The third popular view that this parable refutes is the doctrine of *purgatory*. Both the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church teach that when a believer dies, unless he has attained a state of moral perfection on earth, he goes to an intermediate place where he suffers until all sin is purged away. The sufferings vary according to the guilt and impenitence of the sufferer. Gifts and services to the church, prayers on behalf of the deceased, and Masses provided by friends or loved ones, can all shorten the amount of time the person spends in Purgatory.

If anyone was a candidate for Purgatory, this rich man was. As I said, he was not a bad man. He called Abraham his father, showing his devotion to the Jewish faith. He had a concern for his five brothers’ eternal destiny. But he wasn’t in Purgatory, with a chance to get into heaven after he had suffered a while. He was in hell and there was a great chasm fixed so that he could never cross over. The doctrine of Purgatory is not taught in Scripture (it is based on the apocryphal **2 Maccabees 12:39-45**). It undermines the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ alone. It adds human works to His finished work on the cross.

Deffinbaugh: The Pharisees rejected Jesus for two principle reasons. First, they sought to win men’s approval, based upon outward appearances, rather than God’s, based upon the heart. Second, in so doing they had rejected the Old Testament Scriptures, the “Law and the Prophets,” exchanging the divine standard of righteousness for a human standard.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus dramatically illustrates these two errors. Based upon appearances, it would seem that the rich man would be pronounced righteous and enter into God’s kingdom, and Lazarus would be rejected and condemned. The outcome after these two men died was just the reverse. Appearances, Jesus proved, were deceptive. Men would “highly esteem” the rich man, but God rejected him. Men would despise Lazarus, but God justified him.

What, then, was the basis of the rejection of the rich man and the justification of the beggar, Lazarus? We are immediately tempted to suppose that the answer is an external one—something we can judge by appearances. We are inclined to suppose that God judged these two men on appearances, only He did so with a reversed system of values. God condemned the rich man and justified the poor man. God must save the poor and send the rich to heaven. This conclusion would be the same kind of error that the Pharisees practiced, with a reversed system of external values.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus concludes in such a way as to indicate what really justifies a man. The rich man was not condemned because he was rich, any more than the poor man was justified for being poor. These outward conditions (riches and poverty) were fundamentally irrelevant to the eternal destiny of these men. A godly rich man would have used his wealth differently, but it was not his works that would have saved him. The real basis for justification or condemnation is to be found in the context of the rich man's concern for his lost brothers. The issue was whether or not these men were rich or poor, but whether or not these men believed the Scriptures, Moses and the Prophets. It is not riches nor poverty which determines one's destiny, but belief or unbelief.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now you know, I've found very few people to sit down over a cup of coffee with me and say to me, "You know what, I worship money. You know what, I love money. You know, I'm a lot like the rich man." Why? Because sin has a way of deceiving us. That's why Jesus is telling this story. It's a way to recognize that sin can so get hold of us that we don't even realize that it's gotten hold of us. As one pastor put it, "The problem is not the problem. The problem is that we don't know that we have a problem." That's why people don't repent. They don't know that they need to because they have been deceived by their sin. And Jesus is telling this story in order to hold up the Word of God before us and He's asking us to look in the mirror and see if this is showing us something about our own souls, and if it is, the only response is to cry out and say, "God, deliver me from my worship of self and of stuff that I might worship You more than anything else, repenting of my self-worship and turning to only want to live and worship and glorify You."

John MacArthur:

Fourteen striking contrasts between the poor man and the rich man in **Luke 16:19-31**:

- The poor man then becomes rich; and the rich man becomes poor; and the poor man becomes richer than the rich man ever was; and the rich man becomes poorer than the poor man ever was.
- You have a poor man on the outside of the house, and you have a rich man on the inside. Then comes death, and you have a poor man on the inside and rich man on the outside.
- You have a poor man with no food, and a rich man with all the food he can possibly need; and then you have a poor man at the great heavenly banquet, and a rich man with absolutely nothing.
- You have a poor man with needs, and a rich man with no needs; and then you have a poor man with no needs, and a rich man with needs.

- You have a poor man who desires everything. You have a rich man who desires nothing, and then you have a rich man who will never have his desires fulfilled, and a poor man who has all his desires fulfilled.
- You have a poor man who suffers, and a rich man who is satisfied; and then you have a rich man who suffers, and a poor man who's satisfied.
- You have a poor man who's tormented, and a rich man who's happy; and then you have a poor man who's happy, and a rich man who's tormented.
- You have a poor man who is humiliated, a rich man who's honored. Then you have a rich man who is humiliated, and a poor man who is honored.
- You have a poor man who wants a crumb, a rich man who feasts; and then you have a poor man who's at a feast, and a rich man who wants a drop of water.
- You have a poor man who seeks help, a rich man who gives none. Then you have a rich man who seeks help, and a poor man who gives none.
- You have a poor man who is a nobody, a rich man who is well-known; and then you have a poor man who has a name, and a rich man who has none.
- You have a poor man who has no dignity in death, not even a burial. You have a rich man who has dignity in death.
- Then you have a poor man who has dignity after death, and a rich man who has no dignity after death, not even a name.
- You have a poor man with no hope, and a rich man with all hope. Then you have a rich man with no hope, and a poor man who is hope realized.

J. C. Ryle: A flood of false doctrine has lately broken in upon us. Men are beginning to tell us "that God is too merciful to punish souls forever...that all mankind, however wicked and ungodly...will sooner or later be saved." We are to embrace what is called "kinder theology," and treat hell as a pagan fable...This question lies at the very foundation of the whole Gospel. The moral attributes of God, His justice, His holiness, His purity, are all involved in it. The Scripture has spoken plainly and fully on the subject of hell... If words mean anything, there is such a place as hell. If texts are to be interpreted fairly, there are those who will be cast into it...The same Bible which teaches that God in mercy and compassion sent Christ to die for sinners, does also teach that God hates sin, and must from His very nature punish all who cleave to sin or refuse the salvation He has provided.

God knows that I never speak of hell without pain and sorrow. I would gladly offer the salvation of the Gospel to the very chief of sinners. I would willingly say to the vilest and most profligate of mankind on his deathbed, "Repent, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But God forbid that I should ever keep back from mortal man that scripture reveals a hell as well as heaven...that men may be lost as well as saved.

Ray Stedman: How accurately this parable portrays our human desire for the spectacular, the dramatic, the shocking to occur! We have all felt this way at times. We ask, "Why is it so hard to

believe? Why doesn't God do more? Why doesn't he open the heavens and speak to us? Why doesn't he perform miracles again, as in the days of our Lord, or send an angel to speak to us?" Many feel that if they could only see a miracle, or be spoken to by an angel, then they would believe. But we need to ask ourselves: How many who saw the miracles in our Lord's day still believed in him at the end of his life? How many stayed with him who believed because of the miracles? We know there were very few. Only a handful of people stood around the cross. And what did men do when, shortly after this, another man named Lazarus was actually raised from the dead? What did men do? Did they believe? According to the record, they simply took counsel together to put him to death again! Even when Jesus himself returned from the dead (and that story has been flung around the world since) men do not believe.

No, Abraham is right. The most convincing proof is "***Moses and the prophets***," the Word of God, especially that Word made flesh (**John 1:14**), come to dwell among us. **The rich man was in hell because he refused to heed Moses and the prophets, not because he was rich.** His activities as a rich man grew out of his refusal to hear Moses and the prophets. His self-centered, self-indulgent life is a reflection of that refusal, but he is not in hell because he was rich. **Lazarus, on the other hand, is in heaven because he believed Moses and the prophets, because he believed them he made God his helper and trusted in him.** He is not in heaven merely to give him compensation for what he went through on earth. There will be many a poor man in hell, as there will be rich men in heaven. No, he is there simply because he believed **Moses and the prophets.**

So, what our Lord is saying here is: **The main thing in life is to give heed to what God has said, to heed Moses and the prophets. The point of this story is that you and I are the five brothers that are left behind. This is the whole point. You may be young, sauntering your way through life with life all ahead of you, thinking, as these five brothers undoubtedly thought, "I'll take one world at a time. I'll enjoy life now, and when the next life comes along I'll handle it then."** But the point of this whole story is that **THEN** is determined by **NOW**. That is the whole issue. You are put here **NOW** to learn reality, to distinguish good and evil, and to appropriate God's method of deliverance. That is why you are here. **Unless you learn these things now, there will not be any glorious life to come.** (cf **Acts 16:31**)

Thus the main thing is **Moses and the prophets**, especially this last and greatest of the prophets, the One who tells us this story (cf **Dt 18:15**)! What do you know about him? What do you know about the death of the Lord Jesus, and what that death meant in relation to your sin? What do you know about what he plans to do as a result of your acceptance of that death on your behalf, of his ability to come and live within you (by His Spirit), and to impart to you all the glory of his own life that you might live, not in your own strength, but in the power and strength which He gives (through His Spirit), living through you in this 20th century hour, in the midst of the pressure and excitement of these days -- to re-live again the life that He once lived 1900 years ago (cf **1 Cor 11:1, 1 Pe 2:21, 1 Jn 2:6**).

What do you know about that? That is the point to life. That is what our Lord is saying. Anything that misses **THAT** is a purposeless, pointless, meaningless life. The important thing is to begin now, while you are young. "*Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come*" (**Ecclesiastes 12:1**), says the book of Ecclesiastes. To learn to fear God and to walk in obedience to his commandments -- this is the whole of man. I know the text reads, "*This is the whole duty of man*" (**Ecclesiastes 12:13**), but in the Hebrew the word DUTY does not occur. What it says is, "*This is the wholeness of man.*" This is what makes man **whole**: To fear God

and to walk in fellowship with Him, in obedience to His commandments and especially those commandments that bring one into the knowledge of and relationship to the Son of God, that His life may be in you to change your whole life (cf. Col 1:27b, Col 3:4), from beginning to end and from inside out. That is living. That is what God intends. That is the purpose of this story. See how our Lord brings it right to the point? **The reason for your earthly existence is that you might learn, through Moses and the prophets, the realities of life: What it is all about, and the realities which lie beyond, what this life is heading toward, what its final expression will be.** Everything else must relate, somehow, to that to have any meaning at all.

TEXT: Luke 17:1-19

TITLE: STAYING ON COURSE -- ADDRESSING SIN, WEAKNESS, PRIDE AND INGRATITUDE

BIG IDEA:

FOUR PERSPECTIVES ESSENTIAL FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH (STAYING ON COURSE) AND GLORIFYING GOD

INTRODUCTION:

It is easy to get knocked off course in our spiritual life. That is what makes the journey of Pilgrim in Pilgrim's Progress so vivid and dramatic. He encounters all sorts of dangers and temptations and distractions. Yet he finds the grace of God to be sufficient to enable him to continue on his way and reach his final destination.

Goldenhuy: Most exegetes regard this portion as a number of loose sayings of the Saviour, recorded here by Luke with no connection between them. Nevertheless it appears to us that there is a unity between the various pronouncements and that (although Luke does not expressly say so) they were uttered on one and the same occasion.

MacArthur: humble disciples are marked by restraint from offense, readiness to forgive, recognition of weaknesses, and finally, rejection of honor, rejection of honor.

I. (:1-4) GUARD AGAINST SIN HARMING YOURSELF OR OTHERS – DON'T ALLOW SIN TO KNOCK YOU OFF COURSE

A. (:1-2) Do No Harm – Don't Cause Others to Sin – Be Alert for Spiritual Snares

not a direct quote but some association with Hippocratic Oath

“He said to His disciples, ‘It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come! 2 It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.’”

Lenski: The Pharisees and the scribes were causing dangerous offense to the publicans and the sinners who were inclined to believe in Jesus and were already believing in him (15:1,2).

Goldenhuy: The Saviour here addresses His disciples expressly and warns them against the danger that their example, their words, their attitude or neglect of duty may do spiritual harm to others (especially the weaker ones in the circle of disciples – e.g. former “publicans” and outcast sinners who had turned to Him.) . . . the Saviour does not mean that those who have allowed themselves to be so influenced do not also bear their own measure of responsibility for falling into sin. Here He deals only with the responsibility resting upon all to live in such a manner that they do not lead others into sin.

Wiersbe: It is a serious thing to sin against a fellow believer and tempt him or her to sin (Rom. 14:13; 1 Cor. 10:32; 1 John 2:10).

Ron Ritchie: In that culture, everyone knew of the various types of millstones that were used to crush grain. Smaller millstones were for home use, but when it came to harvest time, farmers used much larger millstones, up to four or five feet in diameter. The grain was placed on a base stone, and then the millstone (which had a hole in the middle as big as a man's head) was lifted up to

the stationary stone, which had a center peg as an axle, so that once the milestone was in place it could be turned around in a circle by a mule or camel until the grain was crushed into fine flour. As Jesus was saying this you can be sure he was warning his disciples about their future ministry, but at the same time he was looking at the lifestyle of the Pharisees. They were the very stumbling stones that he had in mind as he observed them trying to confuse and discourage the open-hearted tax-gatherers and sinners. The warning is very serious.

Darrell Bock: God's concern for his children is seen in Jesus' characterization of them as little ones. Caring for God's children is baby-sitting: the responsibility is great because the children are precious in their parents' sight. Children need attentive care. And teaching carries special responsibility (Jas 3:1). In fact, those who lead others into error are at risk before God. So Jesus issues a warning: a Mafia-style death is better for the one who leads others into apostasy. Jesus pictures an execution with a concrete block tied around the necks of the condemned as they are cast into the sea. A millstone was a large, heavy stone used at the top of a grinding mill. It was a millstone that crushed Abimelech's head in Judges 9:53. The picture is of severe judgment. You are accountable, Jesus says, so watch yourselves. Be careful to avoid sin (Ps 141:8-10).

B. (:3a) Guard Yourself Against Sin

"Be on your guard!"

Make sure that you are not creating a stumbling block for others;

Make sure that you are not falling into sin yourself – before you can rebuke others.

C. (:3b-4) Balance Necessary Rebuke of Sin with Unlimited Forgiveness (based on Repentance)

"If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. 4 "And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Do we truly take “rebuking” as a command from the Lord? When have we fulfilled this responsibility? Don’t be put off by an expectation that our brother may not respond positively.

Geldenhuys: “call his attention to his wrong behaviour (and not slander him behind his back!).

Lenski: We cannot think that this is merely the same sin repeated again and again because it would then be farcical for the sinning brother to say, “I repent!”

[But even if that is the case, we are to assume the best of the professed repentance and grant forgiveness.]

II. (:5-6) EXERCISE FAITH FOR DRAMATIC RESULTS – DON'T ALLOW WEAKNESS TO KNOCK YOU OFF COURSE (or become an excuse)

A. Rather Than Pleading for Faith, Exercise Faith by Obeying

"The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'"

Geldenhuys: The foregoing pronouncements impressed the disciples profoundly with the severe demands made upon them, and they feel spontaneously that they will require supernatural grace and divine strength in order so to live that they may avoid offending others and always be prepared to forgive the repentant. So they ask the Saviour to give them greater faith – the faith that will make

them spiritually stronger, and enable them to act as He has just commanded them to do.

Wiersbe: We might have expected the disciples to respond with the prayer, “Increase our love!” Certainly love is a key element in forgiveness, but faith is even more important. It takes living faith to obey these instructions and forgive others. Our obedience in forgiving others shows that we are trusting God to take care of the consequences, handle the possible misunderstandings, and work everything out for our good and His glory.

Deffinbaugh: we should note that while the disciples made a very clear request for increased faith, Jesus is not said to have granted it. This is such an obvious fact that we hardly even notice it, and yet it is very crucial to understanding our passage. The disciples asked Jesus for more faith, but Jesus did not grant it. A lack of faith must therefore not be the problem.

B. The Amount of Faith is not as Important as the Object of our Faith (right kind of faith)

“And the Lord said, ‘If you had faith like a mustard seed,’”

Geldenhuis: a vigorous, living faith. The grain of mustard seed is exceedingly small, but it contains the germ of life which, when it germinates, shoots up irresistibly into a tree.

Steven Cole: **When we encounter the difficult commands of Scripture, we should not focus on more faith, but on more obedience and humility.**

In this context, it seems to me that Jesus is offering a gentle correction to the disciples’ request, not a commendation of it. He is saying, “Don’t wait around for increased faith. Just a small amount of genuine faith can accomplish what is humanly impossible. Rather, focus on your duty to obey God and, when you have obeyed, don’t start thinking that you’re really something. Keep in mind at all times that you are just an unworthy slave who has done what was required of him.”

C. Faith Should Produce Dramatic Results

“you would say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and be planted in the sea; and it would obey you.”

Donald Miller: genuine faith can accomplish what experience, reason, and probability would deny, if it is exercised within God’s will.

Merrill C. Tenney: Faith knows no impossibilities.

Lenski: Exactly this very thing the apostles would soon do over and over again, for at their word the kingdom would be transplanted, root, and branch, from Israel into the Gentile world in congregation after congregation – into territory in which no man would have thought the kingdom could grow and flourish; the Jews were sure that it could not. No charismatic faith was necessary for this, for the gospel was not spread through the world by anything but the ordinary faith of its bearers.

[cf. the nationalistic pride and exclusive attitude of Jonah which the Lord had to rebuke.]

III. (:7-10) HUMBLY OBEY AS SERVANTS THANKFUL FOR GOD’S GRACE – DON’T ALLOW PRIDE TO KNOCK YOU OFF COURSE

A. (:7-8) What Behavior is Appropriate for a Servant? Giving Priority to His Master’s Interests

“Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in

from the field, 'Come immediately and sit down to eat'? 8 'But will he not say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink'?"

B. (:9) What Reward is Appropriate for a Servant? Not effusive thanksgiving but provision of basic needs

"He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?"

Next section will stress that the Lord is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving; we get things backwards if we are expecting the Lord to thank us; this is not to deny the legitimacy of the rewards which the Lord has promised for faithful service – but we act out of obedience; sense of responsibility to do what is pleasing to our Master

C. (:10) What Attitude is Appropriate for a Servant? Humble Obedience

"So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.'"

Geldenhuis: When believers have received the gift of a living faith and as a result are able to perform glorious things in His service, there is great danger that they may become self-satisfied and may think themselves entitled to special marks of honour. . . as if he were such a meritorious and indispensable person in His service.!

Donald Miller: The task of the Christian is to serve in obedience to his Master, and to do what is commanded with all the powers which he possesses. He can never say that he has done more than his duty, and think of himself as one who could be considered praiseworthy. It is his duty to give his entire service to the One to whom he belongs.

J. McNichol: “Unworthy slaves” not in the sense of being worthless, but as doing nothing to bring their master extra profit for which payment was to be expected.

Ron Ritchie: I remember hearing the story of a faithful missionary couple who came back to this country following many difficult years of ministry in Africa. As their ship docked in New York harbor they heard a band on the dock playing welcome music for a returning passenger. Hundreds of this passenger's family and friends were gathered to greet their loved one. The missionary couple hoped to have someone from their mission board greet them, but by the time they came down the gangplank the band and the welcoming crowds had all gone their separate ways. All that was left to greet them were a few seagulls and the trash from the celebration that had been held earlier on the dock. Not knowing what to do next, they walked a few blocks, carrying their suitcases in silence. Finally, they found a rundown hotel and checked in for the evening. As they sat in the dimly lit room, the husband could not contain himself any longer. In anger and frustration he cried out to: "Honey, we worked so hard all these years. We have been faithful to our Lord, to our calling, to our mission board and to our people in Africa. You would have thought that someone from our board would have met us and welcomed us home, wouldn't you?" After a moment of silence, his wife reminded him of their eternal hope: "But honey, we aren't home yet!" she said.

Thomas Constable: Jesus told this parable to teach His disciples that warning sinning disciples and forgiving those who sinned and repented was only their duty. It was not something for which they should expect a reward from God. The Pharisees believed that their righteous deeds put God in their debt, as did many of the Jews. God will indeed reward faithful service (12:35-37, 42-48). However

that is not because His servants have placed Him in their debt but because He graciously gives them more than what is just. The teaching in chapter 12 (vv. 35-37, 42-48) deals with the Master's grace whereas the teaching here in chapter 17 (vv. 7-10) stresses the servant's attitude.

Deffinbaugh: The underlying principle might therefore be summarized: MASTERS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO DEMAND COMPLETE OBEDIENCE FROM THEIR SLAVES, BUT SLAVES HAVE NO RIGHT TO DEMAND ANYTHING FROM THEIR MASTERS.

IV. (:11-19) GLORIFY GOD BY GIVING THANKS FOR THE HEALING YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH – THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL – DON'T ALLOW INGRATITUDE TO KNOCK YOU OFF COURSE

[Most commentators would not associate this paragraph with the preceding section but treat it independently.]

Walter Liefeld: Not only is this narrative peculiar to Luke, but it also stresses several characteristically Lukan themes. Jerusalem is the goal of Jesus' journey (cf. 9:51; 13:33); Jesus has mercy on social outcasts; he conforms to Jewish norms by requiring that the lepers go for the required priestly declaration of health (cf. Lev. 14); faith and healing should bring praise to God (cf. 18:43; Acts 3:8-9); and the grace of God extends beyond Judaism, with Samaritans receiving special attention (cf. 10:25-37).

A. (:11-13) Jesus is the Source of Undeserved Mercy

"While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him; 13 and they raised their voices, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

R. Chestnut: Some things you ought to know about leprosy:

1. Leprosy is a repulsive disease.
 - a. Gross to look at (open ulcers are not pretty).
 - b. The smell is repulsive.
 - c. In Scripture when people are healed of leprosy it is often called "a cleansing" rather than "a healing."
2. Leprosy is a contagious disease.
 - a. Mildly contagious, but contagious nevertheless.
 - b. In Bible times people with leprosy had to live apart from others; OT law declared them ritually unclean; had to announce their coming by shouting "UNCLEAN!"
 - c. Illust. A leper felt unimaginable feelings of alienation and loneliness. Leprosy was the AIDS of the first century. If you've ever seen the lepers in the movie BEN HUR then you have a sense of how terrible this disease was.
3. Leprosy is an incurable disease.
 - a. Until 50 years ago there was not even a treatment for it!
 - b. To become a leper was to lose all hope of living a normal, happy life.

B. (:14a) Jesus Commands Our Simple Obedience

When He saw them, He said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests."

C. (:14b) Jesus Accomplishes Our Complete Healing

"And as they were going, they were cleansed."

D. (:15-18) Jesus Deserves Our Abundant Thanksgiving and Directs Our Worship to Glorify God

“Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, 16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. 17 Then Jesus answered and said, ‘Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine – where are they? 18 Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?’”

Morgan: Christ values gratitude and misses it when it is not expressed.

John A Martin: The nation accepted the things that Jesus could do (such as heal them and feed them), but it did not want to accept Him as Messiah. However, those outside the nation (such as this Samaritan leper – a person doubly repulsive to the Jews) were responding.

Lenski: Majorities impress us too much. What would you have done if you had stood alone against nine? Majorities can go wrong as easily as an individual may go wrong. The decisive thing is the right, the true, and not the numbers. Luther stood against the world of his day; he stood with and for the truth. It is still true that God and one make a majority.

Thomas Constable: The incident teaches that people whom Jesus delivers and who believe on Him have a moral obligation to express their gratitude to Him for what He has done for them. It also illustrates the fact that the Jews were happy to receive the benefits of Jesus' ministry without thanking Him or connecting His goodness with God. The chiasmic structure of Jesus' three questions (vv. 17-18) is another indication that the focus of attention is on the ingratitude of the nine healed lepers.

Steven Cole: Note that this leper's praise was heartfelt: he glorified God *“with a loud voice”* (17:15). If before his voice had been hampered by leprosy, it was freed up now and he exercised it with full force! Others may have been embarrassed by his exuberance, but he didn't care! Jesus had healed him and he was going to make it known! This leper's glad praise should be that of every person whose heart has been healed by Jesus' mighty power.

E. (:19) Jesus Responds to Genuine Faith

“And He said to him, ‘Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.’”

CONCLUSION:

- Antidote for Sin = Watchfulness, Rebuke and Forgiveness
- Antidote for Weakness = Faith leading to Spiritual Life and Power
- Antidote for Pride = Humility and Servant-like attitude
- Antidote for Ingratitude = Thankfulness

Stay on Course!

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where have we allowed bitterness to fester by not taking the initiative to extend forgiveness?
- 2) Where are we trusting our faith rather than the object of our faith?
- 3) Do we have the proper attitude of a servant in our Christian ministry?
- 4) How can we grow in our giving of thanks continually?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole:

1. Be on guard against committing relational sins (17:1-3a).

A. WE NEED TO GUARD AGAINST RELATIONAL SINS BECAUSE WE ARE SO PRONE TOWARD THEM.

Jesus said, *“It is inevitable that stumbling-blocks come.”* We live as sinners in a sinful world, and so we are prone to sin against others and they are prone to sin against us. But just because we’re all prone to sin, it does not follow that we should just go with the flow. Rather, we should do all that we can to avoid sinning against others and leading them into sin. And, we should do all that we can to avoid taking offense when others sin against us and to avoid being led into sin by the bad example or teaching of others. . .

The major reason that we are so prone to sin against others and to take offense when others sin against us is that our sinfulness prompts us to justify ourselves and to blame others.

B. WE NEED TO GUARD AGAINST RELATIONAL SINS BECAUSE GOD VIEWS THEM SO SERIOUSLY.

2. Deal biblically with relational sins when they occur: rebuke, repentance, and forgiveness (17:3b-4).

A. IF YOUR BROTHER SINS, REBUKE HIM.

B. THE GOAL OF REBUKE IS REPENTANCE.

C. THE RESPONSE TO REPENTANCE IS FORGIVENESS.

Deffinbaugh: In **verse 4**, Jesus gives three characteristics of forgiveness which are most important.

(1) Forgiveness is to be granted, Jesus taught, **to those who have sinned against us**. It is one thing to forgive one who has sinned against God, or against others; it is quite another to forgive the one who has sinned against us. Jesus requires His disciples to forgive personal offenses.

(2) Forgiveness is to be granted, **on the basis of a verbal confession alone**. Frankly, words are cheap. We know how often confession and repentance can lack genuineness and sincerity. Our children, like us, can quickly evoke a hasty, but insincere, “I’m sorry,” in a tone and attitude which betrays a lack of honesty. Knowing this, and the tendency we will have to demand some “proof” of repentance—proof which will undoubtedly take time (thus forestalling our forgiveness and reconciliation)—Jesus teaches that forgiveness must be immediately granted, on the basis of a verbal confession alone.

(3) Forgiveness is to be granted, Jesus said, **even to those who sin against us repeatedly and**

habitually. It is a habitual sinner who is most difficult to forgive—repeatedly, and on the basis of a confession alone. The wife of an alcoholic, abusive, husband has heard, “I’m sorry,” too many times. Humanly speaking, she will come to doubt, even to despise, the “repentance” of her mate. She surely wants to see a change in behavior before she will believe that he has changed, or that he will. Jesus teaches that forgiveness is granted by faith, not by the works of the offending party. It is no wonder, then, that the apostles will ask the Lord to increase their faith in the very next verse. The ability to forgive on the basis of these requirements is only possible by faith.

MacArthur: Although some fail to see the connection, this concluding parable fits in with the overall theme of this section. The scribes and Pharisees were obsessed with being honored. In **Matthew 23:5-7** Jesus said of them, “*They do all their deeds to be noticed by men; for they broaden their phylacteries and lengthen the tassels of their garments. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues, and respectful greetings in the market places, and being called Rabbi by men*” (cf. **Luke 20:46-47**). That attitude is not to characterize the true followers of Jesus Christ. There is a danger that as they recognize their weakness, trust in God’s power, and are used by Him that they become arrogant and prideful. Lest they forget that everything they have and do is solely by God’s grace, Jesus told this parable as a warning against spiritual pride.

MacArthur: [The other 9 that were healed and did not return were **illustrative of the Jews in general** writing that] The ungrateful nine illustrate the general attitude of the Jews, we’ll take everything You give, we’ll take all the benefits, we’ll take all the miracles, just don’t expect worship. The one Samaritan is a picture of the outcasts, the remnant, the ten percent, like **Isaiah 6:13**, the tenth that will believe (see doctrine of the remnant). The grateful Samaritan is a picture of the outcasts who believed in Jesus. This was like the Samaritan woman in **John 4:1-30**, might be Jews who were tax collectors and sinners, the riff-raff, the scum, the thugs, the lowlifes, the prostitutes who surrounded Jesus and of whom He said He had come to call the sinners not the righteous (**Lk 5:32**). Everybody heard the message. Everybody enjoyed the benefit of Jesus’ power. Everybody basked in the wonder of His teaching and His miracles. But only a few came, fell at His feet, glorified Him as God, worshiped Him, humbled themselves, and offered Him thanks. The majority, they were the takers. Only a small group gave Him worship. The majority were content with “fixing their life up,” being content with that which was temporal, unconcerned about the eternal. Only a small group wanted Him to change their souls and transform their hearts. So the warning is that you can experience the goodness and common grace of God, as does the whole world. God makes the sun rise on all of us, the rain to fall on the just and the unjust (**Acts 24:15KJV**). He is good to all men. You can be blessed by God in an earthly sense. You can be even blessed to hear the stories of Jesus and Gospel truth but then say I’ll take what I get. I’ll take my life because I like it the way it is. God gave it to me, so yes I will thank God for it. We hear people say that all the time -- thank God that I’m healthy, thank God that I have my children, thank God for my job, etc. But you can thank God and still walk away right into eternal hell. Or you can come back and fall on your face before Jesus Christ and embrace Him as your Master and Savior.

J. Ligon Duncan: Not only that our obedience isn’t leverage to lay a claim of obligation on God, but God does not reward us based on our performance in some sort of a quid pro quo kind of way. . . . Third, Jesus makes it clear in this passage that we ought to serve God in humility and gratitude, in love and joy.

TEXT: Luke 17:20-37

TITLE: CERTAINTIES ABOUT THE COMING KINGDOM

BIG IDEA:

THE KINGDOM IS HERE (SO SUBMIT TO THE KING) AND IT'S COMING (SO BE READY)

INTRODUCTION:

Confusion and Uncertainty have long surrounded the topic of the coming kingdom of God. This was true when Jesus walked the earth and it remains true today. Yet the Bible offers abundant revelation about many specific aspects of the kingdom. Here the Pharisees kick things off with a question (cloaked in skepticism) about the timing of the kingdom promised in the OT. Jesus focuses their attention on their ignorance of His First Coming. If they don't submit to the King when He is present among them, what is the use of investigating the topic any deeper?

Then He turns to His disciples and delivers a series of certainties about the coming kingdom:

- It will be delayed until after His redemptive mission has been completed – including suffering and rejection in Jerusalem
- It will be hidden from them for an undetermined period of time and they will long to see its consummation
- It will be trumpeted by many imposters who will deceive cult followers
- It will be obvious to all when it appears suddenly and dramatically like lightning
- It will find the mass of humanity unprepared and preoccupied with the normal activities of life
- It requires preparation and readiness since it will mark the watershed between ultimate salvation or destruction

We need to have clarity where God has chosen to reveal details about the coming kingdom so that we will be prepared for the future and make the most of our present opportunities to walk by faith.

Steven Cole: Bible prophecy is not given so that we can sit around and speculate about what will happen in the future. It is always given so that we can apply it to how we live in the present in light of what God has promised to do in the future. Specifically, it is crucial that we understand personally how to be in God's kingdom, because Jesus makes it clear that His awful judgment will fall suddenly and certainly on everyone who is not in His kingdom. He shows us here that: **To be in God's kingdom, we must be personally related to God's King Jesus and we must faithfully await the kingdom's consummation when He returns in glory to judge everyone.**

I. (:20-21) SUBMISSION TO THE KING NOW TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER THE TIMING OF THE CONSUMMATED KINGDOM IN THE FUTURE

A. (:20a) Deflecting Question

“Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming,”

question addressed to Jesus by the Pharisees

MacArthur: They may have asked the question mockingly, having already concluded that He was not the Messiah, not coming with signs to be observed. The Pharisees believed that the Messiah's triumph would be immediate. They were looking for Him to come, overthrow Rome, and set up the millennial kingdom. Christ's program was altogether different. He was inaugurating an era in which the kingdom would be manifest in the rule of God in men's hearts through faith in the Savior (**v. 21; cf. Ro 14:17**). That kingdom was neither confined to a particular geographical location nor visible to human eyes. It would come quietly, invisibly, and without the normal pomp and splendor associated with the arrival of a king. Jesus did not suggest that the OT promises of an earthly kingdom were hereby nullified. Rather, that earthly, visible manifestation of the kingdom is yet to come (**Rev 20:1-6**).

Steven Cole: The general Jewish belief was that the kingdom of God would begin with a bang, with a powerful Messiah establishing His rule in Israel and delivering the nation from her enemies. But here is this carpenter from nowhere with His ragtag band of fishermen, and there is no sign that He is going to defeat the Romans and usher in the glorious new age. Sure, there were some miracles, but where is the clear evidence that He is establishing His kingdom rule?

B. (:20b-21a) Discerning Clarification - Don't Prioritize the Physical Over the Spiritual

*"He answered them and said,
The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed;
nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'"*

Geldenhuys: the final coming of the kingdom will take place so suddenly and unexpectedly that no one will be able to prophesy with any degree of accuracy when the day of His second coming will arrive.

C. (:21b) Definitive Answer

"For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst."

You, Pharisees, don't need to concern yourselves with hypothetical questions about the timing of the coming Kingdom of God in terms of its being established on earth as prophesied in the OT. You should give attention to your submission to the King who is present right now among you. Why are you opposing the King? The kingdom is present right now in the person and ministry of the King.

Donald Miller: the Kingdom was already present in him (**vs. 21**). He, as the King of the Kingdom, had come, had cast out demons, healed the sick, and announced the "good news" that the Kingdom was there (**4:18-21; 11:20**). If they had interpreted these deeds and his teaching rightly by faith, they would have known that the Kingdom was already in their midst in him.

II. (:22-25) SUDDEN RETURN OF THE KING LONGED FOR BUT DELAYED UNTIL AFTER SUFFERING AND REJECTION

Deffinbaugh: The Danger of over-zealous expectation

A. (:22) Anticipation – Longing for the Return of Christ and His Kingdom

"And He said to the disciples, 'The days shall come when you will long to see

one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.”

Response of Jesus switches to focus on His disciples

Donald Miller: The same subject is continued, but to the disciples (vss. 22-37). It is now, however, not a question of the beginning of the Kingdom in the coming of Jesus, but rather of its completion when he comes again as Son of man. Throughout the New Testament these two aspects of the Kingdom are present. Jesus could say that *“the kingdom of God has come”* (11:20), and yet he taught us to pray, *“Thy kingdom come”* (11:2). The Kingdom is already here in Jesus, but not yet here in its fullness. The Church, therefore, must proclaim the Kingdom’s presence and live in its power, yet at the same time witness that it is yet to come in its fullness.

Steven Cole: What believer hasn’t longed for the Lord to return and straighten out this messed up world? We look at world problems—war, violence, greed, crime, corruption, immorality, the pollution of God’s beautiful creation, and the many other problems—and cry out, “How long, O Lord?”

Scott Harris: Why would people long for *“the days of the Son of Man,”* a reference to the Messianic Kingdom? Because the descriptions of it as a time of peace, abundance, righteousness and justice are attractive even for those that interpret them allegorically into only general terms instead of specific promised characteristics. That longing can easily set a person up to be deceived or self-deceived if they are not careful.

B. (:23) Deception – False Claims and Hopes

*“And they will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’
Do not go away, and do not run after them.”*

Anyabwile: Think of how many cult tragedies would never have happened if people would take seriously these two verses. There would be no Jim Jones at Jonestown. There would be no David Koresh and the Branch Davidians in Waco. There’d be no Heaven’s Gate cult massacre. All of these people died because they listened to someone say, “The kingdom is over there!” or “Look! There’s the messiah!” If someone tells you they know the secret path to the kingdom, point to **Luke 17:22-23** and refuse to believe them or give them a hearing.

Deffinbaugh: There is a “cultishness” in all such movements, for in order to follow such “messiahs” they will have to leave their present place of service. Each of these false messiahs will have a following, but they will not be regarded by all as God’s Messiah, nor will they institute the kingdom. Jesus instructs the disciples here that chasing after messiah’s, as though they might miss His coming is foolish and unnecessary. When He returns, it will be universally known and evident. There will be no mistaking it. Thus, there is no need to worry about missing out on this kingdom and no need to follow-up everyone who claims to be the king.

C. (:24) Obvious Glorious Fulfilment – You Won’t Be Able to Miss It

*“For just as the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky,
shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.”*

Comes suddenly, unexpectedly and decisively

Anyabwile: The disciples can't miss it. It's unmistakable. You won't need someone to point you to it. It'll be plain for all the disciples to see. Christ's coming will be so glorious and obvious it will petrify the world. The world will stand still in awe of the brilliance and glory of the coming of the Son of God. His coming is the blessed hope of the church (**Titus 2:13**). If you have this hope in you, it will be fulfilled.

D. (:25) Prerequisite

"But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."

III. (:26-30) SURPRISE DESTRUCTION WILL BE UNLEASHED AGAINST THOSE PREOCCUPIED WITH NORMAL LIVING AND UNSUSPECTING OF FINAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Deffinbaugh: The Danger of worldly preoccupation

A. (:26-27) Like the Days of Noah

"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it shall be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all."

B. (:28-29) Like the Days of Lot

"It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all."

Steven Cole: Jesus uses two examples from history, Noah and Lot, to illustrate the same point, namely, the need to be ready for the certain and coming day of judgment when Jesus returns. . . Note also that Jesus assumes the historicity of these two events, the flood and the judgment on Sodom. They were given to us as two graphic warnings of the coming judgment on the whole earth at the Second Coming.

Scott Harris: While these two examples were times of extreme wickedness, it is not the sin to which Jesus points, but the indifference to God in just living out their lives doing the common things of life as they desired. It is at that point that judgment came upon them suddenly. Though they had plenty of warning, they were completely unprepared. They believed life would just continue on as they had always known it.

C. (:30) Like the Second Coming

"It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed."

IV. (:31-37) SEPARATION UNTO FINAL SALVATION AND DESTRUCTION WILL OCCUR AT THE SECOND COMING

A. (:31-33) Pathway to Salvation - Lose Your Life to Preserve It

1. (:31) Urgency

"On that day, let not the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the

house go down to take them away; and likewise let not the one who is in the field turn back.”

2. (:32) Case Study

“Remember Lot’s wife.”

Donald Miller: The ordinary pursuits of life are legitimate, but are not to be engaged in as though they were permanent, nor allowed to crowd out the constant readiness to part with them at the coming of the Kingdom. A loose hold on the present order makes for readiness for the coming order (**vs. 31**). The fate of Lot’s wife is an example of what happens to those who are too much tied to the goods of this world (**vs. 32; Gen. 19:26**).

Geldenhuys: Lot’s wife, although she had tried to flee from Sodom, nevertheless remained attached in heart to the doomed city and consequently came to a fatal end. But history should ever warn the faithful against such worldly-mindedness.

3. (:33) Principle

*“Whoever seeks to keep his life shall lose it,
and whoever loses his life shall preserve it.”*

Steven Cole: In other words, to be so attached to the things of this earth that we want to hang on to them more than we want heaven is to jeopardize our eternal souls. But to let go of all the things that the world values and to live in light of Jesus’ coming will result in ultimate and final salvation. It may mean hardship and suffering now, in comparison with those who are living for this life only. Like the rich man in contrast with Lazarus (**16:19-31**), they may have it good now and you may be worse off because you are not striving for those things. But when Jesus comes and God’s final judgment falls, you will be the one to preserve your life and they will lose theirs. Remember Lot’s wife!

B. (:34-36) Examples of Separation

1. (:34) In the Home

*“I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed;
one will be taken, and the other will be left.”*

Deffinbaugh: My (NASB) text tells me that two men will be in the same bed. It is possible, as some translations render it, that it is really a man and wife who are thus pictured. It is also possible that it is two men, but without any sense of immoral conduct. In those days a bed was not like the “beds” which we have today—single, twin, standard, queen, king, water, etc. In those days there were no bedrooms usually and thus the whole family slept together on the floor, on what must have been mats, at best (cf. **Luke 11:7**, where the head of the house speaks of he and his children being in bed).

2. (:35) In the Workplace

*“There will be two women grinding at the same place;
one will be taken, and the other will be left.”*

3. (:36) In the Field

*“Two men will be in the field;
one will be taken and the other will be left.”*

Geldenhuys: When the Son of Man appears in His glory, a complete and final separation will be brought about between the faithful and the unbelievers, and even the most intimate bonds between people will not prevent their being separated from one another . . .

C. (:37) Certainty of Destruction

*“And answering they said to Him, ‘Where, Lord?’
And He said to them, ‘Where the body is,
there also will the vultures be gathered.’”*

Probably asking Jesus **Where** this coming judgment will take place.

Donald Miller: When the decisive moment comes, there will be a great separation. Some will be taken into the Kingdom, others left outside. Their outward estate is quite similar – sleeping at night, working in the day (**vss. 34-35**). The only difference is that some have known the transitory nature of this life and have lived in expectancy of the age to come, while others have felt secure in the present age. To the question of the disciples about where this should take place, Jesus replied with a proverb. The fact that it will take place is all that we can or need to know, and not the time or place. As surely as the vulture finds a carcass, so surely will judgment come (**vs. 37**). Therefore, be always ready!

Steven Cole: Jesus’ answer is also hard to understand and there are a variety of interpretations. It could mean that just as vultures gather on dead bodies, so, “Where the spiritually dead are found, there inevitably will there be judgment” (**Leon Morris**, *Luke* [IVP/Eerdmans], p. 262). Or, the sense could be that when judgment comes, it will be obvious, just as the location of a corpse is obvious by the presence of vultures. Or, it could mean more, that judgment not only will be obvious, but also universal and permanent (**Darrell Bock**, *Luke* [Baker], 2:1440 lists these last two views, along with five others; he leans to the last view). Once judgment comes, it will be final. Thus Jesus is saying, “Don’t worry about where the judgment will occur, because once it comes, it will be too late and all will see it in its horrific finality” (adapted from **Bock**, *ibid.*).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What attracts people to false messianic claims?
- 2) To what extent are you preoccupied with normal living and not in a state of readiness for the Lord’s return?
- 3) How much do you long for the return of the Lord Jesus?
- 4) What characteristics of the Second Coming of Christ can be gleaned from this passage?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: To the question regarding the timing of the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus gives different answers to different groups of people: [great sermon outline!]

- (:20-21) The Pharisees Can't See It
- (:22-25) The Disciples Can't Miss It
- (:26-30) The World Won't Expect It
- (:31-33) Only the Self-Denying Will Find It
- (:34-37) Those Who Miss It Will Perish

Steven Cole: As you may know, there are three major views regarding Christ's kingdom.

The *amillennial* view teaches that His kingdom is His spiritual reign over His people in this age. The promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob regarding their possessing the land of Canaan and their descendants ruling over the nations are all spiritually fulfilled now in Christ. While I greatly respect many men who hold this view, I reject it. It seems to me that Christ's present rule over His people in this wicked and corrupt world is a far cry from the glorious kingdom promised in the Scriptures. I agree that Christ's present reign over His people is the *initial* phase of His kingdom, but I believe that Jesus will literally reign over the nations on the throne of David, in power and great glory.

The *postmillennial* view teaches that Christ's kingdom will come gradually but certainly as the gospel spreads and triumphs over evil. They often cite **Habakkuk 2:14**, "*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*" While I, too, believe that verse, I do not believe that it will be fulfilled before Jesus returns. Our text makes it clear that the world will not be converted when Jesus returns. Rather, it will be going on with self-centered business as usual.

The *premillennial* view holds that Jesus will return in power and glory to judge this wicked world and establish His kingdom on earth for 1,000 years. This is the view that makes the most sense of the most Scriptures to me. But don't let the variety of views make you throw up your hands and not believe anything! Note that all three views share some things in common: Jesus is coming again bodily, in power and glory. When He comes, He will judge every person. We need to be ready for His coming by trusting Him as Savior and submitting to Him as Lord now. To deny these things that all of the views share in common would be to deny the core of what Jesus Himself taught.

Deffinbaugh: It is most important to take note of the fact that there are three errors described in our text, all of which have to do with the second coming. The first is the **error of the Pharisees (verses 20-21)**. The second error is that of our **Lord's disciples (verses 22-25)**. The last error is that of the **people as a whole, the masses (verses 26-32)**. From a study of our text, and from a study of the gospels as a whole, we can see that no one fully understood the prophecies of the Old Testament and how they would be fulfilled in Christ. At best, some had bits and pieces of the story, but no one could put them all together. If this is true, we should be instructed that none of us, who live in the 20th century, have a complete understanding of Bible prophecy. We may, like some in Jesus' day, feel that we are experts in the area of the coming of the kingdom, but we, like they, are not. We, too, have many misconceptions concerning the return of our Lord and

the establishment of His kingdom on the earth. We need these words from the lips of our Lord as much as the people of His day needed them. . .

The first danger is that of shaping the second coming in accordance with our own desires and expectations. Neither the Pharisees nor the people of Israel would not recognize the coming kingdom because they had false pre-conceptions of what the King and the kingdom would (must) be like. When Jesus failed to fulfill these expectations, He was rejected, and ultimately put on the cross. . .

The second danger is that which posed a threat to the disciples: over-eagerness to see the Lord Jesus again, manifested in a chasing after every potential “messiah” which may arise. Our Lord’s return cannot (as the Pharisees supposed) be all figured out in advance, but we can be assured that we will know it when it comes. The emphasis of our Lord is not on us finding or discovering Him and His coming kingdom, but on how He will find us. Repeatedly, Jesus urged His disciples to be faithful and diligent when He returned. Let us therefore focus our attention and our efforts on being found faithfully carrying out the task which He has given us, and that is making disciples of all nations. We ought not to be chasing after every self-proclaimed messiah, but we should be bringing others to the true Messiah, by faith. . .

The third danger is that of worldly pre-occupations, which diminishes our desire for the kingdom, and dims our view of its reality, and dulls our desire for it to come. When our “life” is found in Christ, and we can give up all else, all other things in which the world find “life” then we will eagerly await His return, and we will work to hasten it. This is why Jesus has had so much to say about possessions. Possessions will possess us if we find our “life” to be wrapped up with them. When we use our possessions to further the kingdom, then we lay up treasure in heaven, and we quicken our hearts toward heaven.

J. Ligon Duncan: And there are three things in particular that I want us to look at today. I want to tell you what they are ahead of time so that you can't miss them. And the first one is this — **Jesus wants His disciples then, and us now, to understand that His coming will be unmistakable.** And I’ll explain to you why that's important. Secondly, **He wants us to understand that we will not be ready for the second coming unless we understand His cross.** We will not be ready for the second coming unless we understand His cross. His first coming precedes His second coming, and the work that He came to do in His first coming is absolutely essential to the second coming being good news for us.

And third, I think you’ll see here that Jesus is telling us that **we are not ready for the second coming unless He is more important to us than the world is.** If this world is more important to us than Jesus, we're not ready for the second coming. This passage says a lot of things, but those three things in particular I want us to zero in on.

TEXT: Luke 18:1-8

TITLE: PARABLE OF THE WICKED JUDGE – PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER

BIG IDEA:

PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER DIRECTLY TIED TO PERSEVERANCE IN FAITH

INTRODUCTION:

The delay in the consummation of the kingdom of God upon Christ returning means that in this church age we need to live by faith and be persistent in our prayers as we depend upon our Heavenly Father. We need perseverance in faith and perseverance in our prayers. We can't lose heart and give up no matter how difficult things get, no matter the oppression, no matter how long things seem to be taking from our limited perspective.

This is a parable of contrasts. The elect are in such a better position than this poor widow. God is so much more righteous and compassionate than this wicked judge. But the parallel shows up in the outcomes. Persistence yields results. But in the case of prayer it is not because we are browbeating God into giving in to us. It is because of the gracious nature of our loving Heavenly Father who delights in doing what is best for His elect.

Donald Miller: The best way of reminding ourselves of the impermanence of the present order and keeping our expectancy of the coming Kingdom sharp, while at the same time developing patient steadfastness in waiting for it, is to pray. The Kingdom may be long delayed in coming. Bitter suffering may be the lot of those who wait for it. The temptation to despair will be great. The sigh, "O Lord, how long?" will often be on the lips of Christians. The one resource against succumbing to such temptation is prayer. Should prayer cease, Christians would lose heart (**18:1**).

(:1) PROLOGUE– POINT OF THE PARABLE – PERSISTENCE IN PRAYER IS KEY

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,"

the times of suffering and affliction pressure believers into wanting to give up; the longing and expectation for the Second Coming seems too far off and unobtainable so that we allow our present circumstances to overwhelm us

J. Ligon Duncan: the first bit of good news in this passage is that your God is more willing to hear your prayer than you are to pray it. And if you're a hopeless person then you understand how important that is, because if you've ever lost hope, you know what it is to lose the ability to even pray.

MacArthur: In the time between the first and Second Coming, in the time between the first and Second Coming we are not to lose heart but rather we are to pray. We are living in that period of time now. Yes there is the invisible kingdom the Lord is building through salvation as He comes to take up His royal throne in the hearts of those who put their trust in Christ. There is that invisible kingdom being built. But the visible kingdom, the kingdom of righteousness, the

destruction of the ungodly, the binding of Satan, the end of the reign of Satan and sin, the establishment of the glorious kingdom of righteousness, joy and peace and finally the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth are all associated with His Second Coming, which will be triggered by the rapture of the church. That's all in the future. And so He is saying you need to view that event with prayer and not to lose heart. That's the key to unlocking the meaning of the story. . .

This is a call to eschatological prayer, pray that the Lord will come and pray for the strength to endure until He arrives, to endure the flesh, the world, the devil, the hostility against the gospel, persecution, rejection, and even martyrdom. This is eschatological praying.

I. (:2-5) STORY OF THE PARABLE – PERSISTENCE PAYS OFF

A. (:2) Unrighteous Judge

“saying, ‘There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man.’”

This is a bad quality for a judge; he should be all about righteousness and delivering justice without prejudice no matter who appears before him

2 Cor. 8:21 *“for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”*

MacArthur: to say about someone that he had absolutely no reverence for God and could never ever do anything that would make him feel shame in his behavior toward people is to say he is impervious to any appeal to justice or righteousness. This judge was shameless. He had no spark of honor, no sense of character, no point apparently...no noble point to which he could be appealed. Neither for God's sake nor for man's sake would he be moved to do what is right. This is the worst possible human being and his wickedness has all kinds of tragic implications because he is making decisions that affect people's lives.

B. (:3) Oppressed Widow

“And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’”

She is in the most vulnerable of positions; a widow who is being taken advantage of and oppressed by her opponent

Morris: The widow was almost a symbol of helplessness. She was in no position to bribe the judge and she had no protector to bring pressure to bear on him. She was armed with nothing but the fact that right was evidently on her side (she asked not for vengeance but for justice) and her own persistence.

C. (:4-5) Persistent Entreaties Pay Off

1. (:4a) Initially Unwilling to Respond

“And for a while he was unwilling;”

Gives no reason or justification for refusing to act on a legitimate case – just is unwilling

2. (:4b) Unmotivated by Right Reasons

*“but afterward he said to himself,
'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,'”*

Right evaluation of his own wickedness

3. (:5) Finally Motivated by Persistence

“yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.”

Wear me out – lit. *“hit under the eye”*

Lenski: it is certainly about as low a motive as can move any judge to act . . . Not the widow's unquestioned right and her opponent's flagrant wrong against her move this judge, move him at last, but his own personal ease and peace which this widow's constant coming and pleading destroy.

II. (:6-8a) APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE – GOD WILL DO WHAT'S RIGHT

A. (:6) Argument From the Lesser to the Greater

“And the Lord said, ‘Hear what the unrighteous judge said;’”

If we see how the unrighteous judge responds, how much greater hope should we have that our righteous God will do what is right for us

B. (:7-8a) Argument From Family Relationship

1. (:7) God Will Do What's Right

*“now shall not God bring about justice for His elect,
who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?”*

- God loves justice
- God loves His elect
- God hears our cries

Ray Stedman: this widow found the secret of handling reluctant judges! She discovered, in other words, the key to power. She found the one principle on which even a reluctant judge would act, despite his formidable defenses. Now, says Jesus, prayer is the countering principle which is the key to the Father-heart of God. Persistent pressure was the key to this unrighteous judge, perpetual prayer is the key to the activity of God. . .

It is sometimes taught that Jesus is here encouraging what is called "*prevailing prayer*," which is often another way of describing an attempt to belabor God, to give him no peace, to picket the throne of heaven until we get the request we want. This is an absolutely un-Biblical and totally un-Christian attitude in prayer.

2. (:8a) God Will Do It Quickly

“I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily.”

Even though it seems to us like God is delaying and taking a long time to respond

(:8b) EPILOGUE – PERSEVERANCE IN FAITH IS KEY

“However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

This is the more important question

Geldenhuys: His question is intended as a warning that believers should take heed not to let their faith waver, notwithstanding His apparent delay in coming. So He concludes the parable with a powerful summons to His followers to maintain true belief in Him, through whom the Father will give final victory.

Deffinbaugh: I believe Jesus is saying something like this: “You can count on the fact that I will return and that I will bring about justice on the earth when I come. The issue for you to concern yourselves about isn’t whether I will fulfill My promises, but whether you will be found faithful when I return.” We need not worry about our Lord’s faithfulness, but only our own. . .

How very different with God. God is good. God is righteous and just. God does not need to be forced to bring about justice by His saints. God has promised to do so, and He will. His love of justice, His love for His own (and His compassion for the oppressed) predispose Him to act to bring about justice. It is this positive aspect of His character which promotes the perseverance of the saints in prayer, while it is the very wickedness of the unjust judge which required the same perseverance from the widow. The character of God is our motivation not to lose heart and to press on in prayer for His coming and for the establishment of justice on the earth.

Piper: **Luke 18:1–8** is really part of this end-time teaching [from **chap. 17**]. It closes in **verse 8** with the question, “*When the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?*” Will the warnings of Jesus to remember Lot’s wife, to keep the heart fixed on Christ, and to not love the world—will these warnings secure the faith of the disciples? Will they endure to the end? Will the Son of man find us trusting him, or busy securing our lives in this world?

So the implication seems to be: prayer and faith stand and fall together. *If we lose heart and drift away from prayer, then the Son of man will not find faith in us when he comes.* Faith is the furnace of our lives. Its fuel is the grace of God. And the divinely appointed shovel for feeding the burner is prayer. If you lose heart and lay down the shovel, the fire will go out, you will grow cold and hard, and when the lightning flashes from sky to sky and the Son of man appears in glory, he will spew you out of his mouth (**Revelation 3:16**).

MacArthur: We are true Christians and we have been given a tremendous promise. This is how it’s all going to end. In the meantime we suffer and we’re rejected and persecuted and alienated and the gospel is resisted and Christ is dishonored and sometimes maybe we think it’s going on too long and too long. We continue to pray and plead for the glory of Christ, the honor of Christ. And when you live that way and pray that way and plead that way, it changes everything about your life. How you view every part of your life. Yes it’s been 2,000. But our hope burns shining bright, and our love for Christ is still true and pure and our confidence that He keeps His Word is fast and firm. And so we pray persistently calling on Him to come, to glorify Himself, to vindicate Himself, to punish sinners, dethrone Satan, establish a righteous kingdom and peace on the earth, reign as King of kings and Lord of lords and create the eternal new heaven and the

new earth. We say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," and it ought to be on our lips day after day after day, says our Lord. Live in that kind of anticipation until He comes. And watch how it changes your life.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you connect this lesson with Christ's teaching at the end of Chapter 17?
- 2) What is the connection between prayer and being in a state of anticipation and readiness for the return of Jesus Christ?
- 3) How would you develop the link between prayer and faith in this passage?
- 4) What disconnects do you see in the contrast between the judge and God? Between the widow and God's elect?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: If continuing urgency in request could produce results from an unjust judge (**vss. 2-5**), how much more effective will it be with him who is called "*the righteous judge*"? (**II Tim. 4:8**). God's people, as defenseless as the widow, will be vindicated in their trust in his promises of the coming Kingdom (**vs. 7**). The widow was unknown to the judge. God's people are God's children. Her cause was one of human rights, administered by social custom. Their cause is that of God's Kingdom. She came to the judge frequently. They are to pray "*day and night*," living in a continual attitude of prayer. Such prayer will receive its answer. Even though deliverance is not immediately forthcoming (**vs. 7b**), this is not to be interpreted as God's refusal to answer. He "*will vindicate them speedily*" (**vs. 8a**). The vindication may not seem speedy to men, but in terms of his program, in which "*one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*" (**II Peter 3:8**), God will act quickly and decisively. His delay is a mercy to the enemies of his people. Believers are not to fret at the delay, but to be faithful (**vs. 8b**).

Anyabwile: Our text reveals the connection between the prayers of the elect and the answer of **justice** from God. The surest way to get justice in this world for God's people is not by marching, though marching may have its place. The surest way to achieve justice in this world is not by protest signs, though those also may be appropriate. The surest way to find justice is never by rioting and burning down your own neighborhood. Justice comes most surely by falling on our knees with our heads bowed. When God's justice comes, it will be perfect, proportionate, and balanced.

Geldenhuis: In **xvii. 20-37** the Saviour emphasized the fact that no one will be able to determine in advance the time of His second coming. He now teaches in this parable that when His coming is apparently slow in taking place believers are not to become discouraged, but should persist in prayer, knowing that He will indeed come at the right time and will answer their supplication by destroying the powers of evil and by causing His chosen ones to triumph. The parable has, however, also a more general meaning, namely, that the faithful should persevere in prayer with

regard to all other matters when the answer is not immediately granted.

- Unjust judge vs. Heavenly Father who is perfectly holy and just
- The widow vs. the elect of God – In the eye of the unjust judge she is an unknown, troublesome person in whom he takes no interest and about whose fate he does not worry. But the chosen ones of God are well known to Him and loved by Him, and He takes the keenest interest in them.

Steven Cole: We would be greatly mistaken if we thought that Jesus was teaching that God is like this self-centered, callous judge. That would run counter to the entire biblical revelation of the character of God as a loving and tender Father in relation to His children. Jesus uses this humorous example as an argument from the lesser to the greater, taken to absurd lengths. If this widow could get justice from this hardened, crusty, uncaring old judge, doesn't it follow that the loving, tender, gracious Heavenly Father will hear and answer His own children whom He has chosen when they cry out to Him for relief? There are four things here that we need to know about God:

- (1). GOD CARES FOR US.
- (2). GOD NEVER DELAYS ANSWERS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF CARE OR A LACK OF POWER.
- (3). GOD'S DELAYS ARE ALWAYS FOR OUR GOOD, EVEN IF THE REASONS ARE HIDDEN FROM US.
- (4). GOD ULTIMATELY WILL BRING SWIFT AND CERTAIN JUSTICE FOR HIS ELECT.

Deffinbaugh: There is another inference from this paragraph we need to note carefully. The words of our Lord indicate there will be no real, complete, and ultimate justice on the earth until He does return and establish it on the earth. The reason we must persistently pray for justice and not lose heart is that there will be much injustice until He comes again. There are some who seem to be saying these days that Christ will only come to the earth after we (the church) have established justice. That simply is not true, either to this text or to the rest of the Scriptures pertaining to the coming of His kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount speaks of present pain, mourning, persecution, and sorrow, and of ultimate blessing when He comes with His kingdom. Let us not be confused on this point.

TEXT: Luke 18:9-14

TITLE: PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN – HOW TO APPROACH GOD

BIG IDEA:

APPROACH GOD WITH HUMILITY AND CONFESSION OF THE NEED FOR MERCY RATHER THAN SMUGLY TRUSTING IN YOUR OWN GOOD WORKS

INTRODUCTION:

Having just given instruction on the efficacy of persistent prayer, Jesus wants to make it plain that not all prayer has value. So he develops this contrast between the self-righteous Pharisee who is boasting in his good works and the humble Publican who is seeking mercy and forgiveness of sins. They both go the right place to offer up prayers. They both engage in the same activity of praying. But they come before God with two completely different characters and attitudes. Here we see the right way and the wrong way to approach God.

Lenski: Neither the preceding parable nor the one that is now introduced deal with prayer as such; prayer is only the vehicle in both. So the connection is not from prayer to prayer. The first parable deals with the kind of faith Jesus wants the disciples to have, one that is constantly longing and asking for his return; the second parable adds the true humility of faith, of that faith which alone justifies.

I. (:9) PURPOSE OF THE PARABLE = EXPOSE SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

“And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt.”

Anyabwile: It’s amazing how often self-righteousness and looking down on others come in a package.

Steven Cole: The Jews tended to think that being Abraham’s descendants and following the Law of Moses separated them from the Gentile “dogs.” They were a notch above others and would be accepted into heaven because of their Jewish heritage and their moral lives. But Jesus upended that view with this parable.

II. (:10-13) PEOPLE OF THE PARABLE

A. (:10) Two Men Identified

1. Activity

“Two men went up into the temple to pray,”

2. Pharisee

“one a Pharisee,”

3. Tax-Gatherer

“and the other a tax-gatherer.”

B. (:11-13) Two Men Characterized

1. (:11-12) The Pharisee = Self-Righteous – How Not to Approach God

“The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’”

- Very moral man
- Very religious man

J. Ligon Duncan: And there is no sense of that need in this prayer. No sense of a need for forgiveness at all.

Morris: The Pharisee in the parable speaks first of some vices from which he abstains and then of some pious practices in which he engages. . . There is no sense of sin nor of need nor of humble dependence on God.

Geldenhuis: He performs certain exceptional acts of piety: he fasts regularly twice a week (much more frequently than is demanded by the Old Testament laws) and gives tithes of **all** his income (while the Law requires this of only certain kinds of income).

2. (:13) The Tax-Gatherer = Humble Sinner – How to Approach God

“But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’”

Morris: clearly under great conviction of sin. Lifting up the eyes to heaven when praying was normal, but his sense of unworthiness prevented him from doing this.

Anyabwile: He offers no defense, no rationalization, and no justification. He simply admits he is a sinner and needs mercy.

Geldenhuis: as an unconditional avowal of his guilt before the Holy God, he beats upon his breast and beseeches Him to be merciful to him, a sinner – confessing thus that he has no claim to the goodness of God but deserves rather to be cast out and sentenced.

J. Ligon Duncan: The righteousness that comes by God's mercy alone through the person and work of Jesus Christ received by faith on Him and on His finished work, this mercy alone is the basis by which we are forgiven, accepted, and declared just.

III. (:14) POINT OF THE PARABLE = HUMBLE YOURSELF TO OBTAIN MERCY

A. Result = Justified

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;”

Anyabwile: The self-righteous Pharisee goes home deceived, believing himself justified, yet unrighteous and unknowing. It is a terrible thing to think you are right before God when you are not. It is foolish to try basing your righteousness with God on the things you do. Our goodness falls far too short. But it is wonderful to be a sinner, head bowed, pleading for mercy, and being rewarded with that mercy through faith in Jesus Christ.

B. Principle – Exalting Self vs. Humbling Self

*“for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled,
but he who humbles himself shall be exalted.”*

Lenski: The reason the publican was acquitted and the Pharisee was not is stated in the form of an axiom or self-evident proposition, one that is used repeatedly by Jesus in **14:11; Matt. 23:12**, and in other forms elsewhere. . . God had to puncture his arrogance; he could not let the lie endure, especially also since God had provided a true righteousness for sinners, and this man spurned it, manufactured a sham righteousness of his own instead, and tried to pass that off on God.

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we compare our conduct with others in order to justify ourselves or do we confess our sin and seek mercy?
- 2) Are we self-centered in our prayers or focused on God?
- 3) Do we look with contempt on others or are we broken over our own sinfulness?
- 4) Do we humble ourselves or exalt ourselves/

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: The wrong way to approach God is by your own good works; the right way to approach God is as an unworthy sinner, pleading for mercy.

- 1. The wrong way to approach God is by your own good works.
 - A. PEOPLE WHO TRY TO COME TO GOD BY THEIR GOOD WORKS ARE TRUSTING IN THEMSELVES.
 - B. PEOPLE WHO TRY TO COME TO GOD BY THEIR GOOD WORKS ARE LOOKING DOWN ON OTHERS.
 - C. PEOPLE WHO TRY TO COME TO GOD BY THEIR GOOD WORKS ARE COMPARING THEMSELVES TO OTHERS, NOT TO GOD.
 - D. PEOPLE WHO TRY TO COME TO GOD BY THEIR GOOD WORKS ARE LOOKING AT THINGS OUTWARDLY, NOT AT THEIR HEARTS BEFORE GOD.
- 2. The right way to approach God is as an unworthy sinner pleading for mercy.
 - A. APPROACH GOD AS AN UNWORTHY SINNER.
 - B. APPROACH GOD BY PLEADING FOR HIS MERCY.
- 3. When sinners approach God for mercy, He graciously, instantly justifies them.

Jesus emphatically states, “*I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other*” (18:14). To justify means that God bangs the gavel at His judgment bench and declares, “Not guilty!” Not only does He remove the guilt of our sins, He also credits to our account the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the substitute who suffered the penalty of God’s wrath. This man walked into the temple as a guilty, despicable tax collector, who ripped off people because of his own greed. He walked out of the temple righteous before God. How could this be? The answer is, he received a righteousness not his own, imputed to him.

Was that perfect righteousness imputed to him because of his works or his promise to be different? No, it was imputed to him by God’s grace through faith. Did it take years of personal reformation and penance in this life and more years in Purgatory to secure this righteous standing for this man? No, he went down to his house justified. God graciously, instantly granted it. The word “justified” in Greek is a perfect passive participle. The passive voice means that he was acted upon by God; he had nothing to do with his own justification. The perfect tense shows that the act was accomplished with continuing results, so that he is now in a permanent state of justification. The great news is that when a sinner comes to God as a sinner asking for mercy, God graciously, instantly justifies him.

Deffinbaugh: Consider with me several characteristics of the “prayer” of the Pharisee:

- (1) The attitude of the Pharisee was one of self-trust, self-righteousness, and contempt for others. These are the very attitudes which Jesus underscored at the beginning of the parable. These were the attitudes which characterized Jesus’ audience and the Pharisee.
- (2) The standard by which the Pharisee judged righteousness and unrighteousness was external, focusing only on outward deeds rather than on the heart. It was a very selective list of sins which the Pharisee listed, just as the “righteous deeds” were selective. It is no surprise that this man chose to major on what he thought to be his strengths and to minimize or ignore his sins.
- (3) The Pharisee judged himself in terms of those sins which society found unacceptable, rather than in terms of what offends God. Put differently, the Pharisee thought in terms of “crimes” more than in terms of “sins.” Swindlers, unjust, adulterers, and tax-collectors were all looked upon as “crooks.” Once again, human standards are in view. The things which the Pharisee looks down upon as sin are those things which society shuns as unacceptable (cf. **Luke 16:14-18**).
- (4) The standard which the Pharisee used was comparative, not absolute. The Pharisee did not use the Law as his standard of measuring righteousness; rather, he compared himself with the publican. He saw himself as righteous simply because he was, in his opinion, better than the publican.
- (5) The Pharisee boldly approached God, seemingly without regard for His holiness or with a sense of his own unholiness. He almost seems to expect God to be grateful for his presence and prayers.
- (6) The Pharisee thanked God for nothing other than what he was, in and of himself. There was no mention of God’s graciousness, no realization of having been blessed by God. All this Pharisee thanked God for was that which he had achieved for himself.

(7) The Pharisee did not ask God for anything, because he did not believe that he lacked anything. The Pharisee was self-sufficient. He trusted only in himself, and he found himself sufficient; thus he asked nothing of God. While some of us may ask for too much or too often, this man didn't ask at all.

(8) This Pharisee not only saw himself as fully complying with the law, but he actually thought he had gone beyond it.

J. Ligon Duncan: So there is both a recognition of his need for forgiveness of sins and then there is a motion away from himself in trust of God. Do you understand, the Pharisee was trusting in his own inherent, moral, religious, God-enabled righteousness, but he had no sense of sin and need in his prayer and he had a false trust in himself and in his own righteousness? And in contrast to that, you have this tax collector who is looking away from himself and to God. In fact it's a little ironic. When it comes to the issue of being accepted to God, notice that the Pharisee looks into himself and he is satisfied having looked into himself that he is right with God, whereas the tax collector looks into himself and he says, "If that's what I am, and it is, I'm in trouble." And so he looks away from Himself to God. The Pharisee looks in himself and he's satisfied that he is right with God having looked into his own heart. The tax collector looks into his own heart and he sees himself like he really is and then he realizes, "I'm not going to get any peace looking in there. I'm going to have to look away to God."

MacArthur: So what you have in this story is a division of the only two religions that exist: the religion of self, of human achievement, self-achievement, and the religion of divine accomplishment. And the Pharisee is self-righteous, aloof, contemptuous, standing as near as he can to the holy place without touching any of the people who would contaminate him in his mind. He seeks no mercy, seeks no grace, seeks no forgiveness, wants no sympathy. He is thankful that he is not unrighteous. Self-exalted he goes away unjustified. And the other character is the tax collector; sinful, outcast, object of contempt, guilty, standing far away as he feels so unclean and unwanted, seeking mercy, desperately needing grace, distraught that he is not righteous. He goes home justified. He's humble so he ends up being exalted.

Powerful story: two men, two postures, two prayers, two results

TEXT: Luke 18:15-17

TITLE: KINGDOM OF GOD BELONGS TO THE HELPLESSLY DEPENDENT

BIG IDEA:
APPROACH GOD IN CHILDLIKE DEPENDENCE

INTRODUCTION:

This is a good Father's Day Message for 2020. Here we see the attitude and posture of the disciples at odds with the heart of their Master. The disciples still seemed to associate some concept of worthiness or significance to those people whom the Lord would want to bless. In contrast to those who would plead for worthiness based on their Jewish privilege or their own works or merit, Jesus pointed to the helpless condition of little children who have nothing to offer and seem insignificant. But unless someone approaches God on that basis of helplessness and complete dependency they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Deffinbaugh: The setting of our text, the subject at hand, is that of the character of those who will enter into the kingdom of God, when it is established on the earth. To put the matter in more contemporary terms, the issue at hand is, "Who are those who will go to heaven?" I think you will agree with me that there is no more important question in all the world. It was such an important matter that Jesus could urge the rich young ruler to give up all of his wealth to be added to that group who would enter into eternal life. The issues of our text are eternal ones. Nothing matters more in this life, or the next, than the things which Jesus is speaking of here. Let us listen well to His words, for they are words of life.

I. (:15) PROTECTIONIST ATTITUDE OF THE DISCIPLES

Thinking they were protecting Jesus from this intrusive interruption

A. Did Not Want Jesus Bothered

"And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He might touch them,"

Associated with the act of laying on of hands and praying for their blessing

William Barclay: It was the custom for mothers to bring their children to some distinguished Rabbi on their first birthday that he might bless them. That is what the mothers wanted for their children from Jesus....It is one of the loveliest things in all the gospel story that Jesus had time for the children even when He was on the way to Jerusalem to die!

Lenski: Mark adds that he then took them into his arms, laid his hands on them, and went on fervently blessing them.

- Symbols of dependence and helplessness – they have nothing to offer
- Symbols of insignificance
- Symbols of humility
- Symbols of open receptivity
- Not absorbed with a sense of their own importance or accomplishments

Cf. the old Art Linkletter show – "Kids Say the Darndest Things" – refreshing honesty of

expression; no hypocrisy

B. Denied Access to Jesus

“but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.”

- Don't bother Jesus; He is too busy
- Jesus has more important people to help – people who are more worthy of His attention

II. (:16) PROTECTIONIST ATTITUDE OF JESUS

Longs to gather children under His protective wings

A. Not Bothered by Children

“But Jesus called for them, saying,

‘Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them,’”

B. Only Ones Like Little Children Have Access to the Kingdom

“for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

Deffinbaugh: I believe that Jesus was using the coming of the children to Him to be blessed as an illustration of the way in which all men must come to Him for a blessing. That is, if we would come to Jesus for a blessing, we must not come in our own strength (the babes were carried), we must not come through our own understanding, our own wisdom, our own good works. We can only come to Christ in our **helpless state**, looking to Him and to His grace alone. We must come out of our weakness and helpless state, not out of our own righteousness. Here is the difference between all of those who came to Jesus and were “saved” and those who were “healthy” and thus never were saved, because they were too healthy, too good, too pious to need grace. The thing which commends children to Christ is their helplessness, not their goodness. And this is precisely what must characterize every person who comes into the kingdom—they come as those who are helpless and undeserving, entering into His blessings because of God's goodness and grace, not due to their own merits. Here is the child-like quality which must characterize all who would enter into His kingdom.

MacArthur: No one better illustrates the reality that only the lowly who have achieved nothing of merit enter the kingdom than infants. No one has achieved less morally and religiously than them; no one has less knowledge of or obedience to the law, or less devotion to God. Thus, infants perfectly illustrate the principle that God saves sinners apart from their achievements. While the proud and self-righteous are excluded from the kingdom, infants—and those who approach the kingdom like infants—are included. . .

A little child is simple, dependent, helpless, unaffected, unpretentious, unambitious. Children are not sinless or naturally unselfish, and they display their fallen nature from the earliest age. But they are nevertheless naive and unassuming, trusting of others and without ambition for grandeur and greatness.

III. (:17) PRINCIPLE = APPROACH GOD IN CHILDLIKE DEPENDENCE

“Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all.”

Morris: Children show us the way in their utter dependence, their unworldliness, their openness, the completeness of their trust.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we encourage a childlike sense of helplessness and of complete dependence on the Lord?
- 2) When do we consider ourselves too busy or too important to be interrupted by the inquiries of the needy?
- 3) Are there ways in which our attitudes or actions discourage people from coming to Jesus?
- 4) Does our church reflect the priority of ministering to little children?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Jesus was not here speaking of some primal innocence of children (parents know that they are not “little angels”). He was rather saying that only those can receive the Kingdom who accept it as a gift, because they have no sense of their own value, can offer to God no resources of their own, and are wholly dependent on him. These are the “*poor*,” whose is the Kingdom of God (**6:20**).

Geldenhuys: kingdom belongs to those who are as receptive and trustful as little children with their natural humility and whole-hearted faith. A little child who is brought up naturally receives artlessly what is given to him, without doubting the good intentions of the givers – he believes whole-heartedly that what is given to him is good for him and accepts it without thinking conceitedly that he deserves it. So, also, only those who do not doubt the love of God and who do not rely on their own supposed merits may partake of the redemption and blessings offered in the sovereign dominion of God and may in reality enter the kingdom of heaven.

Steven Cole: Studies show that the vast majority (90% or more) who trust Christ as Savior do so before age 20. That shouldn’t make us stop trying to win adults to Christ, but it should encourage us to reach children. In Sunday School, youth club programs, and in “Five-Day Clubs,” one of our main aims should be to see children come into a genuine saving relationship with Jesus Christ. They can understand the basic concepts of the gospel: sin, Christ’s death in their place, and the need to trust in Him for salvation. Spurgeon says that we should be less inclined to doubt a child’s profession of faith than an adult’s, because the child is less prone to hypocrisy and he is less likely to have borrowed his words and phrases. . .

Evangelist Luis Palau tells of an incident during a crusade in Bolivia years ago when his day started with a breakfast where he shared Christ with a number of top government officials. He was looking forward to a luncheon with the Bolivian President. At mid-morning, he was in the

middle of a press conference in his hotel room when there was a knock on the door. A team member walked in with a small Bolivian girl, about eleven, who had seen Palau on TV and was anxious to talk to him.

Palau felt a bit irritated with the team member for bringing her into his room at a time like that, but he greeted the girl, picked up a book, signed it, and gave it to her. “Lord bless you, sweetheart,” he said, as he began leading her to the door. She took two steps, looked back, and said confidently, “But Mr. Palau, I really wanted to receive Christ into my heart.” Luis was caught up short. He dismissed the newsmen, sat down, and led that little girl to Jesus. Later that day he led the president of Bolivia to Christ. Both appointments were significant.

Deffinbaugh: There is, I believe, a clear thread of continuity which ties these two paragraphs together. In the first place, all three gospels include both incidents, both of which are found together in each gospel, and in the same order. Second, both paragraphs deal with how men enter into the kingdom of God. In the first paragraph, child-likeness is an aid, an essential element. In the second paragraph, being rich is a hindrance. Thus, in this passage, as so often in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus reversed the values of His day. Even the disciples were astounded at what Jesus said here.

J. Ligon Duncan: reporting words of **Barbara Porter** (Associate Children’s Director in his church) regarding how parents can bring their children to Jesus:

1. Make sure that you are guarding, nourishing, and focusing on your own spiritual condition. Are you putting Christ first? Do you make time to worship, fellowship with other Christians, read the Word of God, and pray?
2. The example you set as parents is crucial to rearing Christian disciples. Do you realize the importance of living out your Christian faith every day in front of your children? Do they see that Christ is first in your life and that you seek to glorify Him in everything you do?
3. Demonstrate to your children that your relationship with your spouse is the most important human relationship that you have, and prove this by showing respect for your spouse and displaying sacrificial love and physical affection for him or her.
4. Show your child and tell your child that you love them every day. Work diligently at building a relationship with them. Take time from their earliest days to communicate with them about deep and important things.
5. Read the Word of God with your child and pray with and for your child every day.
6. Give your child responsibilities. Do whatever it takes to create within him or her a godly work ethic. Do not do for your children what they are capable of doing for themselves. Those who hate work are among the most unhappy and unfulfilled people in this world. Adam and Eve had responsibilities to fulfill even in the Garden of Eden before sin entered into the world. Work is truly a great gift from the Lord.
7. Do not bail your children out of the consequences that arise because of their own actions and choices. (I could read that one again seven times!) It is essential for them from their earliest days to learn that sin has consequences. You will not always be there to rescue them and you should not enable them.

8. Teach by example that Christ expects us to be presenting our bodies to Him as living sacrifices. The world teaches that it is all about us, breeding those who love themselves first and best. Give them opportunities from their earliest years to serve others, those inside and outside the church. Take them on a short-term mission trip so that they can see the extent of their own blessings and the extent of others' deprivation.

9. Teach them respect for others. Show them by example that it is the soul of another person that they should value and not the person's outer shell. Part of showing respect for others involves on their part: modest dress, inclusion, encouragement, forgiveness, praise, and setting a godly example.

10. Impress upon their children the brevity of this earthly life. God compared it to a vapor. Analyze your desire to accumulate things. We must demonstrate to our children by our actions and priorities that material things will never be enough and they will never satisfy us. One day we will all give an account of our lives to our Creator. Only one life will soon be passed. Only what is done for Christ will last. Help your children to understand that this earth is not our home and therefore we should not treat it as such.

11. Demand and command respect from your children. If they do not respect you, whom they can see, how will they ever be able to respect God, whom they cannot see? Do you live in such a way that you are worthy of their respect? Do you say one thing and yet do another? Even a young child can spot a hypocrite.

12. Teach your children that pleasing God is their ultimate goal. To do this means sometimes being alienated from the crowd. Pray with your child for one friend who is godly and true. God will provide this friend.

13. Make sure your discipline is consistent and abounding in mercy.

These principles must be put into place from a child's earliest days. It's easier to build children than to repair men. If children grow up with these truths as a part of their everyday lives, it will make the job of parenting them as teenagers a more joyful experience.

Now all of those things are ways for us to bring our children to Jesus. Jesus cares about the souls of our children. Are we bringing them to Jesus?

TEXT: Luke 18:18-27

TITLE: THE RICH YOUNG RULER – SALVATION CANNOT BE EARNED

BIG IDEA:

THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF SALVATION BY HUMAN MEANS REQUIRES GOD’S SOVEREIGN GRACE THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

We are still dealing with the topic of how men should approach God. Here the question is framed in the context of “*What shall I DO to inherit eternal life?*” The dialogue with Jesus illustrates the impossibility of men working for or earning their own salvation by obedience to God’s commands or by their own good works. Despite this rich young ruler testifying to his religious upbringing and moral behavior, he is still blind to his own sinfulness and desperate need for salvation. It is not that it is difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom on his own – it is impossible – for a rich man or for any man. Jesus presents His Lordship and His requirements for righteousness in such a way that the ruler is forced to retreat and admit defeat. He lacks the “Goodness” that only God possesses.

MacArthur: If you condense the story and look for its central meaning, it is simply this. No matter what one may believe, no one enters the kingdom unless he humbly confesses his sinfulness and submits completely to the sovereign lordship of Jesus Christ. This is really an illustration of what Jesus taught in **Luke 9:23 to 25** when He said, “*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself.*” That is to deny that there’s anything good in himself. “*Let him take up his cross,*” which means he's willing to die which is the ultimate disdain for all earthly possessions and relationships, including even your own life. “*And let him*” in those terms, “*follow Me.*” This is what Jesus was talking about in **Luke 14** when He said, “*You need to hate your father, your mother, your sister, your brother and even your own life.*” Before you come to Me you have to be willing to give up all your possessions. You have to count the cost like a man who builds a tower or a man who goes to war. . .

Salvation comes to those who have a **recognition of sin** and a **recognition of sovereignty**. That's the message here with a lot of other very important elements added to it. Our Lord gave this young man the right answer. It might not appear on the surface to be the right answer but it is the right answer because the issue with the young man was that which must precede a true and saving faith, and that is an accurate assessment of one's own condition and standing before God. The bottom line, **he had to choose himself or Christ**. He had to choose between self-righteous pride and possessions and total abandonment to God.

I. (:18-21) WRONG THINKING

A. (:18) The Wrong Question Regarding How to Inherit Eternal Life

“*And a certain ruler questioned Him, saying,
'Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'*”

It is never about what we can DO to earn salvation; every other religion is a religion of works; Christianity alone proclaims salvation by the sovereign grace of God based on what Jesus has done to earn our salvation

B. (:19) The Wrong Assessment of Jesus Christ

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.’”

“*Good Teacher*” is not the proper assessment of the person and identity of Jesus Christ. The starting point on the pathway to salvation is clarity regarding the identity of Jesus Christ as Lord.

Morris: *No one is good but God alone* is not to be understood as a repudiation of the epithet *good* as applied to Himself. If that was His meaning, Jesus would surely have said plainly that He was a sinner. Rather He was inviting the ruler to reflect on the meaning of his own words. What he had just said had implications for the Person of Jesus. If He was good and if only God was good, as all rabbinic teaching agreed, then the ruler was saying something important about Him. So far from repudiating the deity of Jesus, as some hold, the question seems to invite the young man to reflect on it.

Geldenhuys: Thus he who knows Him as the Son of God may address Him as “*Good Master*”, but from one who regards Him merely as human (as the rich young man does) He has no desire for such a superficial and flattering form of address.

C. (:20-21) The Wrong Answer to the Requirements of the Law

1. (:20) Self Awareness

“You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”

God’s standard of righteousness has been clearly revealed. The Law is a summary of those requirements. But as Jesus has taught in the Sermon on the Mount, those commands have an internal heart focus as well as a focus on external behavior. The purpose of the law is to bring man to a confession of his sinfulness. This rich ruler had not absorbed that lesson.

Lenski: he starts with the law in order to lead him to the gospel. The process is very simple: the man is first to understand that he cannot obtain the life by the law; second, that all the law can do for him is to show him his sin. After this is clear, his only hope will be in the gospel.

2. (:21) Self Deception

“And he said, ‘All these things I have kept from my youth.’”

Geldenhuys: It is a great disappointment to him that the Master refers him only to the Ten Commandments which he himself knows so well and has observed so faithfully . . . he had come to Jesus to learn whether there was not perhaps something special, something great and heroic, which he must do that it may give him this inward rest and assurance of redemption.

Lenski: He says this to Jesus without blinking an eye. And he is perfectly sincere in what he says. This divine law has no terrors for him – he has kept it all. This is a sample of Pharisaic training which nullifies the very effect God intends his law to produce, namely contrite knowledge of sin and the *terrors conscientiae*. This young ruler is altogether self-righteous in the face of the law.

Deffinbaugh: The man first had to be lost, dependent and helpless like a child, before he could be

saved. This was the role which the law played—to show men to be sinners, deserving only of divine wrath. Jesus thus chose to dwell on the law, as a means to pointing the man to his sin, and then to grace.

II. (:22-23) WORLDLINESS EXPOSED

A. (:22) Pressure Point

“And when Jesus heard this, He said to him, ‘One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’”

You cannot serve God and Mammon

Morris: The ruler had not reflected on what God’s goodness meant, nor had he measured himself against God’s commandments closely enough to see his failure to reach God’s standards. Now Jesus issued a challenge which showed that he came short of what was required. But the call to give everything away was more than simply a dramatic challenge; it showed that the man had not understood the commandments he professed to have kept. The first of them enjoins the worship of one God. But when he was faced with the choice he found that he could not serve God by parting with his money. It was not really God that had first place in his heart.

Anyabwile: he doesn’t notice that Jesus temporarily omits the first table of the law that records those duties we owe to God. We must have no god by God. So the Lord calls the man to practically demonstrate he has no other gods but God by selling his possessions and giving to the poor. . . He looks at Jesus and then his things, and he chooses his things over Jesus.

B. (:23) Fatal Flaw

“But when he had heard these things, he became very sad; for he was extremely rich.”

MacArthur: Jesus was not setting forth terms for salvation, but rather exposing the young man's true heart. His refusal to obey here revealed two things:

1) he was not blameless as far as the law was concerned, because he was guilty of loving himself and his possessions more than his neighbors (cf. **Mt 19:19**); and

2) he lacked true faith, which involves a willingness to surrender all at Christ's bidding (**Mt 16:24**). Jesus was not teaching salvation by philanthropy; but He was demanding that this young man give Him first place. The young man failed the test.

III. (:24-27) WAY TO GOD ONLY POSSIBLE VIA SOVEREIGN GRACE

A. (:24-25) Impossibility of the Wealthy Achieving Salvation

1. (:24) Statement

*“And Jesus looked at him and said,
‘How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!’”*

Donald Miller: The strong hold that the goods of this life have on us is to be seen in Jesus’ sad recognition of how difficult it is for one who is wealthy to put God first. In fact, apart from the grace of God, it is impossible.

2. (:25) Illustration

“For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

B. (:26-27) Only Possibility is Sovereign Grace of God

1. (:26) Despairing Question

“And they who heard it said, ‘Then who can be saved?’”

2. (:27) Hopeful Response

“But He said, ‘The things impossible with men are possible with God.’”

Morris: All this represents a reversal of accepted ideas. It was commonly held that riches were a sign of God’s blessing, so that the rich man had the best opportunity of the good things of the next world as of this. So Jesus’ hearers ask, *Then who can be saved?* They do not ask, “*What rich man?*” but, “*Who (of any kind)?*” If the rich with all their advantages can scarcely be saved, what hope is there for others? Jesus makes it clear that there is none. But what man cannot do God can. Salvation, for rich or poor, is always a miracle of divine grace. It is always God’s gift.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is the approach that Jesus took here in evangelism so different from the approach many advocate today?
- 2) How did this rich young ruler hope that Christ would respond to his question?
- 3) How do you use the law in your presentation of the gospel to others?
- 4) What shocked the disciples about the answer that Jesus gave to this rich young ruler?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: How Good People Get Saved

Perhaps Jesus has something to teach us about the gospel message and how to share it. In particular, He teaches us how to share the gospel with good people—those who believe in God and have lived decent lives. There are three main lessons:

1. Even good people need salvation.

This man believed in God and was zealous for spiritual things. He was a sincere, moral young man who was trying his best to please God. But he was lacking eternal life. He was good, but he was lost. . .

2. Good people are saved by abandoning trust in their own goodness, because salvation by human goodness is impossible.

The story brings out three reasons why salvation by human goodness is impossible:

A. SALVATION BY HUMAN GOODNESS IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE HUMAN GOODNESS CAN NEVER COMPARE WITH GOD'S GOODNESS.

B. SALVATION BY HUMAN GOODNESS IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE HUMAN GOODNESS ALWAYS FALLS SHORT OF GOD'S HOLY LAW.

C. SALVATION BY HUMAN GOODNESS IS IMPOSSIBLE BECAUSE HUMAN GOODNESS DECEIVES US ABOUT OUR TRUE HEART CONDITION.

This man was sincere in thinking that he had kept the commandments, but he was sincerely wrong! He was deceiving himself because he was not looking at things on the heart level as God does. You can sincerely believe that you are well, but if you have some internal disease that is killing you, your sincerity does not matter. You must deal with your true condition or you will die. Sincerity is not enough; we must believe God's diagnosis about the wickedness of the human heart.

3. Good people are saved by turning from their sin and trusting in God alone to save them.

Good people are saved by abandoning trust in their own goodness, by turning from their sin and trusting in God alone to save them.

J. Ligon Duncan: Jesus does not accept this man's assertion that he has kept the commandments. What He does is, He asks him to do something. He asks him to do something very hard. He asks him to do something that God has asked Christians to do from time to time over the last two thousand years. But He asks him to do it not because doing that thing is the way that you inherit eternal life; He asks him to do it because the thing that He is going to ask him to do reveals something about his heart. You see, this young man has just said, "I'm good. I'm a commandment keeper. I've kept the commandments." And then Jesus says, "Okay, let's try out the first couple of three commandments then: You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not worship them or serve them. You shall not make an idol." And He says, "You worship God? You love Him more than anything? Okay, give away everything that you have and worship God. Give away all your money, all your property; give it to the poor and worship God."

What is Jesus' point? He is showing this young man that he is not a commandment keeper. He is showing this young man that in his heart he is an idolater. He worships his money. He worships his property. He worships his stuff. And he cannot inherit eternal life when he's worshipping something else other than God. And so He has just exploded His self-evaluation with a simple test. . .

You see, this passage is all about the Gospel. It's impossible for anyone to be good enough, to do enough, to inherit eternal life. It's impossible for us to free ourselves from our idolatry. Only God can make that possible. Only He can set our hearts free. Only He can show us our idolatry. Only He can wake us up to them. Only He can change us so that our desires are for Him rather than for our idol. And He saves us not through what we do, not through our being good enough, but through the gift of His Son, Jesus, the Messiah. If you trust Him, if you receive Him, His promise, eternal life, you will also receive as God's gift.

Guzik: We may make two mistakes here. The one is to believe this applies to everyone, when

Jesus never made this a general command to all who would follow Him, but especially to this one rich man whose riches were clearly an obstacle to his discipleship. Instead, many rich people can do more good in the world by continuing to make money and using those resources for the glory of God and the good of others. The second mistake is to believe this applies to no one, when there are clearly those today for whom the best thing they could do for themselves spiritually is to radically forsake the materialism that is ruining them.

Steven J Lawson (from **Men Who Win: Pursuing the Ultimate Prize**) - Jesus saw through the outer facade into his heart. To the greed. To the materialism. To the worldliness. To the self-centeredness. What Jesus saw was a bankrupt heart. Empty and void. With the skill of a deft surgeon, Jesus cuts to the real issue of this man's heart: *"One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."* No, Jesus was not saying he must buy his way to Heaven. This man's problem was that money and power had become his master. His god. His life pursuit. Jesus was saying, "You must change ships in midstream and follow a new Master. I must become your new Number One. Reassign your life and all your possessions under My authority." Or it's no deal. This rich yuppie first looked at his money. Then at Christ. Back to his money. Then back to Christ. Which would it be? It was a moment of decision. Who would be his God? Money or the Master? The decision was cast. And money and power won. This young exec turned on his heels and vanished, leaving sad and grieved. His face fell, dejected. Why? Because he could not have it both ways. His money was too much to give up. Jesus watched him as he faded into the horizon and turned to His disciples saying, *"How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!"* (Luke 18:24). Yes, it is hard for the rich to be saved. Hard because they have more "things" to forsake. Hard because they have to stand in line like everyone else and receive a free gift. Hard because they are more tied to this world. Hard because it is hard to forfeit power and control. How hard? "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," Jesus said. Now, that is hard. Hard, as in impossible. Camels don't fit through sewing needles. Unless it is in the movie Honey, I Shrunk the Camel. It is impossible for anyone to be saved who wants to keep control of his life and money. Impossible. I-M-P-O-S-S-I-B-L-E!

Bruce Hurt: -- **Ray Stedman** has an interesting take on the identity of the rich young ruler, which I admit is speculative. I won't say he is correct, but neither would I write it off as possibility. Clearly we will have to wait until we are in Jesus' presence to know if Stedman was correct - As you know, I do not believe this is the end of the story. I pointed this out in the initial message in these studies on Mark. I believe, from various indications in Scripture, that this young man was Mark himself. It is only Mark who tells us that when Jesus looked at this young man, he loved him. How could Mark know that, if Jesus had not told him? And Mark was indeed a rich young man, a member of the aristocratic ruling class in Israel. He fits this picture in many ways. And only Mark tells us of the young man who flees from the scene of the arrest of Jesus, leaving his garment in the hands of the soldiers, and runs off naked into the night. If this was indeed Mark, then there must have come a time when this young man, weighing what Jesus had said, understanding that he was putting all his present comfort and material wealth in the balance against eternal life, against the importance and value of his soul both now and in eternity, understanding that he was giving up the satisfaction of all the deep things of his manhood in exchange for these paltry riches, decided to put it all away and obey Jesus. He gave everything away, and had nothing left but a robe, and came and followed Jesus. And that is why he writes this Gospel. Now, this is my own speculation. It is not what the Scripture teaches. It is the Stedmaniac view. You may not agree, and that is fine.

TEXT: Luke 18:28-34

TITLE: RETURN ON INVESTMENT

BIG IDEA:

**THE COSTLY SACRIFICES FOR GOD'S KINGDOM
WILL PROVE TO BE WORTH IT BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S SACRIFICE**

INTRODUCTION:

The call to “Follow Jesus” unreservedly with full heart commitment comes to each of us in our own circumstances. Jesus asks us individually to forsake specific things in order to submit to His plan for our life. The rich young ruler went away sad because he was unwilling to choose Christ over the sacrifice of his great wealth. Peter speaks up on behalf of the apostles to raise the obvious question: For those of us who have made the sacrifice to “Follow You” – how is that going to work out for us? Will it prove to have been worth it?

Philip Ryken: There are times in life when even the strongest Christians wonder whether it's really worth it to follow Jesus. Once you make a total life commitment to Christ, there are certain commands you are committed to obey, certain pleasures you choose to forgo, and certain sacrifices you are compelled to make. Sometimes it is so hard to follow Jesus that it is tempting to wonder whether it is really worth all the trouble. Maybe life is better with Jesus, but it doesn't always seem that way.

Deffinbaugh: I believe that the revelation of our Lord to His disciples in verses 31-34 was intended to put their “sacrifice” into perspective. Did they think that they were giving up everything for the kingdom of God? In reality, they were not giving up, but gaining, as our Lord's immediately preceding words indicate. There was really only one sacrifice on which the kingdom of God was based, and that was the sacrifice which the Lord Jesus would make—the sacrifice of His own precious blood, to atone for the sins of the world.

Lenski: The disciples go from one extreme to the other. They first fear that, on the basis of what Jesus said, none of them can be saved; now after their fears in that direction have been allayed, they want assurances that they will be rewarded for the sacrifices they have made.

I. (:28-30) COSTLY SACRIFICES BY THE DEDICATED FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

A. (:28) Testimony of Total Commitment – Implied Question: Is it Worth It?

“And Peter said, ‘Behold, we have left our own homes, and followed You.’”

Peter says this in contrast to the example of the rich young ruler who chose his possessions over the opportunity to follow Jesus. Looking for assurance that the apostles have made a wise choice. What's in it for us?

Joe Marino: Peter is wondering if his investment in following Jesus is a sound investment and if the return on his investment will make it all worthwhile. Peter's essentially asking: *“Is it worth it to follow you Jesus?”* and Jesus' answer to Peter's question is a beautiful promise.

B. (:29-30) Triumph of Tremendous Reward – Definitive Promise: You Bet It Is

1. (:29) Recognition of the Sacrifice

“And He said to them, ‘Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God.’”

2. (:30) Recompense Corresponding

a. In This Life

“who shall not receive many times as much at this time”

Emphasis is on relationships here – our spiritual family – especially our local church relationships – should be valued as a tremendous gift from God

Guzik: There is a special honor for these disciples. They have a special place in judgment, probably in the sense of administration in the millennial Kingdom. As well, the apostles had the honor of helping to provide a singular foundation for the church (**Ephesians 2:20**), and have a special tribute in the New Jerusalem (**Revelation 20:14**).

William Barclay: Peter pointed out that he and his fellow disciples had left all to follow Jesus; and Jesus promised that no man would ever give up anything for the kingdom of God but he would be repaid many times over. It is the experience of all Christian folk that that is true. Once someone said to David Livingstone, thinking of the trials he had endured and the sorrows he had borne, of how he had lost his wife and ruined his health in Africa, "What sacrifices you have made!" Livingstone answered, "Sacrifices? I never made a sacrifice in all my life." For the man who walks the Christian way there may be things the world calls hard, but, beyond them all and through them all, there is a peace which the world cannot give and cannot take away, and a joy that no man takes from him.

b. In the Age to Come

“and in the age to come, eternal life.”

Joe Marino: The beautiful promise that Jesus gives us here is that when we invest ourselves in the kingdom of God to the extent that we willingly resist our longings for material possessions and reject even the closest relationships that threaten our relationship with Jesus then we can rest assured that the return on our investment will be worth *“many times more in this time, and in the age to come”* because what we receive by leaving everything behind to follow Christ is the beautiful promise of the very presence of Christ himself. This beautiful promise is a very **costly** gift.

II. (:31-34) COSTLY SACRIFICE BY CHRIST HIMSELF = SUPREME SACRIFICE

A. (:31) Prophetic Fulfillment Regarding Suffering and Death in Jerusalem

“And He took the twelve aside and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.’”

- Resolve to go to Jerusalem despite knowing what awaits there – part of God’s overall redemptive plan
- Reassurance that all that will take place there is in fulfillment of prophecy

Geldenhuys: For the fourth time now the Saviour announces that He will be delivered to suffer and to die (**ix. 22, 44, xiii. 33**).

B. (:32-33a) Progression of Suffering Culminating in Crucifixion

“For He will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him;”

Lenski: Note the wording: four passives regarding things that are done to Jesus; then one plural active, *“they shall kill”* (not another passive, *“he shall be killed”*), which points to the murderers; then one singular middle-active, which points to the resurrection of Jesus as being effected by himself.

J. C. Ryle: The importance of our Lord's death appears in the frequency with which He foretold it, and referred to it during His life. He knew well that it was the principal end for which He came into the world. He was to give His life a ransom for many. He was to make His soul an offering for sin, and to bear our transgressions in His own body on the tree. He was to give His body and blood for the life of the world. Let us seek to be of the same mind with Christ in our estimate of His death. Let our principal thoughts about Jesus be inseparably bound up with His crucifixion. The corner-stone of all truth concerning Christ is this--that *“While we were yet sinners, He died for us.”* (**Rom. 5:8.**)

David Guzik: Taken together, the entire picture is one of great suffering.

- Suffering from the disloyalty of friends.
- Suffering from injustice.
- Suffering from deliberate insult and humiliation.
- Suffering from physical pain.
- Suffering from great humiliation and degradation.

MacArthur: So you go from disloyalty to rejection to humiliation to condemnation, injustice, to bodily injury. And then they nail Him to the cross and that adds more injury, put a crown of thorns on Him, that adds more injury. And death by crucifixion, we all know, was the most horrible way to die. You basically died by asphyxiation when you could no longer push yourself up, being suspended on your great wounds, and catch another breath. One writer says, *“Death by crucifixion seems to include all that pain and death can have of the horrible and the ghastly, dizziness, cramp, thirst, starvation, sleeplessness, traumatic fever, tetanus, shame, long continuance of torment, horror of anticipation, mortification of open wounds, breathlessness, all intensified just up to the point at which they can be endured at all, but stopping short of the point which would give the sufferer the relief of unconsciousness. The unnatural position made every movement painful, the lacerated veins and crushed tendons throbbed with incessant anguish. The wounds inflamed by exposure gradually gangrened, the arteries especially at the head and stomach became swollen, compressed with surcharged blood while each variety of misery went on gradually increasing. There was added to them the intolerable pang of a burning and raging thirst. All these physical complications cause an internal excitement and anxiety and in all this you couldn't catch your breath.”* Add to that the weight and the burden of the soul tortured by men and by God and the proportions of Christ's sufferings are staggering.

C. (:33b) Promise of the Resurrection

“and the third day He will rise again.”

D. (:34) Perplexity on the Part of the Apostles

“And they understood none of these things, and this saying was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.”

Deffinbaugh: The amazing thing for me is that even with such a specific prophecy, the disciples had no idea what Jesus was talking about (**verse 34**). The reason for their lack of understanding is given in our text: the meaning was hidden from them—God deliberately withheld it. They were not ready for it. They would only understand Jesus’ rejection, crucifixion, and death after His resurrection.

J. Ligon Duncan: Even in the wake of Jesus emphasizing the centrality and importance of His death and resurrection, even in the wake of His emphasizing the importance of understanding why He had to die and why He had to be raised again, the disciples do not understand what He saying. They’re clueless.

Requires sovereign grace and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit for any of us to comprehend the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of circumstances cause you to rethink whether it is really worth it to follow Jesus?
- 2) What have you left to follow Jesus?
- 3) Do you value the spiritual family God has given you in this life to encourage you?
- 4) What is the most difficult thing for you to forsake when you choose to follow Jesus?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: What Do You Get When You Follow Christ?

To follow Christ, you must forsake all for Him, but you get blessings for time and eternity, along with trials in this life.

1. To follow Christ, you must forsake all for Him.

A. FORSAKING ALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST MEANS LETTING GO OF WHATEVER KNOWN SIN STANDS BETWEEN ME AND GOD.

B. FORSAKING ALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST MEANS COMMITTING MYSELF TO DO WHATEVER GOD WANTS ME TO DO WITH MY LIFE.

C. FORSAKING ALL TO FOLLOW CHRIST MEANS PURSUING CHRIST AND HIS CAUSE.

2. When you follow Christ, you get blessings for time and for eternity.

A. YOU GET BLESSINGS IN THIS LIFE.

B. YOU GET BLESSINGS IN ETERNITY.

3. When you follow Christ, you get trials in this life.

Conclusion:

If you've been tracking with me, you have figured out that although there are many blessings in this life when we forsake all to follow Jesus, the real payoff is in eternity. *"If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied"* (1 Cor. 15:19). So how can we know for sure that the eternal rewards will really be there and that they are worth the sacrifices of following Christ now?

Three ways: *First, you can trust the truthfulness of Jesus' promises because of His authority.* He says, *"Truly I say to you"* (18:29). When Jesus says anything, it's true; but when He says, *"Truly I say to you,"* you know for sure that it's true! Either you have to call Jesus deceived or a deceiver, or what He promised about the blessings for those who follow Him is true.

Second, you can trust the truthfulness of Jesus' promises because of the prophetic Word. Although evil men put Him to death and they are responsible for their great sin, they were only fulfilling *"all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man"* (18:31; see Acts 2:23; 4:27-28). God's Word predicted Jesus' death in detail centuries before it happened (see Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). Jesus' own predictions of His death were exactly fulfilled. The certainty of God's prophetic Word assures us that history will culminate exactly as He predicts and that heaven will be all that He has promised.

Third, you can trust the truthfulness of Jesus' promises because of His resurrection. He arose on the third day, just as He predicted He would. As a result, the confused and fearful disciples were transformed into confident, bold witnesses, willing to give their very lives for the gospel.

Brian Anderson: My friends, **what does it look like to forsake all and follow Jesus?** It looks like a person who has put Christ before any other person, any of his dreams, and any of his money or possessions. Does this describe you? Have you forsaken all to follow Jesus? Do you hate your family in comparison with your love for Jesus? Are you seeking first the kingdom of God rather than your own plans? Are you using your money and possessions on your own pleasures or the advancement of the kingdom of God?

So, **what can we expect when we forsake all and follow Jesus?** Three things: a spiritual family, persecutions, and confusion. Oh well, one out of three is not all bad! Thank God for His spiritual family that ministers to you in your need. Pray for courage to face persecution boldly. And trust God implicitly when you don't understand Him.

Geldenhuys: Whosoever desires to inherit life everlasting must be inwardly free from the power of all possessions as well as from all faith in his own deserts, and must willingly obey the command of Jesus. If He commands us to give up certain things because they hamper our spiritual life, we must do so unhesitatingly. In each case He acts according to the special needs and circumstances of the person concerned – He does not call upon everyone to sell his

belongings or to leave his family, but He calls upon all to surrender to Him unconditionally the first place in their hearts and lives.

It Will Be Worth It All

1. Sometimes the day seems long,
Our trials hard to bear.
We're tempted to complain,
to murmur and despair.
But Christ will soon appear
to catch his bride away!
All tears forever over
in God's eternal day!

CHORUS:

It will be worth it all
when we see Jesus!
Life's trials will seem so small
when we see Christ.
One glimpse of his dear face,
all sorrow will erase.
So, bravely run the race
till we see Christ.

2. At times the sky seems dark,
with not a ray of light;
We're tossed and driven on,
no human help in sight.
But there is One in heaven,
Who knows our deepest care;
Let Jesus solve your problems,
just go to him in prayer.

3. Life's day will soon be o're,
all storms forever past;
We'll cross the great divide
to Glory, safe at last!
We'll share the joys of heaven:
a harp, a home, a crown;

The tempter will be banished,
We'll lay our burdens down.
<https://lyricstranslate.com>

MacArthur: Now the disciples knew they were on the way to Jerusalem because it was Passover season. And every Passover everybody went to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. So that is not unusual. What they didn't know was that He would be the Passover Lamb, that He would be offering the only sacrifice that would ever satisfy God and that by that sacrifice He would bring to an end the whole sacrificial system. They need to understand this because they are His first line of preachers and they need to know that these things are planned. And one of the reasons they need to know it is because it was so hard for them to comprehend a Messiah who died. It wasn't in their plan. By the way, the Jews of the first generation had a very, very well developed Messianic idea. They had a very finely tuned eschatological system. Messiah comes at the end of the age and sets up His kingdom. They were all premillennialists. The Messiah comes and He sets up His kingdom. And there's a wonderful book by Emil Shurer that studies...written in 1885, published T. T. and Clark in Edinburgh...a scholarly work that shows the basic theology of Messiah that existed among the Jews at that time. And there's nothing in that for a dead Messiah, a crucified Messiah, or even a risen Messiah. This doesn't fit into their expectation. They didn't get the picture. And there was this lingering sense that this was sort of necessary to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, but the timing couldn't be worse. The disciples weren't stupid. They were very aware that during these many months of ministering in Judea, the leadership of Israel was more and more and more hateful and hostile toward Christ. And so, Mark says in his parallel account...You can read it in Mark 10 verse 32, and Matthew's account is in Matthew 20 verses 17 to 19. Those are the parallels to this one that give us the full picture. Mark says they were amazed and afraid. Yes they knew it was Passover. Yes they knew this was the normal thing which you did as a Jew, you went to the Passover. But they also knew they were walking right into the eye of the hurricane, if you will, or the tornado. They were walking right into the realm and the domain of the hostile enemies of Jesus. Jesus knows their fears. He knows their misconceptions. He knows they haven't been able to grasp this whole concept of the cross. They just don't get it. In fact, in verse 45 of Luke 9, they did not understand this statement. It was concealed from them so they might not perceive it. They were afraid to ask Him about this statement. They didn't get it. It was really concealed because of their own theology and they didn't even want to press the issue. It was so bizarre: A dead crucified Messiah? As we learn from Paul, and we'll look at this next week a little more in detail, a crucified Messiah was a stumbling block to the Jews.

TEXT: Luke 18:35-43

TITLE: MESSIANIC DEMONSTRATION = HEALING OF THE BLIND MAN

BIG IDEA:

SEIZE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO SEEK GOD'S MERCY FOR TRANSFORMATION THROUGH FAITH IN THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

There are always individuals that you might expect would come to Jesus in faith – like the Pharisee and the rich young ruler – but who fail to acknowledge their sin and choose to trust in their own righteousness. On the other hand, we see examples of Jesus reaching out to show mercy to save the unlikely – the small child or the blind man or the physically handicapped.

1 Cor. 1:26-30

MacArthur: But on the way to Jerusalem, before the darkness sets in, there are two wonderfully beautiful salvation stories that Luke gives us. They occur in Jericho. These are two stories that stand in stark contrast to the belief...to the unbelief and the hatred of Israel's leaders. These are two stories that are in contrast to the shallow, superficial praise offered by the crowd that was so fickle; two stores if salvation, two prodigals brought home for the joy of God, two outcasts, two hated sinners. And they are the lowest of the low. One, a blind man begging, which means he had no one to care for him. The other a tax collector, the most hated and despised of all people in Israel. And the other two trophies of sovereign grace at the cross were also outcasts: a wretched, hated, executed criminal and a despised Roman. This is an indictment of massive proportions against the nation Israel: a beggar, a tax collector, a thief, and a Roman centurion. It is a reminder that the Lord chooses the poor and the lowly for His kingdom.

I. (:35-39) THE BLIND CAN COME TO JESUS FOR MERCY

A. (:35) Helpless Individual

And it came about that as He was approaching Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the road, begging.”

- Blind
- Immobile
- Begging

Lenski: Mark preserved the beggar's name, Bartimaeus, and Matthew, who himself saw the miracle, informs us that the blind beggar had a blind companion.

J. Ligon Duncan: It was a common thing for beggars to be by the roadside asking people who were passing by to give them food or give them money. And furthermore, it was considered a pious thing for a godly Jew to give alms to the poor. And this man is by the roadside heading up towards Passover season. And pious Jews avoided going through Samaria to get down to Jerusalem and so a natural path for them to make their way up to Jerusalem at Passover time was through Jericho. And so this man was positioned in a very strategic point.

B. (:36-37) Hope Stirred by Arrival of Jesus

“Now hearing a multitude going by, he began to inquire what this might be. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.”

Bruce Hurt: The word *OPPORTUNITY* is derived from the Latin "*ob portu*." In ancient times before modern harbors, ships had to wait for the timing of the tide before they could make it safely to port. Thus "*OB PORTU*," described the ship waiting "*FOR PORT*," ready to seize the crucial moment when it could ride the tide into safe harbor. The captain knew that if he missed the passing tide, the ship would have to wait for another tide to come in. God gives each of us many "*ob portu*'s", but we must be spiritually wise and Spirit filled in order to see and seize them. As **Charles Swindoll** said "We are all faced with a series of great opportunities (*ob portu*'s) brilliantly disguised as impossible situations." **Shakespeare**'s famous line from Julius Caesar conveys the same thought: "There is a tide in the affairs of men (an "*ob portu*"), Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; Omitted, all the voyage of their life Is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat; And we must take the current when it serves, Or lose our ventures." In short, Bartimaeus had a deep sense that this was an "opportune time," his small "window of opportunity!" (cf **2 Cor 6:2, Isa 55:6**) (From *Redeem the Time*)

C. (:38-39) Insistent Cry for Mercy

1. (:38) Initial Cry for Mercy

“And he called out, saying, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

Donald Miller: The blind man, who apparently had heard of Jesus' mighty works before, called Jesus the "*Son of David*" (vss. **38-39**). This was a Messianic title (**20:41**). This time Jesus does not refuse the public acclamation as Messiah. In fact, he seems deliberately to draw it out, by stopping to speak with the blind man, when he could well have avoided it (vs. **40**). . .

Did the blind man merely want some alms, or did his faith in Jesus lead him to believe that Jesus could open his eyes, which was one of the signs of the Messianic Age? (**4:18; 7:21; Isa. 29:18; 35:5**).

MacArthur: That's His title as the heir to the messianic throne. That's His title as the one who has the right to fulfill the Davidic Covenant in **2 Samuel 7:12 to 14**, where God promises David's going to have a greater Son who is going to reign and who is going to have an everlasting kingdom. Who is David's greater Son? They all knew that that greater Son was not Solomon. They all knew that that there was a greater Son than Solomon. There was a coming Son who would have an eternal kingdom. Solomon didn't have a very successful kingdom at all. In fact, out of him comes a divided kingdom. They all knew that there was coming another king in David's line. That's why it's so important when the New Testament opens up it gives a genealogy of Jesus right back through Joseph to David. And in Luke it gives a genealogy of Jesus right back through Mary to David. Mary was in the line of David, and so was Joseph. He was fully by fatherly right and by blood an heir to David's throne. More than that, He was God's choice. . .

By the way, a typical cry, "Have mercy on me" for afflicted people, you see it throughout the Psalms: **Psalm 4, Psalm 6, Psalm 9, Psalm 25**, on and on through the Psalms, people saying, "*Have mercy on me, have pity on me.*" This is a penitent heart. Here is a man who has faith in the person of Jesus Christ as his Deliverer and the one sent from God to be His anointed King. Here is a man who knows his plight and it is not possible for him to remedy it. And so he cries to the only one who can help. It's a beautiful, beautiful moment.

Anyabwile: The blind man discovers more riches in Christ than the rich man had without Christ. The blind man sees more in Jesus than the disciples with their sight. The beggar was not present in the private meeting Jesus held with the disciples (vv. 31-34), so he did not know Jesus had used another messianic title, “*Son of Man*” (v. 31), from **Daniel 7**. The disciples with the private study could not see it while the blind man sitting by the streets saw perfectly.

2. (:39a) Rebuked as Insignificant

“And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet;”

Bruce Hurt: The tragedy in this scene is that those who were following Jesus had little if any of the compassion which moved their Master (see **Mt 20:34**)! (As a follower of Christ how am I doing in regard to demonstrating His compassion? Ouch!) The crowd shows their utter disdain (lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike) for this lowly, despised beggar. He is of no value in their eyes, but not thank God, every "lowly, despised" soul is precious in the sight of the Creator and He wishes for none to perish! (cf **2 Pe 3:9**) By way of application it is notable that opposition to this blind beggar's seeking of Christ is a picture of the sure Satanic opposition experienced by all who seek Christ for healing of their spiritual blindness. If you have ever shared the Gospel with individuals, you are well aware of this spiritual opposition. But the certainty of opposition must not stop us from endeavoring to move ahead with sharing the Gospel with the soul which God's Spirit has placed on our heart.

3. (:39b) Intensified Cry for Mercy

“but he kept crying out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

Lenski: Note that each evangelist reports the title twice and thus makes it prominent in the record. Now that Jesus is going to his death at Jerusalem he accepts the Messianic title openly before the multitude, accepts it with all its implication of royalty (**1:32, 33**). He had hitherto avoided it as much as possible because of the wrong political and worldly ideas the Jews connected with the Messiah-King they were expecting. Only in Samaria, to a lone woman, Jesus declared himself to be the Messiah.

II. (:40-43) THE BLIND CAN RECEIVE SIGHT THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

A. (:40-41) The Request for Regaining Sight

1. (:40a) Intervention of Jesus

“And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him;”

- Interrupted what He was doing – “*stopped*”
- Initiated interaction with the man – “*commanded that he be brought*”

2. (:40b-41a) Inquiry of Jesus

*“and when he had come near, He questioned him,
‘What do you want Me to do for you?’”*

Anyabwile: The Lord gives the blind man a blank check in prayer! It’s the same blank check he gives us. He asks us each day, “*What would you have me do for you?*” *The Father has given us his Son. How will he not, along with Christ, give us all things (Rom. 8:32)?*

3. (:41b) Entreaty of Jesus

“And he said, ‘Lord, I want to regain my sight!’”

B. (:42) The Response of Jesus to Faith – Commanded the Miracle

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.’”

J. Ligon Duncan: Shorter Catechism -- Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel.

C. (:43a) The Response of the Healed Man

1. Transformation = Regained Sight

“And immediately he regained his sight,”

Geldenhuys: Whosoever, like the blind beggar, in consciousness of his own misery, and believing in Jesus, cries to Him whole-heartedly will just as assuredly be healed of spiritual blindness through His word of power.

2. Obedience and Commitment = Followed Jesus

“and began following Him,”

3. Worship = Glorified God

“glorifying God,”

D. (:43b) The Response of the People = Praising God

“and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we be sensitive to special opportunities when Jesus is calling upon us to exercise faith and appeal to His mercy?
- 2) Do we pass by the poor and the insignificant and the handicapped; do we view them as less worthy of our time and attention?
- 3) What lessons about faith can we learn from this passage?
- 4) Are we consistently responding to Jesus as this blind man welcomed his healing – with lives that are being transformed, with obedience in following Jesus and with worship to glorify God?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: When Jesus Passes By

Matthew and Mark both report that the incident took place as Jesus was going *out* of Jericho, but Luke states that it happened as Jesus was *approaching* Jericho. . .

Here, then, are several proposed solutions. Some say that Jesus was leaving old Jericho and about to enter the rebuilt Jericho when this incident occurred. This view is possible, but the problem is that old Jericho was not inhabited in Jesus' day, and thus it would be unusual to speak of Jesus leaving the ruins as if He were leaving the city itself.

Others propose that a two-part event was condensed into one account. Bartimaeus cried out as Jesus entered the city, tagged along with the crowd, and eventually was heard by Jesus and healed along with the other beggar as Jesus left the city. Another variation is that Jesus entered and passed through the city when He encountered Zaccheus (19:1). When Zaccheus responded, Jesus turned to go back into the city, at which point He met Bartimaeus. Thus, depending on how you view it, Jesus had left the city or was entering it. Luke merely separates the accounts for his purposes.

However you resolve it, both this story (which is Luke's last miracle) and the next (about Zaccheus) are examples of how the nation should have responded to her Messiah. Bartimaeus and Zaccheus line up with the publican in Jesus' parable (18:9-17), who cried out to God for mercy. They stand in contrast to the Pharisee in the parable and the rich young ruler (18:18-27), who both tried to approach God based on their own merit. The Pharisee and the rich young ruler were likely candidates for salvation who missed it because they trusted in themselves and refused to acknowledge their sin. Bartimaeus and Zaccheus were unlikely candidates for salvation who obtained it through faith in God's mercy, apart from anything in themselves. Thus Luke uses this unlikely blind beggar to teach us that...

When Jesus passes by, we should cry out to Him in faith and He will be merciful to us.

1. There are opportune spiritual moments when Jesus passes by.

2. When Jesus passes by, we should cry out to Him with bold, persistent faith.

(1). OUR FAITH SHOULD BE IN JESUS THE MESSIAH.

(2). OUR FAITH SHOULD APPEAL TO GOD ON THE BASIS OF MERCY, NOT MERIT.

(3). OUR FAITH SHOULD BE PERSONAL, NOT GENERIC.

(4). OUR FAITH SHOULD PERSISTENTLY OVERCOME ALL HINDRANCES.

(5). OUR FAITH SHOULD BE SPECIFIC IN FOCUS.

(6). OUR FAITH SHOULD BE BOLD IN ITS REQUESTS.

(7). OUR FAITH SHOULD RESULT IN GLORY TO GOD FOR HIS ANSWER.

3. When we cry out to Jesus in faith, He will be merciful to us.

Deffinbaugh: Bartimaeus knew about Jesus, perhaps from what he heard as he sat along the street. You can imagine how the rumors would circulate about Jesus among the sick and the infirmed, especially concerning His miracles of healing. Bartimaeus began to call out to Jesus. He wanted healing and he believed Jesus was both able and willing. He did not call to Jesus by the name that was told him—Jesus of Nazareth—but rather by the name which identified Him far more accurately—Jesus, Son of David. The blind man may have had a physical handicap of blindness, but he knew that Jesus was more than a man; He was Messiah. Thus, Bartimaeus called to Jesus as Messiah, for He could heal the sick and give sight to the blind. Bartimaeus pled for the one thing which touches the heart of a righteous God toward an undeserving sinner—mercy. He did not merit anything, but he did beg for mercy.

Bruce Hurt: **William MacDonald** writes "It was a good thing that Bartimaeus sought the Lord that day because the Savior never passed that way again!" Dear reader, if you have yet to see yourself at a sinner bound for Hell, then you need to repent and believe the Good News that Jesus will deliver you from having to go to Hell and you will spend eternity with Him in Heaven. So today Jesus is passing by your heart. Cry out for His mercy. Beg Him for spiritual sight. And by all means DO NOT put off today what you may not be able to do tomorrow, because Jesus may never pass by your heart again. (**2 Cor 6:2**).

Beloved, it strikes me that it is not just the blind man who needed to cry "have mercy on me," but it is me, it is you, for daily we commit sins of thought, word and deed, some we are not aware of, some that sadly are presumptive, but daily we too are like this blind beggar and should frequently find ourselves crying out for mercy from Jesus our great High Priest "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that **we may receive mercy** and find grace to help in time of need." (**Heb 4:15-16**).

As someone said "Never plead **merit** when asking God for things, always plead **mercy**." Salvation is not rooted in the merit of man — but in the mercy of God.

Justice is God giving us what we deserve.
Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve.
Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve.

One of these days the dam of God's **mercy** will give way to His **justice**.

Adrian Rogers adds that "**Mercy** is sympathy with legs."

David Guzik: Jesus connected the man's healing with the man's faith. There were many notable aspects of this man's faith that made him ready to receive from Jesus.

- It was faith that wanted Jesus.
- It was faith that knew who He was.
- It was faith that knew what he deserved from Jesus.
- It was faith that could tell Jesus what it wanted.
- It was faith that could call Jesus Lord.

TEXT: Luke 19:1-10

TITLE: MESSIANIC MISSION OF JESUS

BIG IDEA:

THE SON OF MAN HAS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST

INTRODUCTION:

It's great when Jesus just comes out and states the Big Idea of the story so there is no doubt about the message He wants to communicate. God is in the business of seeking and saving lost sinners. God is the one who takes the initiative and draws unworthy sinners to Himself. It is the sovereign grace of God that accomplishes our salvation. Zacchaeus might look like the seeker early in this passage. But it quickly becomes abundantly clear that Jesus was on a mission to seek out Zacchaeus.

I. (:1-4) LOST SINNERS SHOULD SEEK TO CONNECT WITH JESUS

A. (:1) Itinerary of Jesus = Passing Through Jericho

“And He entered and was passing through Jericho.”

- Find out Who Jesus Is
- Find out Where Jesus Is
- Find out What Jesus Is Doing

Lenski: At that time Jericho was a city that was rich and prosperous indeed, was watered by the Fountain of Elisha and other springs, the whole oasis being green and flowery, rich in balsams, myrobalanum, honey, etc. – the city of fragrance, the city of roses, “*paradise of God.*” It was the place to make a halt before the final ascent from a location 1,000 feet below sea level to 2,400 above, to the heights on which Jerusalem rested.

MacArthur: Pilgrims from Galilee and Perea, priests who lived there and served there, traders from all lands, it was one of the high density trading centers, there were routes going north, east, west and south, it was a busy, busy place, full of good people in a human sense, full of the wretched, the worst who occupied places where there was lots to steal. The robbers were there en masse. The great caravans came through there. There was ample supply for those who stole, as well for those...as well as for those who bought and sold. Soldiers were there, courtiers were there, the worst of everything, the best of everything. Tax collectors had a high profile there because it was one of the three regional tax centers in the land of Israel, the northern one being Capernaum, the central one on the coast being Caesarea, the southern one being Jericho.

B. (:2) Introduction to Zacchaeus = a Lost Sinner

1. Identified by Sex

“And behold, there was a man”

2. Identified by Name

“called by the name of Zacchaeus;”

Meaning “pure” or “righteous”

Bruce Hurt: Zacchaeus is derived from a Hebrew verb *zakak* which means to be bright, clean, pure, innocent (cf "*make yourselves clean*" - **Isa 1:16**). **Thayer** says Zacchaeus means "pure, innocent." What an ironic name, because tax collectors were considered anything but pure, and in fact were treated as "unclean" by the Jews, and certainly an unlikely candidate for salvation!

3. Identified by Occupation = His Work
"and he was a chief tax-gatherer,"

In charge of the local branch of tax collectors

Donald Miller: According to the Judaism of that time, his calling excluded him from membership in the people of God who would benefit from Messiah's coming. He was, therefore, kept away from Jesus not only by the pressure of the crowd, but by religious ostracism (**vs. 7**). He may have heard of Jesus' gracious dealings with fellow tax collectors (**5:27-32; 15:1-2**) and, desirous of seeing a rabbi whose attitude was so different from that to which he was accustomed, would let nothing stand in his way (**vs. 4**).

MacArthur: In order to have a tax franchise, you had to buy it from Rome. So you were a traitor from the very outset to your own people who were occupied by the Roman idolatrous and despised pagans. Rome would set a certain amount that the tax gatherer had to pay. Whatever else he could collect, he could keep; a formula for corruption for sure. And there were so many ways to tax. The people had no idea what they were supposed to pay. Yes, there were some sort of foundational taxes. There was, for example, an individual tax, kind of a poll tax for men from 14 to 65 and women from 12 to 65 and they paid that tax. There was a ground tax they called like a property tax, one tenth of all grain or something the equivalent of grain, one fifth of wine and oil. So there were some fixed taxes; even a kind of income tax which was about 1 percent of a person's income. So they had those that were fixed. But beyond that, you could tax anything that you could get away with taxing. You could tax everybody's commerce by taxing every wheel, every axle on their cart, taxing every animal pulling the cart, taxing every product that they bought and sold, every way imaginable. And so tax collectors became filthy rich because what they paid Rome was only a portion of what they actually collected. They also became despised and hated. They couldn't attend the synagogue. They couldn't have any social relationships with people because the people wouldn't get near them because they were considered unclean and anybody who came near one of them would be polluted. So the only people they could associate were the people who were also unclean, and so they were the collection of people called the tax collectors and sinners that we meet so often in Jesus' ministry, the very people that God loves to save. "*He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*" In fact, Jesus spent so much time with the scum and the riff-raff, the tax gatherers and their assorted criminals, that they called Him, **Luke 7:34, Matthew 11:9**, "*a friend of tax gatherers and sinners.*" They would have said that with such disdain you couldn't imagine it. And it is really why they thought that He represented Satan because He spent so much time with the people that they thought belonged to Satan.

4. Identified by Economic Class = His Wealth
"and he was rich."

Cf. **18:24ff** regarding the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom

C. (:3-4) Intent of Zacchaeus = Trying to See Who Jesus Was

1. (:3) Obstacle = Crowd Blocking His Vision

“And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.”

Not just trying to see Jesus; but trying to understand His identity and the implications on his life

Brian Bill: He wanted to figure out what it was that made Jesus different from everyone else.

There will always be obstacles that must be overcome in trying to connect with Jesus

Lenski: All that follows shows that his desire was far more than the curiosity of the crowds who merely run to gaze on some famous man. His was a far more serious desire which impelled him also to go far beyond what curiosity alone is able to produce.

MacArthur: He has a dissatisfied heart. He knows he's alienated from God. He knows he has no eternal life. He knows that he's overwhelmed with guilt and sin. He knows the kind of man he is. I don't know exactly what was going on in his heart, but he was after Jesus for more than just curiosity because the Holy Spirit made sure he was in the right place at the right moment for Jesus to look at him and speak to him.

2. (:4) Overcoming the Obstacle = Climbing Up Into a Sycamore Tree

“And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.”

- Sense of urgency – *ran on ahead*
- Willingness to take extreme measures – *climbed into a sycamore tree*
- Focused on the goal of seeing Jesus – *in order to see Him*
- Realizing that the opportunity is fleeting – *for He was about to pass through that way*

Geldenhuys: He was so eager to see Him that, although he was a wealthy leader among the “publicans”, he did not even shrink from doing something that would make him look ridiculous in the eyes of those present.

Deffinbaugh: While this rich little man is quite different, in many respects, from the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, he is also similar to him. Both men wanted to see Jesus. Both men would not be stopped by hindrances. And both men were rewarded by the Master. The difference between the two was that Bartimaeus called out to Jesus. He wanted to be noticed and summoned to come to Jesus. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, may have wished to remain unnoticed. It was not a very dignified thing he did. We might even say it was child-like (cf. **18:15-16**).

II. (:5-6) JESUS MAKES THE CONNECTION WITH LOST SINNERS

A. (:5) Jesus Invites Himself Into Zacchaeus' Life

“And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’”

Look at how Jesus calls him by name; personal knowledge

Anyabwile: The Lord knew Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus knew the Lord. That's the case with us all.

Lenski: At that moment Zacchaeus knew that Jesus had read his whole heart even as Nathanael knew it and confessed it when Jesus uttered that one word to him about being under the fig tree.

Salvation is always based on Sovereign Grace where God is the Initiator;
Today is the day of salvation – you can't put it off for another day

Morris: He did not say, "*I would like to stay at your house,*" but "*I must stay.*" This is a strong expression. Jesus saw His visit to Zacchaeus as part of his divine mission.

B. (:6) Zacchaeus Eagerly Receives Jesus

"And he hurried and came down, and received Him gladly."

The response of eager faith and acceptance is key

Look at the emphasis on hurrying and urgency throughout this story; everything is speeded up; there is no complacency

III. (:7-9) LOST SINNERS ARE TRANSFORMED WHEN SAVED BY JESUS

A. (:7) Association with Sinners Criticized

*"And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying,
'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'"*

Anyabwile: Let us be careful of ever daring to assess whether someone is worthy of meeting God. When we feel someone is unworthy of God, we actually insult that person and God. When we think someone is unworthy of God, we throw that person away long before God ever would. At the same time, should God welcome them, then we put ourselves in a position, like the crowd, of questioning God. We ought to concern ourselves with our own unworthiness if we find ourselves condemning others. What's true of Zacchaeus is true of us all: we're all sinners who have fallen short of the glory of God (**Rom 3:23**).

B. (:8) Evidence of Transformation

1. Evidenced by Voluntarily Relinquishing His Wealth to the Poor – Out of Compassion for the Needy and Obedience to the Lordship of Christ

*"And Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord,
'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor,'"*

Look at the contrast with the rich young ruler

Anyabwile: In a world where riches choke out the word and strangle faith, to give to others signifies genuine repentance. . . Zacchaeus is not buying his salvation. No amount of money can buy salvation. No, he's showing by his giving the change of heart he's had. When a person is truly repentant, it affects how they view and use money. At the very least, money is no longer

their god – Jesus Christ is. They don't look to *cheat* people for money; instead they look to *bless* people with their money. They become givers rather than takers because they've been set free from greed and idolatry. A converted man is a generous man.

2. Evidenced by Generous Restitution to Those He Had Defrauded --
Acknowledging His Sin and Making Things Right

“and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

There were probably many instances of having defrauded people; this is why he didn't give away all of his money to the poor; he needed a great sum to make restitution to all these people he had wronged

Morris: Where voluntary restitution was made the Law required no more than the original amount plus one fifth (**Lv. 6:5; Nu. 5:7**), so that Zacchaeus was cheerfully agreeing to do more than was necessary.

Geldenhuys: Whosoever accepts Jesus whole-heartedly in his life and become personally acquainted with Him receives real salvation, a salvation which brings about an effective and practical revolution in his life, inwardly and outwardly. When Jesus comes into a person's life, and gains authority there, selfishness and dishonesty are irresistibly eradicated.

C. (:9) Affirmation of Salvation of Zacchaeus

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.’”

Significance of “house” – involves more in the family than just Zacchaeus

“Son of Abraham” – means a son of genuine faith (**Rom. 4:12**); a member now of the family of God and of God's kingdom; not just a Jew by nationality

Jesus provides assurance of salvation

IV. (:10) MESSIANIC MISSION STATEMENT

“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Story starts out looking like the lost sinner is doing the seeking; in actuality we find out that Jesus is the Prime Seeker

But the sinner must actively respond in repentance and faith –

- Respond with haste
- Respond with eagerness
- Respond from a sense of being lost and a conscience that is convicted of sin
- Respond with obedience
- Respond with joy

Donald Miller: set forth his mission in religious rather than political terms. He had come not to establish an earthly throne from which to rule the nations. He had come “*to seek and to save the lost.*”

Anyabwile: Spiritually, we are all lost apart from Christ. We cannot determine how we got where we are or how to get back where we've been. We are surprised at our spiritual location. And it may be that we've been lost so long that we don't know where home is. We can be so separated from God that we forget we were made to be with God in his kingdom, face-to-face in his love.

Lost people are people who cannot find their way to God because of sin. They have lost their way, and they are lost to God. But the Father sent his Son to find them – not only to seek them but also to rescue them and bring them back safely home.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How did Jesus seek after you and draw you to Himself?
- 2) What type of response might we expect to see from a sinner who experiences salvation?
- 3) Can we give a person assurance of salvation before there are any fruits of repentance?
- 4) Do we stay focused on the Great Commission?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Why Jesus Came

Since Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, sinners should respond to His call quickly with joyful repentance.

1. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

A. CHRIST CAME TO SEEK THE LOST.

- (1). CHRIST SEEKS THE LOST BY TAKING THE INITIATIVE.
- (2). CHRIST SEEKS THE LOST PERSONALLY AND PARTICULARLY.

B. CHRIST CAME TO SAVE THE LOST.

- (1). CHRIST ACTUALLY SAVES THE LOST.
In other words, He did not come just to make salvation *possible* for everyone, but rather to make salvation *actual* for those whom the Father had given to Him. In **John 6:37** Jesus declared, “*All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me.*” Then He adds, “*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.*” (**6:39**). Our salvation does not depend on our weak will, but on the mighty and certain will of God and on the keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (2). CHRIST SAVES THE LOST, NOT THE FOUND.
- (3). CHRIST ASSURES THOSE WHOM HE SAVES.

2. Sinners should respond to Christ's call quickly with joyful repentance.

A. YOU SHOULD RESPOND WITH HASTE.

B. YOU SHOULD RESPOND WITH OBEDIENCE.

C. YOU SHOULD RESPOND WITH JOY.

D. YOU SHOULD RESPOND WITH REPENTANCE.

Deffinbaugh: The purpose of our Lord's coming was still not clear. First and foremost, Jesus came to save sinners. Yes, He would later establish the kingdom of God on the earth, but the basis of this kingdom, that which Christ must accomplish at His first coming, was the forgiveness of man's sins. Men could not enter into the kingdom of God in their sinful condition. Jesus came to bear the penalty of man's sins, and to provide them with His righteousness. This was the foundation of the kingdom.

Jesus came to seek and to save sinners. He did not come to associate with the rich and powerful. He did not come to provide positions and power for the disciples. He came to save sinners. To do so, He must associate with sinners. Thus, while it may offend the sensitivities and the social mores of His day, Jesus would go where sinners were, so that the gospel could come to them and they could be saved. If one's goal is to save sinners, then being with sinners is simply a means to that goal. Jesus' ministry was governed by His goal of seeking and saving sinners. Did Zacchaeus think that he had sought the Lord? He had. But the Lord had also sought Him.

What a beautiful picture of the tension that is maintained here between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. The blind man called out to the Savior for mercy and received it. Zacchaeus did not call upon the Lord, but the Lord called to him. The Scriptures clearly teach that no one who truly comes to Jesus for mercy, on the basis of faith, will be turned away. They also teach that anyone who comes to Christ for salvation does not come on their own initiative, but is drawn by God:

**“WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED”
(Romans 10:13, citing Joel 2:32).**

“All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 6:37).

It is therefore God who both begins and finishes the work of salvation, and yet man is not to be passive:

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6).

For it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith (Hebrews 12:2).

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, In order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in you

faith supply moral excellence, and in you moral excellence, knowledge ... (2 Peter 1:4-5ff.) .

God's sovereignty does not remove our responsibility both to seek God and to obey Him. And yet when we do, we know that it is because God has caused us to will and to work His good pleasure. No man who truly seeks God as Savior will ever be turned away. Those who do seek, will find that they have first been sought by Him, the One who came to seek and to save the sinner.

MacArthur: That final verse, **verse 10**, that final statement of our Lord Jesus is the most valuable, the most glorious and the most important truth ever revealed in Scripture. As far as we are concerned, this is why we are saved, because God is a seeker and a saver of those who are lost. This is true to the nature of God. From the Fall of man in the garden, when the Lord came searching for Adam and Eve who were hiding from Him, and He said, "*Where are you?*" **Genesis 3:8 and 9**, God has continued to seek for lost and hidden sinners. It all began in the garden and it still goes on. In one of the most beautiful Old Testament passages, Ezekiel quotes God as saying this, "*I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the weak,*" **Ezekiel 34:16**. God is a seeker of those who are lost and in grave danger. This is critical. This is foundational to our understanding of the Bible and of God's divine purpose in history. We need only to be reminded from **Romans 3:11** that no man seeks after God to be grateful that God seeks after us. In our sinfulness, in our fallenness, in our reprobation, in our blindness, in our ignorance, in our association and relationship to the kingdom of darkness and under the power of Satan, we cannot seek after God. We do not seek after God. There would then be no reconciliation, no salvation, no forgiveness, no hope of heaven if God did not seek after us. God does the initial seeking. God does the saving of those who apart from Him would hide themselves from Him like Adam and Eve, running from His presence with no capacity in them to ever turn and pursue Him.

This is what our Lord is saying here. He is the seeker. He is the saver of those who are lost. And the story is an illustration. A man out of a massive crowd sitting in a tree has a divine appointment with the seeking, saving Lord who spots him, names him and by divine necessity says, "*I'm coming to your house because this is the day of your salvation.*" This is one of the great biblical illustrations of sovereign salvation, of God seeking not just sinners in a general or vague way but seeking sinners in a very specific, personal way. And this is the work of the Son of Man. The Son of Man in **verse 10** is a title which Jesus used of Himself more than any other, by far. It refers to Him as man, that is His humanity, but far more than that, it is a messianic title referring to Him as the all-glorious, chosen One by God to rule and reign over an ever-lasting kingdom. That is prophesied as He is there identified in **Daniel chapter 7**. So it sees Him yes in His humanity, but far more in His divine glory and everlasting rule. Son of Man has come. "*Has come*" refers to His incarnation, not has come to Jericho, but has come into the world. At His birth He came, incarnation, for the purpose of seeking and saving. Those are two infinitives which means it starts with to, t-o. That's an infinitive. These are what we call in Greek infinitives of purpose, two purposes *to seek, to save*. The word "*seek,*" zte, means to pursue, to look for, to search for. To *save* means basically to rescue from harm, to deliver from danger. And the amazing irony of it all is that God sends Christ to seek and to save those who are headed for His own wrath and judgment.

Wiersbe: We are all "*too little*" to enter into heaven! The tragedy is, many lost sinners think they are "big." They measure themselves by man's standards—money, position, authority,

popularity—things that are an "*abomination in the sight of God*" (**Luke 16:15**). They think they have everything when really they have nothing (**Rev. 3:17**). Zacchaeus trusted Jesus Christ and became a true "*son of Abraham*," meaning, of course, a child of faith (**Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7**). That is as big as you can get!

Ray Pritchard: Whenever Jesus calls a person by name, something is about to happen. Our Lord never uses anybody's name in vain.... If you like to write words in the margin of your Bible, write beside verse 5 the word "Grace." Beside verse 6, write the word "Faith." "*So he came down and welcomed him gladly.*" This is the doctrine of the free grace of God. This is the story of what salvation is all about....Zacchaeus is up in a tree. He's interested in Jesus. He's watching and here comes Jesus. He stops and he calls him by name and says, "*Zacchaeus, come on down.*" That's the grace of God. That's where salvation begins. Listen, Zacchaeus had nothing with which to recommend himself to God. Zacchaeus had done nothing to deserve an invitation from the Master. Zacchaeus was the worst man in the city. And that's the man that Jesus singles out. That's the unmerited grace of God. "*Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus, you wicked old tax collector. Come on down. We're going to eat supper together.*" That's the grace of God and the Bible says that "*Zacchaeus came on down and he received him gladly.*" That's the human response to the grace of God. That's what salvation is. Zacchaeus had nothing to recommend himself to Jesus. He had done nothing good in his past, nothing at all. Do you want to know how to be born again? When Jesus calls you, answer him gladly. How do you know when he calls? Believe me, you'll know it when you hear his voice speaking to your heart. When you want to leave your life of sin, when you are ready, come on down and receive him gladly. You say, "I'm not good enough." Neither was Zacchaeus. "I've been a bad man." Zacchaeus was bad too. "I'm an outcast." So was Zacchaeus. He's the man that Jesus picked out. Salvation made simple. "Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." This is a wonderful picture of the grace of God saving the worst of sinners.

TEXT: Luke 19:11-27

TITLE: *FUTURE ACCOUNTABILITY DEMANDS FAITHFULNESS NOW – PARABLE OF THE POUNDS*

BIG IDEA:

FAITHFULNESS IN SPIRITUAL STEWARDSHIP WHILE THE KING IS AWAY WILL BE REWARDED WHEN THE KING RETURNS

INTRODUCTION:

This is not a story primarily about stewardship of money. It is not the same story that Christ told on another occasion about investing our spiritual talents wisely. What Christ has entrusted to His servants here (the one pound that He gave every professing disciple) is everything that pertains to multiplying disciples in the advance of His kingdom. That would include the Word of God, the message of the Gospel, the dynamic power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, etc. We need to make sure that during this time of the delay of the kingdom while Christ is in heaven that we are investing our lives to further His Kingdom agenda. The disciples needed this word of exhortation and accountability since they mistakenly thought that they were reaching the finish line of their life of sacrifice when they got to Jerusalem. They were ready for the kingdom of God to transform their world. They were ready to get their reward. Jesus said, “Not so fast. Slow your roll.” Apparently, there is much work to be done before the Second Coming and the consummation of the kingdom.

Donald Miller: Jesus’ disciples had left home and employment, and had followed him through the months with increasing hope. Now that they were nearing Jerusalem, their hopes were fanned into flame. They thought that the Kingdom “*was to appear immediately*” (vs. 11), and that they would share in the glory of him who brought it (9:46, 49, 54; 18:28). Jesus had to show them that there would be a long period of waiting before the Kingdom came in all its glory. In the meantime, they were to serve responsibly in the midst of a hostile environment. Their final share in the Kingdom would depend on their faithfulness during the time of waiting.

(:11) PROLOGUE – CORRECTING KINGDOM MISCONCEPTIONS

“And while they were listening to these things, He went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.”

Players in the parable:

Nobleman = Jesus Christ, the King

Servants = Disciples entrusted with stewardship of the Kingdom while Jesus is away;

two categories of servants:

- Genuine disciples
- False disciples

Citizens = Jews who reject the reign of Jesus

Deffinbaugh: Jesus had just told Zacchaeus that “*salvation had come to his house*” (v. 9). Some listened and believed that this meant that salvation had also come to the nation in the form of the kingdom of God. Jesus and His disciples were pressing on, drawing ever nearer to Jerusalem, the hub of Israel, the focal point of biblical prophecy. The disciples, at least, regarded Jesus as the Messiah, albeit a very different one than that which was to be. As the distance between Jesus, the

crowds who followed, and Jerusalem shrunk, the expectation exponentially multiplied. They thought of the kingdom as but a few miles and a few hours away. They believed the kingdom of God was imminent. That was the problem, it would seem. That is the very reason Luke gives us for Jesus telling the parable which follows. Somehow, this parable is to correct, or at least to clarify, the situation.

I. (:12-14) KINGDOM RESPONSIBILITY

“He said therefore,”

A. (:12) Parameters of the Kingdom Established

1. The King’s Identity

“A certain nobleman” – Jesus is the rightful King

2. The Departure of the King

“went”

Speaks to the Ascension back to heaven

3. The Delay in the King’s Return

“to a distant country” – intimates that this would be a long delay and period of waiting; don’t expect the king back immediately; Jesus has returned to His Heavenly Father for an undetermined period of time

4. The Certainty of the Kingdom

“to receive a kingdom for himself” – certainty of the establishment on earth of the future Messianic kingdom as prophesied in the OT

5. The Return of the King

“and then return” – we should be looking for the return of the King and living in light of that reality; but the timing of the return is undetermined

B. (:13) Stewardship of the Kingdom Commanded

“And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business with this until I come back.’”

Gave each of them one mina so that they each got the same thing; this was not an insignificant amount; it was enough to invest and do business with

MacArthur: This is about living your Christian life as a trust, taking the truth, the power of the Spirit, spiritual opportunity, spiritual gifts, spiritual privileges, everything the Lord puts in your life and maximizing it for His honor and His glory.

Deffinbaugh: He gave each of the ten slaves one mina. From the marginal note found in the NASB at **verse 13**, we can learn that this was equivalent to nearly 100 days’ wages. A talent, on the other hand (as mentioned in **Matthew 25:15ff.**), was worth about 50 times as much (cf. marginal note in NASB at **Matthew 25:15**). His command was specific. The slaves were all to *“do business”* (**Luke 19:13**, NASB) with the money, or, as the NIV puts it, to *“put the money to work”* until the master returned. The master expected to get back more than he put into the hands of his slaves. Money, as a friend of mine put it, has a time-value. Money should always increase over time, since it can always be loaned out at interest, or at least put in the bank, where it will be loaned out. The master thus expected to get back more than he left in the care of each slave.

C. (:14) Resistance to the King Intensified

“But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, We do not want this man to reign over us.”

Not surprising that the Jews rebel against Jesus and resist His reign over them

II. (:15-23) KINGDOM ACCOUNTABILITY

A. (:15) Final Reporting

“And it came about that when he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him in order that he might know what business they had done.”

Geldenhuys: The Jews’ hate and rejection of the Saviour, however, did not affect His reinstallation in power and glory or His reception of the divine kingship. By His ascension He has already been exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high, and at the final Consummation He will return in full glory. Then the faithful will have to render an account of the execution of their vocation as labourers in His vineyard, preachers (by word and act) of the Gospel message, extenders of his kingdom on earth.

B. (:16-25) Faithfulness Rewarded / Unfaithfulness Rejected

1. (:16-17) Tremendous Multiplication = 10X

a. (:16) Report

“And the first appeared, saying, ‘Master, your mina has made ten minas more.’”

b. (:17) Reward

“And he said to him, ‘Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.’”

Morris: The reward is not rest but the opportunity for wider service.

2. (:18-19) Good Multiplication = 5X

a. (:18) Report

“And the second came, saying, ‘Your mina, master, has made five minas.’”

b. (:19) Reward

“And he said to him also, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’”

3. (:20-25) Busted – Leading to Subtraction

a. (:20-21) Report

“And another came, saying, ‘Master, behold your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief; for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.’”

MacArthur: Then we go from the faithful to the false. **Verse 20**, “And another came.” Another? I just have to say a word about that. The Greek word *ho heteros*, “heterogeneous,” means

different, heterodox, something not orthodox, different. Here comes a different kind of person. Here comes a different kind of slave. . .

This man has no love for the nobleman. He has no affection for the nobleman. He has no interest in his cause. He has no interest in his honor or respect. He doesn't care what he thinks of him either. He's not trying to prove anything. He basically has no relationship with the nobleman and frankly doesn't care. But he's been putting on a show. He's been putting on a show. Maybe he liked the association. Maybe he thought it was a way to get rich. Maybe he thought...Maybe he's Judas, huh? Thinking that if I hang around this guy, maybe I'll get rich, and one day realizing that it's not going the way he wants so he sells Jesus. He never wanted a relationship with Him in the first place. This is the false follower. He takes no responsibility for what he's done. He blames the nobleman, now the king. No true believer would act like this. This isn't a true believer. I read some commentators who said, "We're not too sure about this guy whether he's a believer or not." I'm sure. What do you need? No true believer calls the Lord a liar and a thief and an exploiter. No true believer indicts the Lord. No true believer declares his lack of love, lack of trust and lack of interest in the things that the Lord is concerned with. No true believer accuses the Lord of lacking justice and fairness and using people for illegitimate selfish gain. He has an unfaithful heart. He has no love for the king, he has no interest in the king. He has no desire to honor the king at all. And the king knows it.

J. Ligon Duncan: Now Jesus is doing something very interesting there because aren't there a lot of us who are tempted to look at God and say, "God, You're hard. You've given me a hard life. You've put me in a tough place. You haven't rewarded me very well. I haven't gotten what I deserve because You're hard." And you see, Jesus is wanting every true disciple to look at that and say, "That is ridiculous. He is disproportionately generous in the way that He rewards and He is not hard and severe, because if He were, we'd all be in trouble." And Jesus is holding up that disproportionate reward and He's saying this — "You may go through this life and experience rejection and disappointment and betrayal, but there is a reward that you cannot even comprehend and it's coming for you and that reward then makes all the difference how you live now because it allows you not to be all turned in on yourself about what you haven't gotten here because you know that the Lord is going to take care of you, and it allows you to turn out and instead of being all tied up about what you haven't been given, you just give. And instead of being all tied up about how you've been disappointed, you serve."

b. (:22-23) Rebuke

"He said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down, and reaping what I did not sow? Then why did you not put the money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'"

Anyabwile: God expects us to use what he give us to make more for his kingdom. God expects us to use our theology to motivate our actions. We should act on what we know about God. There's no acceptable excuse for not acting on the truth we know about God. That very truth will condemn us. It's not that we are responsible for the truths we *don't* know. It's what we do with what we *do* know.

c. (:24) Debiting / Rejecting

"And he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him,

and give it to the one who has the ten minas.”

d. (:25) Pushback Regarding Fairness

“And they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas already.’”

Steven Cole: The question is, does this unfaithful servant represent a true believer who loses his rewards, who is saved, yet so as through fire (**1 Cor. 3:15**)? Or, is he a person who professes to know God, but by his deeds he denies him, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed (**Titus 1:16**)?

It seems to me that this third servant does not know the king. He wrongly thinks of him as a harsh man, when in reality he is very generous to the faithful slaves. **Darrel Bock** explains, “The third servant represents people who are related to the king in that they are associated with the community and have responsibility in it. Nevertheless their attitude shows that they do not see God as gracious and that they have not really trusted him.... Such people are left with nothing at the judgment; they are sent to outer darkness, because they never really trusted or knew God” (*Luke* [Baker], 2:1542). **J. C. Ryle** observes, “Hard thoughts of God are a common mark of all unconverted people. They first misrepresent Him, and then try to excuse themselves for not loving and serving Him” (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* [Baker], **Luke 11-24**, p. 305).

This third servant, then, represents those in the church who know the gospel and should believe it. But they are indifferent and unconcerned about the Master’s purpose and kingdom. As a result, they are not using the opportunities He has given them to further His kingdom. They are living for themselves and making up excuses as to why they are not serving the King.

III. (:26-27) KINGDOM LESSONS

A. (:26) Faithfulness Will Be Rewarded / Unfaithfulness Rejected

“I tell you, that to everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.”

B. (:27) Final Condemnation for Rejecting the King

“But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Does this passage undermine a belief in the imminent return of Jesus Christ?
- 2) What type of investment are you making on a daily basis to promote God’s kingdom agenda?
- 3) In what way can additional responsibility and leadership be viewed as a reward?
- 4) What would the Pharisees have thought of this parable?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The form of the parable is probably taken from a first-century event. Upon the death of Herod the Great, his son Archelaus made the long journey to Rome to have his rule over Judea confirmed by Augustus Caesar (vs. 12). The Jewish people sent a delegation at the same time, saying, “*We do not want this man to reign over us*” (vs. 12). The comparison is clear. Jesus, as he has intimated all along and as his disciple believe, will receive the Kingdom. But, as he has announced before and they did not understand (18:31-34), he must go on the long journey of death to receive this Kingdom. Later, he would return in “*kingly power*” (vs. 15; 23:42). In the meantime, his servants would have to live in the hostile environment of people who hate him (vs. 14). During this period, they were to take what they had received from him, and increase it by making disciples of all others who would hear them and believe (vs. 13). A reckoning would be made at his return (vs. 15). All bear the same responsibility, yet the results are not the same (vss. 16-24).

Morris: Archelaus had given the Jews good reason for hating him. At the first Passover after his accession, for example, he had massacred about 3,000 of his subject (**Josephus**, *Bellum* ii. 10-13). He was a thoroughly bad ruler. But the emperor confirmed him in the place of authority, though he denied him the title “king” until he should prove worthy of it (which he never did). There would be special fitness in an allusion to Archelaus in this region, for he had built a magnificent palace in Jericho and also made an aqueduct for irrigation purposes (**Josephus**, *Antiquities* xvii. 340).

Steven Cole: Doing Business for Jesus

I have a recurring dream which I’ve read is common among those who have been to college. In this dream it is the end of the semester and I suddenly realize that I have not been attending a class that I’m registered for. The final exam is looming ahead of me and I’m panicked because I haven’t done the work for the class. Thankfully, I usually wake up at this point and realize that I’m off the hook. It was only a dream.

But what if it were true? And what if it was not just a college class, but the end of the age and the examiner was the Lord? You realize too late that you must give an account to Him and you have not been doing what you were supposed to have done. That would be an awful nightmare from which you would not wake up!

Jesus tells this parable to warn us about the upcoming exam. He told the parable because the disciples and others who were journeying with Him to Jerusalem had the wrong notion that He would institute the kingdom of God immediately. They didn’t realize that He would suffer and die, be raised again, ascend into heaven, and that many years would go by before He returned to establish His kingdom. Jesus wanted to let His hearers know what they were supposed to be doing in His absence. They were not supposed to sit around waiting for Him to return. Rather, they were to be actively doing business for Him with what He entrusted to them. The day will certainly come when He will return. At that time, each servant must give an account for what he has done.

Because we all will give an account, we must faithfully do business with what the Master has given us until He returns.

1. The kingdom is not here in its full and final form.

2. The Master has entrusted to all of us the same resource to use for Him.

Again, we must distinguish this parable from the parable of the talents, which teaches a different lesson. That parable shows that different servants have been given different abilities, and that the danger is for the person with relatively smaller ability to do nothing. This parable shows that every servant has been given the same gift and that the difference in results is not due to differing gifts, but to differing levels of diligence in using the gift.

The fact that each of *ten* servants received a mina shows that it was not just the twelve apostles who were in view, but rather, God's servants in general. Thus the parable is not directed just to those in leadership, but to all of Christ's subjects. The fact that each was given the same amount shows that it is not referring to differing gifts, but to something that all followers of Christ share in common, namely, the Word of God and in particular, the central message of that Word, the gospel. We all have been given the same gospel and we are told to do business with it for our King during His absence.

3. While we wait for the Master's return, we must do business with the gospel in a hostile environment.

All of this leads me to ask, "Do you see yourself in business for the Master with His gospel?" He has entrusted the gospel message to every believer and said, "Do business with this until I come back." Are you doing business with the gospel for the Master? Are you using the good news of Christ as Savior to bring others into His kingdom, under His lordship? That is the question our Lord would have us consider by this parable.

If you do not see yourself as a "gospel entrepreneur," you will not be thinking about ways to multiply the Master's resources for His purpose. The apostle Paul saw this as his aim. He states the governing purpose of his life: "*I do all things for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it*" (1 Cor. 9:23). But not just Paul and the apostles, but every believer should be living for the same purpose, to do all things for the sake of the gospel. We should see ourselves in the gospel business, using Jesus' capital to make a profit for Him in His absence. If we are not thinking that way, we should change our thinking, because ...

4. When the Master returns, we all will be called to give an account of our business.

A. THE SERVANTS WHO HAVE DONE BUSINESS FOR HIM WILL BE REWARDED ACCORDING TO THEIR FAITHFULNESS.

B. THE SERVANTS WHO HAVE NOT DONE BUSINESS FOR HIM WILL BE STRIPPED OF EVERYTHING THEY HAD.

C. THE REBELLIOUS WILL BE PUNISHED WITH ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM THE KING.

Deffinbaugh: Here is a very real tension in Christian living. We must hold two truths in tension as we seek to apply them. On the one hand, we must live in the light of an **imminent return**. Christ may come at any moment, and we should both be ready and watching for His return. But we must also **live wisely, making good investments** for His kingdom, knowing that His return

may not be as soon as we think or hope. Many foolish things have been done by those who felt that the kingdom was imminent. On the other hand, many foolish things have been done by those who feel its coming is distant. We must hold both a short-term and a long-term view of life and ministry, and we must seek to hold these in tension. . .

The text has an interesting lesson regarding **Jews and Gentiles**. Remember that the gospel of Luke is purposed to be an explanation of the gospel from a Gentile perspective. Now who do you think the “citizens” in this parable represent? They represent the Israelites, The mass of Jews in Jesus’ day who rejected Him as their Messiah. And who would constitute the slaves? Slaves were most often foreigners—Gentiles if you would. Jesus has once again turned the world upside-down, for it is the (Gentile) slaves who become rulers, while the Jews, the “citizens” do not even enter the kingdom, but are slaughtered outside. The Gentile thrust of this gospel is once again evident. The way to honor and position is not competition and self-assertion (as the disciples seem to have been doing), but faithful service as slaves. To seek to preserve one’s independence, however, is to invite divine judgment.

MacArthur: Fitting Rewards from the Returning King

A fascinating story that Jesus invents. Just as a footnote, this is very familiar to us because it sounds like the parable in Matthew 25 of the talents. It is a different occasion, a different location, and a different story with a different application even though there are some similarities. This story in Luke 19, Jesus tells on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. The story in Matthew 25 He tells in the middle of the Passion Week up in Jerusalem some days later after this story. There's no value in mixing stories. Since they are stories, they are self-contained and we don't mingle them. So we'll stay with the Luke 19 account. This is the only place where this story is recorded.

Now I said that Jesus starts with something that is familiar. Did you catch the story? A nobleman is going away to receive a kingdom. In other words, he is going away to have somebody who is a higher authority than he give him a kingdom. The kingdom is going to be the very country he leaves, so he's going away to get a kingdom and that kingdom is his own country and he will come back and rule over that country. That's basically the story. While he's gone, he gives his servants a certain amount of money and expects that they will do his business while he's gone and earn a respectable profit with their efforts and that's how they can demonstrate their love and respect and concern for him and their own trustworthiness as his servants. When he comes back, he will evaluate what everyone has done.

However, when he goes to receive the kingdom, the citizens of his country don't want him to be their king. And so, they protest. Verse 14 says they hate him, and they do not want him to reign over them, so they send a delegation following him as he goes to a higher monarch to receive the right to be the king over his own country. They send a delegation to the citizens of that country pleading with that superior king not to make him their king. That's the story. So you have essentially the nobleman who becomes the king, who comes back. You have three groups of people, those who did what they were supposed to while he was gone, those who didn't do what they were supposed to while he was gone, and those who hate him. Those who did what they were supposed to were rewarded. Those who did not do what they were supposed to were rejected. Those who hated him were destroyed.

What is compelling about this story is this: You're in it, every single one of you somewhere. There are only three possibilities. You are either a true servant of the

nobleman. You are a false servant of the nobleman. Or you are his enemy. There are no other categories. It is again one of those amazing illustrations that Jesus invents that is comprehensive and embraces all of humanity. . .

He knows what they're thinking. What are they thinking? Well they're nearing Jerusalem and they're thinking that the kingdom of God is about to appear immediately. They're...They're on track for the reigning Jewish eschatology. The Messiah comes. What does He do? He sets up his earthly kingdom. That's how they thought. That's what they expected. And so because He knows that, He is telling them the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost. Before I come to set up a kingdom, I must do a salvation work. He comes first as Savior. Then He comes as King. To split that out a little bit and make simple sense out of it, He did not come to overthrow Rome and set up an earthly kingdom. He did not come to right all wrongs socially. He did not come to straighten out all civil inequities. He did not come to make the nation or the world moral. He did not come to establish economic justice. He did not come to institute Jewish triumphalism. He did not come the first time for this. He came to save. He came to do the work of salvation. He came to offer salvation to all who would confess their sinful lostness, repent and believe in Him and to die on the cross and rise from the dead to provide the sufficient atoning work that would satisfy the justice of God by which He could forgive sinners. His stories were always about this, lost sheep, lost coins, lost sons, a beggar, Lazarus, hated by everybody but loved by God who ends up in heaven, the salvation of the leper, the salvation of a publican, the salvation of two blind men, the salvation of a despised tax collector named Zacchaeus. It was always stories and stories and stories about salvation and events about evangelism which ended in the salvation of men and women. Everything pointed to His coming to establish an internal kingdom. **Chapter 17 verse 21**, "*The kingdom is within you.*" The first time He came to save, He didn't come the first time to make the world a better place to live in. He didn't come the first time to right all the earthly evils, to fix things, to end in justice, to stop abuse, to bring an end to crime, to destroy all wicked institutions, to end poverty, injustice, slavery, corruption. He didn't come to stop that. He came to seek and save the lost. . .

Please notice: "*His citizens hated him.*" Jesus' words are carefully, carefully chosen. They are his citizens. Listen to this. Everybody belongs in his kingdom. You may reject Christ, you may hate Christ; He owns you. He is sovereign over you. You may be an atheist, you may be a Muslim, you may be a Buddhist; Christ owns you. You live in His country for He made this world. It is His, and He made you. By creation, He owns you. Like the story of the prodigal, people say, "Well...well, he has to be a believer; he has to be a believer because he's the son of the father." No, he doesn't become a believer until he repents and comes back. But he is in the father's family by creation. I think this is a message that people don't quite understand. They think that if they reject Christ, then Christ has nothing to do with them. You reject Christ and He has everything to do with you. You accept Christ and He has everything to do with you. You do nothing with Christ and He has everything to do with you. You are in His world. You live in His country over which He is sovereign, over which He has full authority. Every knee bows to Him, every knee, **Philippians 2**. You can reject Him, you can ignore Him, but He owns you. . .

There it is in one story, rewards for the faithful, rejection for the false, retribution for the foes. Where are you? What group is your group? All under the sovereignty of the King.

TEXT: Luke 19:28-40

TITLE: MESSIANIC APPROACH TO JERUSALEM IN HUMILITY AND PEACE

BIG IDEA:

THE KING OF PEACE APPROACHED JERUSALEM IN FULFILLMENT OF OT PROPHECY WITH MESSIANIC SIGNIFICANCE

INTRODUCTION:

Here we enter into the Passion Week which culminates the revelation of the Son of Man with Messianic significance. The Miracles have been performed and now the Mission of the Messiah as the Suffering Servant lies ahead. The consummation of the kingdom will have to await the redemptive mission and the intervening years of delay before His powerful return in triumph and judgment. All of the details prophesied in the OT are sovereignly orchestrated to show how the reality completes all the types and foreshadowings. The meekness and humility of the King of Peace stand in contrast to the type of powerful entrance into Jerusalem that would have been expected. All that the disciples had difficulty understanding about the suffering and rejection and death of the Messiah would soon be played out on the grand stage of Jerusalem.

Donald Miller: Jesus' arrival at Jerusalem was a dramatic moment. It was the point toward which he had been moving with determined intention for months (9:51). Fully aware that death would be the result, he chose to make an open proclamation of himself as God's Messiah in God's city. The events associated with his dramatic arrival sprang the trap which led him to the Cross.

I. (:28-34) REQUISITIONING THE COLT TO RIDE ON

A. (:28-29) Messianic Significance of the Setting

1. (:28) Messianic Significance of Approaching Jerusalem

“And after He had said these things, He was going on ahead, ascending to Jerusalem.”

- City of Peace
- City of David
- Holy City of God

2. (:29) Messianic Significance of Mount Olivet

“And it came about that when He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet,”

Morris: Bethany was a village about two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives.

Donald Miller: The place is significant (vs. 37). Zechariah had spoken of a time when “*the Lord will become king over all the earth. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives*” (Zech. 14:9 and 4). . . Jesus, therefore, appeared on this Mount to proclaim himself Israel's true Deliverer.

Deffinbaugh: The Mount of Olives is a hill outside of Jerusalem, which Luke tells us elsewhere is a “Sabbath day’s journey” from Jerusalem (**Acts 1:12**). It is a place of great significance. It was on the Mount of Olives that king David wept, along with his faithful followers, as he fled from Jerusalem and from his son, Absalom (**2 Samuel 15:30**). According to **Zachariah 14:4**, the Messiah was to appear on the Mount of Olives, which would be split in half, forming a great valley. It is here that the “triumphal entry” was staged. During His last week, Jesus spent His nights on the Mount of Olives (**Luke 21:37**). It seems also to be from the Mount of Olives that Jesus ascended (cf. **Acts 1:12**).

B. (:30-31) Messianic Significance of the Lord’s Instructions

1. (:30a) What’s the Big Deal About the Colt?

“He sent two of the disciples, saying, ‘Go into the village opposite you, in which as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one yet has ever sat;’”

Donald Miller: Animals which had never been used ere commandeered for especially holy purposes (see **Num. 19:2; Deut. 21:3; I Sam. 6:7**). Furthermore, the whole event was a conscious enactment of an ancient prophecy: “*Lo, your king comes to you . . . humble and riding on an ass*” (**Zech. 9:9**).

Ray Fowler: So here’s Jacob’s prophecy in **Genesis 49**: “*The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.*” (**Genesis 49:10-11**) For the Jewish person in Jesus’ day, steeped in the Old Testament as they were, this tethered colt here in Luke’s gospel would evoke associations with this prophecy in Genesis and provide yet another reason to see Jesus as the Messiah.

2. (:30b-31) What’s the Big Deal About Orchestrating All the Details?

*“untie it, and bring it here.
And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’
thus shall you speak, ‘The Lord has need of it.’”*

Morris: it seems best to understand the expression as a pre-arranged password. When the animal’s owners heard these words they would know the ass was for Jesus and would let it go.

Significance of Lordship of Jesus

C. (:32-34) Messianic Significance of Obedience to the Lord’s Instructions

1. (:32) Obeying Finding the Colt

“And those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them.”

2. (:33-34) Obeying Explaining Its Commandeering

*“And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them,
‘Why are you untying the colt?’
And they said, ‘The Lord has need of it.’”*

II. (:35-38) RECEIVING PRAISE AND ADULATION

A. (:35-36) Messianic Significance of Physical Displays of Praise and Adulation

1. (:35) Messianic Significance of Regal Enthronement

“And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments on the colt, and put Jesus on it.”

2. (:36) Messianic Significance of Red Carpet Treatment

“And as He was going, they were spreading their garments in the road.”

Donald Miller: act of homage rendered to royalty (**II Kings 9:13**).

Lenski: This was a spontaneous act of submission which was combined with the highest honor. The imperfect tense states that this was kept up. The robes were picked up in the rear and laid down again in front.

B. (:37-38) Messianic Significance of Verbal Expressions of Praise and Adulation

1. (:37) For His Messianic Miracles

“And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen,”

2. (:38) For His Messianic Mission

“saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”

Geldenhuys: they call upon Jesus Himself as the blessed King that comes in the Name of the Lord, as His representative and deputy; in other words, as the Messiah, through whose coming peace has been established between God and His people so that the All-Highest is now truly glorified. From **Matthew xxi** and **Mark xi** it appears that the excited multitude gave vent also to various other exclamations and panegyrics. The atmosphere was in the highest sense laden with Messianic expectations, and the enthusiasm of the multitude knew no bounds.

III. (:39-40) REBUKING THE PHARISEES = BOOMERANG REBUKE

A. (:39) Messianic Significance of the Reaction of the Pharisees – Pharisees Want Jesus to Rebuke His Disciples

“And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to Him, ‘Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.’”

Morris: They would have objected to the enthusiasm on general principles and they certainly did not want to see Jesus proclaimed as Messiah. They were not in favour of the use of force unless the practice of their religion was directly involved, and they would have opposed anything that might provoke Roman intervention. There was no hope of stilling the tumult by appealing to the people, so they ask Jesus to calm them down. In a striking saying Jesus affirms that the shouting is inevitable. If the people were to keep quiet *the very stones would cry out*, which may have been a proverbial saying (cf. **Hab. 2:11**).

B. (:40) Messianic Significance of the Reply of Jesus – Instead, Jesus Rebukes the Pharisees

“And He answered and said, ‘I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!’”

Crying out in a testimony of both praise and condemnation

Ralph Wilson: Jesus could be saying that if the disciples are silent the rocks themselves would be forced to offer praise. Indeed, praise is sometimes poetically attributed to objects and animals (**Psalm 96:11; 98:7-9; 114:1-8; Isaiah 55:12**). But Jewish writings sometimes mention mute stones bearing witness when sin has been committed -- in this case the sin of not offering praise when praise is due (**Habakkuk 2:11; Genesis 4:10; and Joshua 24:27**).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was surprising to you about how Jesus entered into Jerusalem here?
- 2) How would you summarize the miracles and the mission of the Messiah?
- 3) What type of physical displays or verbal expressions of praise and adulation do we offer up to the Lord?
- 4) How do false religious leaders today try to silence the testimony and praise of genuine believers?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: The King of Peace

Main Idea: God offers true and lasting peace when we praise, seek, and listen.

Peace Is a Person (19:28-40)

A. Jerusalem, the city of peace (19:28)

Name means literally "*Foundation of Peace*"

B. Riding on a colt (19:29-35)

Zech. 9:9 – Zechariah predicted that the true king of Israel would come to Jerusalem on a young, unused colt. When kings came to cities in times of war, they came on mighty warhorses, terrible steeds. But when kings came on a donkey, it meant they were coming in peace.

C. Praise for peace (19:36-40)

Wherever Jesus goes, he brings peace. When he was born and came to earth, the angels cried, "*Peace on earth.*" When the Lord was about to be crucified and ascend to God, then men cried out, "Peace in heaven." Here is the King of peace entering the city of peace on a beast of peace.

Do not let anyone stop you from praising Jesus, including outwardly religious folks. Do not be afraid to express yourself when you praise him. He is worthy! If Christ brings you peace, then bring him praise!

Steven Cole: Why You Should Follow Jesus

This story that inaugurates the week leading to Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, conveys the picture that He was in absolute control of the circumstances. He was not deluded by the cheering crowd. He was not intimidated by the threats of the Pharisees. He lived under the precise timetable of the Heavenly Father, and now Jesus knew that His hour was approaching.

On Palm Sunday Jesus staged a public demonstration to show the people and the rulers that He is the Messiah, but not the kind of Messiah they were expecting. The chief priests and the Sanhedrin were looking for Jesus and had given the command that if anyone knew where He was, they should inform them so that He could be arrested (**John 11:57**). Jesus' bold action infuriated them and led to His arrest and crucifixion at the very moment that the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in Jerusalem, as a fulfillment of His offering Himself as the Lamb of God for sinners. Even the day of the triumphal entry was in fulfillment of God's prophetic timetable. Jesus was in control of every event. Whether He had pre-arranged the details about securing the colt or whether they reflect His supernatural knowledge, we do not know. But the clear point is, Jesus was in command of the whole situation. He is the Lord who had need of the colt.

To have a faith that perseveres, you need to understand that Jesus Christ is the Sovereign Lord of authority. He is sovereign even over all of the evil things happening in the world. He will work all these things together for His glory and for the ultimate good of His saints. Jesus was not a well-meaning reformer who was tragically murdered because He made a mistake in picking a disloyal disciple who betrayed Him. He laid down His life for His sheep on His own initiative (**John 10:17-18**).

While the crucifixion of Jesus, the Son of God, was the most horrible crime imaginable, and those who did it are responsible for their terrible sin, that sin did not thwart the sovereign plan of God, but rather, fulfilled it. As the apostles prayed (**Acts 4:27-28**), "*For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.*" Nothing can thwart God's purpose (**Psalms 103:19; 115:3**). Either you can submit to Him willingly now and be blessed, or on the day of judgment you will be forced to submit to Him and be condemned. Because He is the Lord of authority, we must follow Him.

Deffinbaugh: There is a whole paragraph devoted to a description of the details surrounding the procuring of this donkey and its foal in all three of the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). John alone cuts these details from his account. Why the detail in Luke and the other two gospels? Several responses can be given:

First, this was an important fulfillment of prophecy, which our Lord was intent on fulfilling precisely. While Luke does not stress the element of fulfilled prophecy as much as Matthew, this is nevertheless a factor. Jesus was, by His deed, declaring His identity as Messiah.

Second, the miraculous power of the Lord Jesus is portrayed. Some might think it a miracle that the animals were released to these two disciples. But Jesus' exact knowledge of the whereabouts of the animals, and of the response of the owners, indicates our Lord is completely aware of and in control of His environment. The fact that the animal on which Jesus rode had never been ridden may be a hidden clue to His deity. In **Numbers 19:2** and **Deuteronomy 21:3**, the animals which were to be sacrificed to God were not to have borne a yoke. Is the fact that this animal had

never been ridden a clue to the fact that it was, as it were, an offering to God, something to be used in His service? I believe that our Lord's choosing to ride on a never-ridden animal is a miraculous event. I can almost see the owners snickering to themselves, saying, in effect, "Just wait until he tries to ride this animal. Is he in for a jolt!"

Third, the fact that the disciples did not first ask to use the two animals, but only gave an explanation for their right to take them, is an indication of the Lord's right to make use of anything man owns. Think of the various ways in which a previously unriden animal could have been acquired. Jesus Himself could have gone and asked to use it. He could have identified Himself as Messiah, and explained that He had certain prophecies to fulfill, and the use of that person's animal would be an important contribution to His kingdom. Or, Jesus could have sent His disciples on a similar task. Once they explained who Jesus was, and then asked for the use of the animal, they surely would have gotten it. They could, of course, have promised to bring the animals right back, or could even have offered to rent or buy them.

Yet none of these things were done. Instead, these two disciples went into the village, and without previously asking permission, started to take the animals. All this was done in the sight of the animals' owners. We would say that this act was "gutsy." And remember that the two disciples are doing precisely what Jesus instructed them to do. They were told to locate the animals, to take them, and to give an explanation only if they were challenged, which they were. In effect, the owners were probably saying something like this, when they saw their animals being taken, "Hey, what do you think you're doing?"

The amazing thing to me is that once told, "*The Lord has need of it,*" the owners cease to protest, allowing the two disciples to lead the two animals away, with no statement being made about their return. I wonder if they ever expected to see these animals again. Our understanding of the response of these owners must begin with an understanding the value of these two animals to their owners. Wealth in that part of the world, was often measured in terms of cattle. Put into today's culture, the ass and its colt would have been something like a red Porsche convertible. Can you imagine allowing two strangers to get into it and drive off, with only the words, "*The Lord has need of it*"? What was it about these words which satisfied the owners of these animals?

The key is to be found in the word, "*Lord,*" which, in every account is the same term. What did the word "*Lord*" convey to the people of Jerusalem, and to these people in particular? I believe that this term "*Lord*" was understood by the animals' owners to refer to Jesus of Nazareth. I further assume that the term "*Lord,*" based upon its Old Testament roots, implied the deity of our Lord, and thus His sovereignty over all creation. The term "*Lord*" conveyed to these animal owners that Jesus was not only Messiah, but God, and thus He had every right to possess these animals, whether He ever returned them or not. His same authority is that which enabled and empowered Him to be in perfect control over this animal, which had never been "broken," and which would normally have refused to bear Jesus as a burden, or to go where He wanted it to go.

MacArthur: Jesus' Humble Coronation

Chronology of Passion Week:

The week would then go like this. On Saturday, He is anointed. On the next day, Sunday, there's a great crowd comes to Bethany to see Him. On Monday is the triumphal entry. He comes into the city. He goes to the temple. At night He returns to Bethany. On Tuesday, comes from Bethany back into Jerusalem, curses a fig tree, cleanses the temple. The religious leaders

get more angry with Him than they've been and they've been very angry, wanting to destroy Him. At the end of that Tuesday, He goes back to Bethany and stays. On Wednesday He comes back into Jerusalem and He has another day-long controversy with the religious leaders. He gives the great Olivet discourse, the sermon of His Second Coming recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. Predicts that He's going to be crucified in two days at the Passover which is exactly what happened. And Judas plans the betrayal, that's Wednesday. Thursday, meets with His disciples, eats the Passover meal in the upper room, gives the great final discourse to the disciples. Goes into the Garden of Gethsemane, prays to the Father. On Friday He's arrested, tried, crucified. Saturday He's in the grave. Sunday He rises from the dead. That's what's in His mind. And the people, all they can think about is He's going to come and bring us glory. But there couldn't be any glory until there was a cross. There couldn't be a kingdom until there was a sacrifice for sin. . .

Five hundred years then before the people of Jerusalem would hail Him as a King, it was declared by the prophet that He would ride a donkey's colt. The Old Testament then declared that He wouldn't come as a conquering hero riding on a white horse. That's the picture in Revelation when He comes the next time. But that He would come not in earthly splendor to reign in earthly power, but the first time He would come in humility to save and to die and give His life a ransom for sinners. He did not come into the city on this occasion in wealth but in poverty. He didn't come in grandeur, He came in meekness. He didn't come to slay Israel's enemies but to save sinners. The incarnation is the time of His humiliation. The next time He comes, the time of His glorification. And by the standards of earthly kings, this is anything but a triumphant entry. That's why I call it a humble coronation rather than a triumphal entry. But it's exactly what it had to be. It's exactly what the prophet said it would be. Jesus knew that, knew the prophecy, knew how to fulfill the prophecy and therein we see His deity and Messiahship manifest in the preparation for His entry. He comes to the right city on exactly the right day to be offered as the Lamb to the people, four days later to be executed on the very day that Passover lambs are always killed as symbolic sacrifices for sin because He is the real and true sacrifice for sins. He comes in the right year. Every detail is on divine schedule.

So here we see His omniscience as God. Here we see His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy validating His claim to be the Messiah. It's magnificent. Clearly He is God's King. . .

Now Jesus never allowed such a massive demonstration in His entire ministry because He knew it would precipitate escalated fury and anger on the part of the religious leaders who had wanted Him dead for a long, long time. A display like this would speed up everything toward them completing their mission of His execution. Up until now, He didn't want it to happen. But now He did. Now was the time. . .

He vindicates Himself as the Messiah in preparation, omniscience and the fulfillment of prophecy; in adoration, receiving worship; and in condemnation He possesses the authority to pronounce judgment, and He knows the future. You see His deity here in knowing about an animal that He cannot see, not visible to His eyes, being in a place, a precise place. He knows what only supernatural can know; only God can know, about the present, where that animal is. He also knows what only God could know about the future, the very judgment that is to come. He is then the Messiah, the omniscient one who fulfills Old Testament prophecy, who knows things in the present that no one can know, and who determines the future and has a right to judge. . .

Screaming stones? What is that? What is that? It's more than just the expression of praise from some inanimate object, as if God is to be praised by His creation, far more than that. In fact, in the little prophecy of **Habakkuk, chapter 2**, we have a very good parallel. In the prophecy of Habakkuk we have a statement of judgment on the Chaldeans, the Chaldeans, the wicked, pagan Chaldeans. And the Chaldeans had basically prospered as a society, but they had prospered at the expense of other nations, they had prospered by extortion, they had prospered by usury, charging exorbitant interest rate, they had prospered by murder and bloodshed. They had literally built their towns and cities by the sacrifice and the slaughter and the abuse of other people. So Habakkuk, the prophet, is given a message from God of judgment against them. I just want to pick out one verse; that is in **verse 11**. "*Surely the stone will cry out from the wall and the rafter will answer it from the framework.*" Then **verse 12**, "*Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed and founds a town with violence.*" The stones in the houses and the buildings that they built were symbols of their wickedness. The walls of their houses and the timbers of their roofs, plundered from others, gained by bloodshed and usury, scream of their wickedness, scream of their guilt. And Jesus is saying the same thing here.

There are going to be some stones who will cry out against you as the stones in the past cried out of the guilt of the Chaldeans. All you had to do was look at their houses and when you saw them, all their prosperity, all their edifices were testimonies to their corruption and bloodshed. The stones cried out of their guilt and the judgment of God upon them, and some stones are going to do the same in your case.

TEXT: Luke 19:41-48

TITLE: ARRIVING IN JERUSALEM AND IN THE TEMPLE

BIG IDEA:

FAILURE TO DISCERN THE DAY OF MESSIANIC VISITATION LEADS TO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

INTRODUCTION:

Do you have the sense that the Messiah is visiting you today – calling for repentance and faith? Do you have a heart of compassion for those who seem oblivious to the hope offered in the gospel? Are you so preoccupied with greed and wealth-grabbing that you are missing out on the opportunity to call on God in prayer? Are you experiencing the peace with God that the Messiah came to bring or is your life caught up in turmoil and instability? Are you listening intently to the Word of God, hanging on its every word, or are you looking for ways to attack Christianity and try to discredit it? Jesus deals with all of these important questions as He enters Jerusalem and the temple and begins his final week of ministry before going to the Cross.

I. (:41-42) LAMENTING OVER JERUSALEM

A. (:41) Grief

“And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it,”

B. (:42) Regret

“saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.’”

Geldenhuis: He realizes only too well that it is already too late; their persistence in their wicked unbelief has blinded the to the opportunities for redemption still remaining; through their own fault the way to salvation is hidden from their sight.

II. (:43-44) LEVELING OF JERUSALEM

A. (:43-44a) Devastating Destruction

1. (:43a) Siege Against the City

“For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you,”

2. (:43b) Surround the City

“and surround you, and hem you in on every side,”

3. (:44a) Sack the City

“and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another,”

Lenski: The city and her children or inhabitants were to be dashed to the ground, the latter to be slain; and this destruction was to be so radical as not to leave one stone on another – an absolute and utter ruin.

B. (:44b) Fatal Flaw – Leading to Serious Consequences

“because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

Morris: it is the divine visitation in the presence of God’s Messiah among them that the people had failed to know, “*God’s moment*”, as NEB translates. There is an ignorance that is innocent, but there is also an ignorance that is culpable. These men had the revelation God had made known in the scriptures of the Old Testament. They had the continuing evidence that God was active in the life and ministry of Jesus. They could see in Him that God had not forgotten His people. There was every reason for them to have welcomed Jesus as His disciples did. But they refused to accept all this evidence. They rejected God’s Messiah. They would not have to live with the consequences of their rejection. It is this that brought forth Jesus’ tears.

Lenski: God’s looking in upon us with his grace continues until a certain time; then those that refuse that grace shall receive a far different visitation from him whom they have spurned.

III. (:45-46) LIBERATING THE TEMPLE – IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING TO GOD

A. (:45) Purge of Temple Merchants

“And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were selling,”

MacArthur: He started His ministry, you remember, in John chapter 2, by cleansing the temple. He went into the temple when He first arrived at the beginning of His ministry in Jerusalem, sat down in a premeditated manner, made a whip, and cleaned out the temple. That’s how it started in **John 2, verses 13 to 17**, and that’s how, 3 years later, it ends – with the 2nd assault on the corruption of the temple. . .

Three years has changed nothing. His focus is unaltered, back to the temple. He passed over many issues – social issues, economic issues, political issues, issues of justice and equity. He saw all that was out of harmony. He saw all that was not as it should be, but He also knew that the only way to remedy anything is to have a right relationship with God. His ministry was always about the kingdom and about true worship.

Donald Miller: His action in driving from the Temple those who were defiling it as a business center, was wholly in accord with Malachi’s description. He was to “*purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord*” (**Mal. 3:3**). Jesus’ attack on the High Priesthood here could hardly have been a more exact fulfillment of this prophetic word.

B. (:46) Indictment for Subverting the Mission of the Temple

“saying to them, ‘It is written, ‘And My house shall be a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a robbers’ den.”

Anyabwile: We are God’s temple (**1 Cor 3:16; 6:19**). We are also his priesthood. So we ought to be a people of prayer. We can never pray enough if we want to maintain the peace of God.

Geldenhuis: Instead of using the temple as a place consecrated to God where He could be worshipped in spirit and in truth, the Jews, through all kinds of business transacted in the courts

of the temple, were degrading it to a den of thieves – a place where people who were carrying on their businesses in a dishonest manner, and were robbing other people, could enjoy a safe refuge.

W A Criswell: “*Those who bought and sold*” refers to merchants who sold animals that were needed for the sacrifices, and other things like wine and oil which were also needed for some offerings. The heart of the problem was commercialism in holy precincts, as well as unequal exchange rates and the attachment of exorbitant prices to the purchase of sacrificial animals. Through sharp dealing, merchants and money changers were fleecing the pilgrims. The commercial enterprise in the temple was offensive for more reasons than merely the location of the sellers. Exorbitant prices for sacrificial animals made offering a sacrifice so costly that the poor were almost certainly either excluded or impoverished. The deliberate falsification of rates of exchange in changing Roman for Jewish coins afforded still other unlawful profits for the temple.

IV. (:47-48) LISTENING IN THE TEMPLE – IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING TO GOD

A. (:47) Danger While Teaching Daily in the Temple

“And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,”

Bruce Hurt: **And He was teaching daily in the temple** - One has to love this simple statement. Jesus' death is imminent and He knows it and yet what does He deem to be of the highest value, the greatest yield with the precious seconds He has left on this earth which He created? Teaching! **Luke 20:1** adds “*preaching the Gospel!*” Given that we “*have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps*” (**1 Peter 2:21**) and we claim that we abide “*in Him (we) ought (ourselves) to walk in the same manner as He walked*” (**1 John 2:6**), teaching and proclaiming the Gospel! Time was running out quickly for Jesus and yet Jesus continues daily teaching and preaching! Beloved, if we are truly His followers, our holy charge, our holy privilege is to be diligent to redeem the short time left in each of our lives and enabled by His Spirit and His all sufficient Word of Truth, we should be about our Father's business just as was our Lord! Are you? The sands of time are running out of the hour glass and eternity is your doorstep. Beloved, do not waste your life in frivolous, trivial activities. God grant you the desire and the power to redeem the time teaching and proclaiming the Gospel for the glory of the Lord.

B. (:48) Devotion of the Listening Crowd Offered Temporary Protection

“and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging upon His words.”

Lenski: This love of the pilgrims for Jesus held the Sanhedrists in check.

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What type of longing did Jesus have to see peace established?

2) How could a loving God allow His elect nation and holy city to be so utterly devastated in 70 A.D.?

3) What changes could we make in our own home to improve its functioning as a house of prayer?

4) What can we learn from the example of Jesus in His last week before going to the Cross about the priority of teaching others the Word of God and the message of the Gospel?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Jerusalem was to Jesus a much-loved city. It was the city where God had chosen to establish his presence among men. It was the center of a Temple, a Law, and a People which held the spiritual hopes of humanity and which were dear to Jesus. But it was a city blind to God's will and purpose, a rebellious city which did not know "*the things that make for peace*" (vs. 42) – the proposal of reconciliation which God had made to them in Jesus. God had "*visited*" them with offers of grace, but they did not know it (vs. 44; see also **Gen. 50:24** for the meaning of "*visit*"). Consequently, nothing lay ahead but judgment. The Romans would attack the city and utterly destroy it. Jesus must speak this word of judgment, but he weeps as he does it. He had no tears for his own suffering which was soon to come, but his heart broke over his people whom he had come to save. To be the means of the destruction of the very people he had come to redeem, was to Jesus a part of the Cross.

Brian Bill: Jonah looked on Nineveh and hoped it would be destroyed, while Jesus looked at Jerusalem and wept because it had destroyed itself. The parade suddenly stops. People see His shoulders shaking. Maybe He's laughing. Everyone else is throwing up cheers while Jesus is shedding tears. These were chest-heaving sobs. This same word is used in **Mark 5:38** to describe how family members were crying over the death of a young daughter when it says they were "*crying and wailing loudly*." Jesus was not weeping because He was going to suffer and die. No, He was lamenting the lost and their hard hearts. He breaks out into loud wailing when people will to go their own way. I like how the Bible Exposition Commentary puts it: "No matter where Jesus looked, He found cause for weeping. If He looked back, He saw how the nation had wasted opportunities. If He looked within, He saw spiritual ignorance and blindness...as He looked around, Jesus saw religious activity that accomplished very little...as Jesus looked ahead, He wept as He saw the terrible judgment that was coming to the nation, the city, and the temple." I wonder how much He weeps for the things that are happening in our country? Do you feel what Jesus feels – even when others don't? Are you willing to let your heart be broken for those who are hurting and wandering?

Bruce Hurt: *The things which make for peace* - What irony -- Jerusalem "City of Peace" had no clue as what made for true peace, most importantly peace with God! The Hebrew concept of Shalom emphasized peace or right relationship between creature and Creation! Without this man can experience no true peace. Here is my simple formula for genuine peace = Know God. Know peace! No God. No peace! So Jesus is not referring to political peace! Ultimately it is not what **things** but Who makes for peace. Messiah was the prophesied Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-note) Who would have indeed brought in the Messianic Kingdom of peace for the Jews and the

holy city of Jerusalem just as had been prophesied (cf **Isaiah 32:18, 60:18, Micah 4:3** NASB-note, **Micah 4:4** NLT-note; **Zechariah 14:11**-note).

MacArthur: The Court of the Gentiles had been turned into basically a business center. And the business was selling animals needed for the sacrifices (twice daily and then the Passover). One Passover record indicates 260,000 lambs were slain, so you can just imagine how many animals would have been in the courtyard! And you had to buy other necessities for offerings and sacrifices. Then there were moneychangers. All of this was basically called the Bazaar of Annas. Annas and Caiaphas both being high priests ran the operation and became filthy rich selling franchises to people who sold the animals and changed the money and sold the oil and the other things that were used. They sold these franchises for very high prices and then skimmed off a huge percentage of the profit of shop owners, so that the Court of the Gentiles was just jammed with these shops. **Lightfoot** writes there was always a constant market in the Temple in that place (THE COURT OF THE GENTILES)...One might ask, "Well why don't they bring their own animals?" They should and they could choose the best one in the flock without spot and without blemish. But if you brought your own animal, it was risky because every animal that was sacrificed had to pass priestly inspection. And it was to the benefit of the priests to reject your animal because when they rejected your animal, you had to buy their animal. And you would be forced to do that at an exorbitant price, and a huge percentage would be skimmed off and paid to the chief priests. And if they rejected your animal, some records say you would have to pay ten times the fair price. This is robbery and extortion by the priests. The noise, the filth, the stench of all the animals, the chaos of a stockyard in the Temple of God was nauseating to Christ – the corruption, the robbery, the thievery, by people who had no conscience about bilking the poor. And there were sellers of doves and pigeons because there were some people so poor they could not afford a lamb, so according to **Leviticus 12:6,8** the poor people could offer two doves. Doves would be worthy in today's money about a dime each but they would cost about \$10 each there. The travesty, the prostitution, the perversion, the corruption was just vile and blatant. Then there were the moneychangers, *kollubos* is the word that is a part of the word "moneychangers." It means "small coins." Every Jew had to pay a half-shekel temple tax near the Passover time. A month before, you could pay it locally, but if you got to Jerusalem and you had not paid it, you had to pay it in the Temple, and you had to pay it with a certain required coinage. And if you did not have the exact amount, then you had to change your money, and they charged you 25% to change money. The whole "Bazaar of Annas" was vile and had become a hangout for every crook, charlatan, conman of all sorts plying their trade. That is where Jesus went. Religion was corrupt. That is where He gave His attention. He was repulsed by what He saw and smelled and heard. Jesus was on His turf. "My house," He says in **Lk 19:46** quoting from **Isaiah 56:7**, "*You have brought your corruption into My house.*" ...He goes to defend God and God's house against the blasphemers.

TEXT: Luke 20:1-8

TITLE: *UNDENIABLE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST – TRAPPING THE TRAPPERS*

BIG IDEA:

THE SOURCE OF THE BAPTISM OF JOHN ANSWERS THE QUESTION OF THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Answering the question of authority impacts the choice of whether or not to believe. That is why the authority of Scripture is such a major issue. If it truly is God's authoritative revelation to mankind then its message of how men must be reconciled to God only through faith in Jesus Christ must be embraced. Here the question brought by the hostile religious leaders deals with the source of the authority of the ministry of Jesus Christ. How did He have the audacity to enter into their temple system of worship and purge the temple of the corrupt moneychangers? Who gave Him the authority to teach and preach without relying on quotations from the famous rabbis? How could He charge the religious leaders of Judaism with hypocrisy and legalism? Their hostility was at a fever pitch. The only thing preventing them from immediately seizing Jesus was His popularity among the pilgrims there in Jerusalem.

I. (:1-2) THE QUESTION OF UNBELIEVING, HOSTILE HEARTS – WHAT AUTHORITY DOES JESUS HAVE?

A. (:1) Hostile Confrontation

“And it came about on one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him,”

- Jesus involved in legitimate, high priority ministry of teaching and preaching the gospel
- Chief religious leaders on a mission of hostile confrontation

Morris: looks like an official inquiry from the Sanhedrin . . . they were especially concerned with the cleansing of the temple

Lenski: It was rather late to ask about the authority on which Jesus acted, for this was the third day of his last week. Nor do the Sanhedrists come prepared to arrest Jesus, should his authority be deficient. When Jesus refused even to name his authority, they did not even forbid him to teach further, they withdrew in defeat. This shows how the presence of the pilgrim hosts affected the murderous intention of the Sanhedrin.

B. (:2) Condemning Question = Who Gave You Authority?

“and they spoke, saying to Him, ‘Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?’”

Not asking the question in an open, objective sense seeking to gain information;

This is more like a presidential news conference where the question has been framed to try to expose a lack of credentials and a lack of competency.

Donald Miller: At least two motives lay behind the question. First, if Jesus were to be taken, it was necessary to discredit him before the people. If he could be exposed as having acted without proper credentials, this end might be achieved. Second, if Jesus could be induced to make a verbal claim to Messiahship, they might condemn him for blasphemy.

II. (:3-6) THE METHOD OF INDICTING THE CRITICS BY THEIR OWN WORDS

A. (:3-4) Answering the Question With a Very Obvious Question

“And He answered and said to them, ‘I shall also ask you a question, and you tell Me: “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?””

Not always wise to just directly answer a question – especially from an antagonistic critic. Often it is better to return another question that forces them to see the inconsistencies and the hypocrisy of their mindset.

Donald Miller: John’s baptism was a call to repentance. It involved not theological, but **moral**, decision. Was God at work in John? Since the mission of John and that of Jesus were bound together (see **7:33-35**), a moral decision about John was necessary before the issue of Jesus could be settled.

B. (:5-6) Catching Them In a Dilemma

1. (:5) Accepting John the Baptist Would Place Them in a Bind

“And they reasoned among themselves, saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’”

Could not just be honest and come up with the simple answer that the observing crowd knows to be true. They had to hold a quick scheming session to see how they could wriggle out of this dilemma.

2. (:6) Attacking John the Baptist Would Place Them in the Grave

“But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”

C. (:7) Indicting Them By Triggering an Obvious Lie

“And they answered that they did not know where it came from.”

Pretty lame – and the watching crowd could tell that they were exposed as liars and frauds.

Anyabwile: They don’t know because they don’t want to know. They don’t want to say John’s baptism was from heaven because they rejected John. They don’t want to say it was from man because all the people recognized John as a prophet from God. They were stuck between conviction and cowardice. They’re trying to control the spin.

III. (:8) THE ANSWER IS SELF-EVIDENT = A MATTER OF FAITH

“And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”

Classic Mike drop! Nothing more needs to be said on this issue.

Anyabwile: Beloved, this is a stunning scene. With one question the Lord Jesus Christ exposed the spiritual emptiness of Israel's religious authorities. If you don't know where authority comes from, then you can't truly have it yourself.

By that one question the Lord demonstrated that all of Israel's religious authorities were unqualified to question his authority. If they couldn't tell the difference between a prophet and a mere man, how could they judge the Son of God when he came?

When we meet Jesus, we meet a person with unquestionable authority. Mere men cannot challenge the Lord's right and ability to teach and to rule.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How did you come to accept the authority of the Bible and of Jesus as Lord of your life?
- 2) What were some of the things that made Jesus especially odious to the chief religious leaders of his day?
- 3) What are some of the abuses of authority that you have seen in our culture and even in the church?
- 4) What were some of the topics that you think Jesus might have covered in his final week of teaching in the temple in Jerusalem?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The protection of the crowds gave Jesus opportunity to teach in the Temple for a few days. During this period the authorities pressed him with questions designed to discredit him with the multitudes, or to entice him into answers which might lead to his condemnation on religious grounds according to the Jewish Law, or on political grounds according to Roman Law (see vs. 20). After he had silenced their questions (vs. 40), he confronted them with further claims (vss. 41-44), offered some additional instruction (vss. 45-47; 21:1-4), and then gave a discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the End of the Age (21:5-38).

Geldenhuys: And because they refused to give an honest answer to Jesus' express question, our Lord also refused to reply to their question. So their attempt to lead Him into a trap failed and led to the exposure of their insincerity and also their incompetence to act any longer as spiritual leaders. Because on such a most important matter, in connection with which all the people urgently needed guidance, they stated: "We do not know", they showed that they had forfeited their right to be regarded as teachers of the people, and consequently they no longer had the right to question Jesus about His own actions. Accordingly He definitely refused to answer their

question. If you do not recognize authority when you see it, He said in effect, no amount of arguing will convince you of it. In this manner it was they and not Jesus who stood exposed as unlawful intruders in the regulation of the religious life of the people.

Steven Cole: The Tempest in the Temple: The Abuses of Authority

The issue which underlies this entire section of Scripture is that of authority. Jesus has clearly declared Himself to be Israel's Messiah by His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. He has claimed in so doing, not only His identity as Messiah, but also His deity. As such, He demonstrated His right as Messiah to possess His kingdom, including the two donkeys. The words, "the Lord has need of them," spoken by His two disciples, was all that was needed to convince the owners of the donkeys that they could take their animals. The entrance of the Lord into Jerusalem, His acceptance of praise as Messiah, and His refusal to silence the multitudes, all pointed to His right, as God's Son, to possess men's praise. And, His entrance into the temple, His cleansing of it, and His taking possession of it to teach daily there, was proof of His authority to possess and make use of His temple.

This is where the crunch comes, for if Jesus would claim such authority, it was in direct competition with the "authorities" of Jerusalem, who saw themselves as the ones with authority. This leads to a major confrontation, which I have called, the "tempest in the temple," and which will conclude in the crucifixion of our Lord on the cross of Calvary. The focus of this lesson will be on the initial challenge to Jesus by the Jerusalem Jewish authorities, and His response to them. We will seek to learn what abuses they had made of their authority, which prompted them to reject God Himself, and even to purpose to put Him to death. I believe that we will find that the same abuses of authority which were evident in that day, 2000 years ago, can be found today. The application of these verses will then become self-evident.

Outline of the Text

Our passage can thus be outlined in this way:

- (1) Jesus' possession of His temple—(19:45-48)
- (2) The Challenge of Jerusalem's Leadership—(20:1-2)
- (3) Jesus' Counter-Question—(20:3-8)
- (4) Jesus' Answer by Parable—(20:9-16)
- (5) Jesus' Further Clarification—(20:17-18)

Their challenge came as a question concerning His authority. The question was two-pronged, not simply one question put differently the second time. There were two questions in view:

- (1) Just who do you think you are to do these things, anyway?
- (2) Who gave you the authority to do these things?

The first question has to do with Jesus' personal authority. Jesus was acting as though He owned the place, and so He did. The simple answer would have been, "I am the Messiah." But while the people were entertaining this at least as a possibility, the leaders rejected the thought out of hand. No way! The second question had to do with Jesus' official accreditation—Who sent Him? These leaders seemed to think that they were the accrediting agency. Jesus had not received their permission to come to town as He had, or to accept men's praise, or to take over the temple. If the nation's highest spiritual leadership had not authorized Jesus, who had? That was the issue. It was the issue of authority, both Jesus' innate authority, and His delegated authority. . .

The issue was broader than Jesus, for John the Baptist had introduced Jesus to Israel as the Messiah. If the Jerusalem leaders were going to pronounce on Jesus' authority, they would also have to deal with John's, for if John was a divinely appointed prophet, a spokesman for God, then Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus forced His opponents to deal with the testimony of John before He would bear witness to Himself. Furthermore, if they refused to accept John's witness, then they surely would not receive Jesus, either. Let them declare themselves, then, on the authority of John. What authority did he have? Who sent him? If they would answer this question, then Jesus would answer theirs. . .

They dared not say what they really believed, and so they had to say nothing. Their answer was probably one of the most painful they had ever given, for they were forced to say, "We don't know." For those whose authority was based on their "knowing all," this was a kiss of death. How they must have choked on these words, "I don't know," especially when they were convinced that they did know. Since they refused to answer, Jesus did as well. How could they demand an answer when they would not answer either?

MacArthur: Rejecting the King's Authority

Maybe a simple way to understand the essence of this authority is to grasp two Greek words that can be translated "authority." The first one is *dunamis*, usually translated "power," it's the power from which the English word "dynamite" comes. *Dunamis* refers to the ability to do something, the ability to do it. The other word is *exousia*. *Exousia* is the word usually translated "authority" such as in this text where the word "authority" appears three times. This means the right to do something. To have all authority, then, is to have all power and all right to do everything and anything one wills to do. . .

Now you have to understand that this is, in a sense, just another huge offense to the Jews who are in leadership in Israel. They are distressed, first of all, that He attacks their theology, attacks their credibility. He unmasks them as hypocrites of the rankest kind. And now He gets physical with their very domain. And He teaches without any connection to any prior mentor or rabbi, and without credentials, and without ordination, which could only be given by the Sanhedrin. Such behavior is outrageous to start with, and such unauthorized behavior is doubly outrageous. . .

Now, you have to understand that the mounting hostility at this point is really immeasurable. He treats them all - and remember this, they lived to be elevated. They lived, these leaders did, to wear long robes, and tassels on their robes, and pretend holiness. They lived to fast in public, and put ashes on their head, and make their donations in the temple in full view of everyone while someone was blowing a trumpet to announce their arrival. They sought the chief seats in the high places, and to be elevated, and to be called "master" and "teacher" and "father," and all of those things.

It was all about elevating them, and Jesus literally treated them with the utter disdain. As far as He was concerned, they were non-existent. They had nothing to do with God. They had nothing to do with the kingdom of God. They had nothing to do with the true people of God. They were alien to the purposes of God and the life of God.

There's nothing more devastating and hard to swallow than being treated as if you don't matter when you think you really do. And you add all of the elements of this together and there is a

fury inside of them to the degree that their souls are literally on fire with the flames of hatred. And it's escalating rapidly, and it explodes in a conflagration of crucifixion on Friday. . .

That leads to the final point, the condemnation. The **confrontation** led to the **counter-question**, and finally the **condemnation**. This is one of those really sad, sad statements. "Jesus said to them, '*Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.*'" That is just tragic. Jesus is saying essentially, "Based on what you've done with the information you have, I'm not giving you anymore. It's over."

J C Ryle: The spirit which prompted this demand is too evident to be mistaken. These men hated and envied Christ. They saw His influence increasing. They saw their own power waning. They resolved, if possible, to stop the progress of this new teacher; and the point on which they made their assault was His authority. His mighty works they ought to have examined. His teaching they ought, in all fairness, to have compared with their own Scriptures. But they refused to take either one course or the other. They preferred to call in question His commission.

Every true-hearted Christian who tries to do good in the world, must make up his mind to be treated like his Master. He must never be surprised to find, that the self-righteous and the worldly-minded dislike His ways. The lawfulness of his proceedings will be constantly called in question. He will be regarded as meddlesome, disorderly, and self-conceited, a pestilent fellow, and a troubler of Israel. (**Acts 24:5; 1 Kings 18:17.**) Scripture-readers, district-visitors, lay-agents, and un-ordained missionaries, are specially liable to meet with such treatment. And worst of all they will often meet with enemies, where they ought to find friends.

Stevenson: I enjoy playing chess. There sometimes comes a point in a chess game where, no matter what you do, you are going to lose a piece. That is what happened here. They pondered their possible range of answers and came to the conclusion that, no matter what they said, it would be wrong. Notice that they are more interested in fighting Jesus and in holding onto their popularity than they are in learning the truth. The one thing that they do not do is to ask, "I wonder if John and Jesus are right in what they are saying?" Why? Why don't they see their need for the truth? It is because they have a vested interest in continuing in their unbelief. And so, they refuse to answer the question.

TEXT: Luke 20:9-18

TITLE: PARABLE OF THE WICKED TENANT FARMERS –
4 UNTHINKABLE ROLE REVERSALS

BIG IDEA:

THE JEWISH SPIRITUAL LEADERS HAVE SURRENDERED STEWARDSHIP OF GOD'S KINGDOM BECAUSE OF:

- **THEIR ATTEMPT TO USURP OWNERSHIP OF THE KINGDOM INSTEAD OF FUNCTIONING AS GOOD STEWARDS**
- **THEIR REJECTION AND MISTREATMENT OF GOD'S ENVOYS (DESPITE GOD'S PATIENT LOVE AND FORBEARANCE)**

4 UNTHINKABLE ROLE REVERSALS

INTRODUCTION:

There will be dire consequences for those who reject God's authority and attempt to live independently from His sovereign rule. The Jewish nation had been carefully and lovingly cultivated as God's choice vine. The religious leaders were privileged to receive numerous prophetic warnings leading up to the culmination of God's revelation in John the Baptist who served as the forerunner to God's only beloved Son – the living Word. Yet they consistently failed to humble themselves and submit to God's authority. The patience and forbearance of God has been stretched beyond any imaginable limits. The day of reckoning is upon them. This is their last chance to respond with respect and obedience to the Promised Messiah.

Geldenhuys: He shows His enemies that He is fully aware of their murderous plans against Him and warns them that if they should carry out those plans an awful fate is awaiting them. Moreover, the parable is also the answer to their previous question – He is acting on the authority of the Father who sent Him.

Steven Cole: Jesus told this parable for two main reasons. He wanted to encourage His faithful servants who get beat up and thrown out of the vineyard to keep on being faithful. He owns the vineyard and the main thing is for His servants to bear fruit for Him. Second, He told it to warn those who wrongly think that they own the vineyard that they do not. A day of reckoning is coming!

Deffinbaugh: Jesus is saying that He is the Son of God, that He comes in God's authority, that they will kill Him, and that God will not only destroy them, but He will give their leadership to the Gentiles.

I. (:9-15a) UNTHINKABLE ROLE REVERSAL = GOD'S ELECT NATION MISTREATS GOD'S ENVOYS INSTEAD OF RESPECTING THEM

“And He began to tell the people this parable:”

A. (:9b) Privilege of Kingdom Stewardship Over a Long Time Period

“A man planted a vineyard and rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.”

The rental was to be a percent of the harvest, not cash up front

Donald Miller: The figure of a vineyard was a familiar representation of Israel (see **Isa. 5:1-7; Jer. 12:10; Hosea 10:1; Ps. 80:8-13**). It suggested both God's choice, for a vineyard does not plant itself, and God's patient nurture of his people, inasmuch as a vineyard needs constant care. The fruit of obedience to his will is a legitimate demand on God's part.

Bruce Hurt: Who are the **vine-growers**? These are the religious leaders (cf "*the chief priests and the scribes with the elders*" who confronted Jesus in **Lk 20:1**) These mean are those who God had puts in charge of caring for His vineyard, the nation of Israel, especially providing for their spiritual nourishment, in the true way of God. Notice that these leaders are never called "owners" but serve only as stewards (including all their previous leaders - kings, priests and prophets) who were given responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the people of Israel.

B. (:10-15a) Persecution of God's Envoys Culminating in the Killing of God's Beloved Son

1. (:10) First Slave – Beat Him / Sent Away Empty-Handed

“And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order that they might give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.”

Jer. 25:4

Geldenhuys: The servants who were sent to fetch the fruit of the vineyard represent the various prophets and other messengers of God in Old Testament days who from time to time were sent to the Jewish people and were but too often ill-treated and rejected by the Jewish leaders (cf. **Jer. vii. 25, xxv. 4; Amos iii. 7; Zech. i. 6**).

2. (:11) Second Slave – Beat Him / Treated Shamefully / Sent Away Empty-Handed

“And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed.”

Each slave is mistreated progressively worse than the preceding one

Lenski: As Jesus recites these points in the parable he is looking these very vine-growers squarely in the eye, and they know that Jesus has them in mind. The situation is dramatic in the extreme. The fact that no human lessor of a vineyard ever did a thing such as that which is depicted here brings out the full enormity of the reality of which these Sanhedrists were guilty. The patience of God toward Israel's rulers is without parallel in all human history – an illustration must be invented to picture it, and that illustration must be unreal.

3. (:12) Third Slave – Wounded and Cast Out

“And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.”

Alfred Plummer: The uniform hostility of kings, priests, and people to the Prophets is one of the most remarkable features in history of the Jews. The amount of hostility varied, and it expressed itself in different ways, on the whole increasing in intensity; but it was always there. Deeply as the Jews lamented the cessation of Prophets after the death of Malachi, they generally opposed them, as long as they were granted to them. Till the gift was withdrawn, they seemed to have had

little pride in this exceptional grace shown to the nation, and little appreciation of it or thankfulness for it.

4. (:13-15a) Beloved Son – Rejected and Killed Him

a. (:13) Sending the Most Precious Envoy

*“And the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do?
I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’”*

Geldenhuys: In this verse the Messianic consciousness of Jesus is expressed very clearly. In these words He declares plainly that, while He is a divine Messenger and One who acts on God’s authority, He is quite different from all the other divine messengers, as, e.g., the prophets. He is altogether unique – the beloved Son of the Father. In addition, He is the very last One to come to the people, and indeed to the whole world. After His coming no higher revelation and no mightier manifestation of God’s love is to be expected. Through His coming to the people they (and especially the leaders) have now their last chance.

b. (:14) Scheming From the Depths of Depravity

“But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, ‘This is the heir; let us kill him that the inheritance may be ours.’”

c. (:15a) Sealing Their Destiny by Rejecting and Killing God’s Beloved Son

“And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.”

Lenski: They first threw him out outside the vineyard. This agrees too closely with the place where Jesus was put to death, **John 19:17; Heb. 13:12, 13**, “*without the gate*,” “*without the camp*,” to be a meaningless feature of the parable, compare **1 Kings 2:13; Acts 7:58**. Jesus died on Calvary, outside of Jerusalem, “cut off in the intention of those who put him to death from the people of God and from all share in their blessings.” **Trench.**

II. (15b - 16) UNTHINKABLE ROLE REVERSAL = GENTILES GAINING KINGDOM STATUS INSTEAD OF THE JEWS

A. (:15b) Role Reversal Deserved

“What, therefore, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?”

B. (:16a) Role Reversal Executed

“He will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others.”

Anyabwile: No one can safely reject the Father’s prophets or the Father’s Son, Jesus Christ. “*How will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?*” (**Heb 2:3**). We will not. We will be destroyed.

MacArthur: But now our Lord says, “Not only will this generation be destroyed, but the custodianship of Israel will pass from the hands of these apostate, untrue, unfaithful, Messiah-rejecting leaders to others.”

Here is this nondescript little collection of weak-faithed men, many as seven of them, perhaps, fishermen, unskilled, untrained, unimportant by the world’s standard, and certainly by Israel’s religious measurement. And they are the new leaders of God’s vineyard, the new vine-growers,

the new stewards, the new custodians of a new people of God. And at the end, you remember, of Matthew, when our Lord gives them their final commission, the eleven are in Galilee and they see Jesus, **verse 17**, “*they worshiped Him; some were still doubtful.*”

Jesus ended all doubt when He came up and spoke to them and He said this, “*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.*” You are the ones. You go. You “*make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” You go. You're My representatives. You're the new tenant farmers, the new contract workers, the new vine-growers in My vineyard.

This is the stewardship that was given to the apostles and the apostles were faithful to it. The apostle Paul himself, added to the original group, was a steward of the mysteries of God. **First Corinthians 4**, he said he is a steward. “*Consider me as a steward of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.*”

So the work of God in building up the body of Christ through evangelism and edification is given to a new stewardship. It is those who start with the apostles, and then the New Testament prophets, and then come the evangelists, and teaching pastors, who build their teaching in their ministry on what was revealed to those early apostles and the associates of the apostles who wrote the New Testament.

C. (:16b) Role Reversal Unthinkable

“And when they heard it, they said, ‘May it never be!’”

Morris: To Jesus’ enemies it was unthinkable that the privileges of the Jews as God’s chosen people could under any circumstances be given to the Gentiles. They interject, *God forbid!* (the only occurrence of this strong expression anywhere in the New Testament outside the Pauline writings). The words express their sense of outrage and horror as they break in, in the manner of the listeners in **19:25**.

III. (:17) UNTHINKABLE ROLE REVERSAL = JESUS BECOMING PREEMINENT AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH INSTEAD OF REJECTED BY THE NATION OF ISRAEL – IMAGE OF CHIEF CORNER STONE VS. REJECTED STONE

A. Prophetic Anticipation

“But He looked at them and said, ‘What then is this that is written’”

B. Rejection of the Messiah

“The stone which the builders rejected,”

C. Preeminence of the Messiah

“This became the chief corner stone’?”

Anyabwile: A cornerstone is used in constructing a build to make sure the foundation is square and level. If the cornerstone is off, the entire building will be off, so this one stone is essential to the entire structure.

IV. (:18) UNTHINKABLE ROLE REVERSAL = CHIEF CORNER-STONE NOW BECOMES STONE OF DESTRUCTION– IMAGE OF FALLING ON STONE OR STONE FALLING ON SOMEONE

A. Broken to Pieces

“Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces;”

Deffinbaugh: The Son who is rejected and put to death is the Son of God who will rise from the dead, and who will someday return to the earth to establish His kingdom. The Son is on the one hand, a “*stone of stumbling*,” a cause of stumbling to the Jews. This was our Lord’s role at that moment in time. In a “passive” way (the stone didn’t move, men stumbled over it) Jesus was a stumbling block to men who refused to acknowledge their sin and their need of a Savior. But this passive “*stone of stumbling*,” whom the builders (the leaders of the nation) rejected, will also be an active agent in their destruction. Now, He is viewed as a moving stone, a falling stone that crushes and grinds His enemies.

B. Pulverized

“but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

Steven Cole: **Verse 18** means that if you pit yourself against the chief cornerstone, you will lose and He will win every time. A Jewish proverb put it, “If the stone falls on the pot, alas for the pot; if the pot falls on the stone, alas for the pot!” (Midrash Esther 3:6). Either way, the pot loses and the stone wins!

Morris: To fall on the stone or have the stone fall on one in either case means destruction.

Anyabwile: If we fall on that stone (by rejecting him) or that stone falls on us (in condemnation), then we will be “broken to pieces” or it “will shatter” us (**v. 18**). If we reject Jesus Christ when he offers himself to us in the gospel, we break ourselves. If his condemnation falls on us, it crushes us.

Geldenhuis: As a blind man who stumbles and falls over a stone and injures himself against it, so those who through their unbelief and falseness of heart are spiritually blind will find Jesus, as it were, a stumbling-block in their path and so in a spiritual sense they will fall and come to grief. Even in the ordinary course of life this will happen to those who do not believe in Jesus. But whosoever persists in the state of unbelief until the time of grace is expired will be completely crushed by the judgment of God, carried out by the Son – and be pulverized like one on whom a tremendous rock crashes down.

When the terrible judgments of God visited the Jewish leaders and the unbelieving section of the people in Palestine during the Roman-Jewish war, the words of Jesus in **verses 17 and 18** came true. But only at His second advent will their final fulfilment take place – and that for everyone (from whatever race or station he may be) who has not rendered Him faith and obedience as the Son of God.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does the uncertainty regarding the timing of the return of Christ affect the level of intensity and the faithfulness of our service?
- 2) How could we be better stewards of the kingdom of God?
- 3) How do we value Jesus Christ as the chief cornerstone?
- 4) How does the patience and forbearance of God impact our evangelistic efforts?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The story is a rehearsal of the history of God's dealing with his people. The tenants are the leaders of Israel, who had the spiritual life of the people in their charge. The servants who are sent in succession are the prophets. The fact that judgment did not come at the initial rejection is a clear reflection of the patience and love of God for his people. This is underlined by the fact that God then did what no human owner would have done – sent his “*beloved son*” in the hope that the tenants might respond to him (**vs. 13**). The expression clearly refers to Jesus (see **3:22; 9:35**). The love of God surpasses all human calculation and knowledge. It is difficult to know in what sense the tenants thought the “inheritance” was to pass to them if the son were killed (**vs. 14**). This may reflect the very essence of sin, which according to **Genesis 3:5** is man's desire to be “like God,” in the sense of being independent of him by refusing to live under his sovereign will. . .

The destruction of the tenants means that the vineyard will be given to others (**vs. 16**). The rebellion of Israel does not thwart the purpose of God. It will go forward through the Gentiles, who are also the objects of God's grace (see **Isa. 42:6; 49:6; Rom. 9-11**). This drew from the people the spontaneous expression, “*God forbid!*” (**vs. 16**). To them it was unthinkable that the purpose of God could be transferred to any people other than the Jews. Jesus, therefore, drew upon **Psalms 118:22**, a Messianic Psalm, implying that he was the stone which the builders of Israel would reject, but that God would make him the cornerstone of a New Israel, the Church (see **Acts 4:11; 1 Cor. 3:16; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4-8**). Even if Israel rejected their Messiah, the purpose of God would be fulfilled, and Jesus' authority would remain. The Son who came to offer himself on the altar of God's love also gave some terrible warnings (**vs. 18**). The smoldering heap of ruins which was Jerusalem in A.D. 70 testified to the fact that the warning here was more than mere words.

Steven Cole: To follow up the challenge of the Jewish leaders to Jesus about the source of His authority, He tells a parable about some wicked tenants of a vineyard, who had wrongfully assumed ownership of that which was not their own. It is one of only three parables that occur in all three synoptic gospels (the sower and the mustard seed are the other two). The parable answers the question that the leaders had just asked Jesus: “By what authority are you doing these things?” If God owns the vineyard and Jesus is the Son and rightful heir to it, then He is acting under God's authority. The Jewish leaders have wrongfully usurped the authority of God, the rightful owner.

Thus the fundamental question that not only these Jewish leaders, but also all who hear the parable, need to answer is, “Who owns the vineyard?” Keeping in mind the answer to that question will determine how we live.

Since God owns the vineyard, we must live accountably to Him. . .

1. God expects fruit from His people.

Why go to the bother of planting a vineyard if you don’t expect fruit? It was a common arrangement for an owner to rent out his vineyard to tenant farmers who would pay him a percentage of the crop each year. So, at the proper time, the owner rightfully sent a servant to collect what the farmers owed him. . .

2. God’s great patience, seen in His repeated, gracious messengers should motivate us to live accountably to Him.

At this point, the parable is not at all like real life. These wicked tenant farmers rough up and send away empty-handed the first servant that the owner sends. Any human owner would not have tolerated that. Any sensible businessman immediately would have thrown these bums out, prosecuted them legally for their negligence and abuse, and replaced them with tenants who would be more faithful in managing his vineyard. . .

Jesus is showing us the unreasonable, illogical, supra-human patience of our gracious God. He sent His prophets to Israel over and over again, looking for fruit. But the disobedient nation ignored, mistreated, and even killed some of these faithful servants. Yet in spite of this, God kept sending them, over and over again, as a demonstration of His abundant patience and grace.

The history of Israel reveals the tragic wickedness of the human heart. No people were as privileged by God as that covenant nation, and yet repeatedly they turned away from God. While Moses was on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments, Israel was in the valley below carousing in front of the golden calf. Time and again they grumbled against God in the wilderness. When they moved into the promised land, instead of living separately from the pagan nations around them, they imitated their idolatry and immorality.

Yet where sin abounded, God’s grace super-abounded (**Rom. 5:20**). Far beyond any human expectations, God patiently sent prophet after prophet to warn His people to turn from their sins.

3. God’s great love, seen in sending His beloved Son, should motivate us to live accountably to Him.

The owner had one more to send, his beloved son. He said, “*What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him*” (**20:13**). Again, at this point the parable is not true to reality. In reality, God doesn’t wonder about what to do or about what will happen if He does it. Both the Father and, as the next verse shows, Jesus the Son, knew that He would be rejected and killed. It was no surprise. But in telling the story, Jesus brings out the vineyard owner’s “quandary” to show both the depth of God’s amazing love and the intractable wickedness of the human heart. The Father’s love is so great that He was willing to send His beloved Son after His servants had been so abused. The depravity of the human heart is seen in those who would not only disregard the son, but kill him for their own selfish ends.

Note also Jesus' implicit claim here, that He stands apart from the other servants whom God had sent. They were servants, but He is the beloved Son. He is uniquely God's Son, of the same substance with the Father, one with Him and intimately related to Him in a way that no one else is. Jesus is God in human flesh. . .

4. God's righteous judgment on those who reject His Son should motivate us to live accountably to Him.

This parable illustrates what Paul exclaims in **Romans 11:22**, "*Behold then the kindness and severity of God.*" God's kindness is seen in His sending far more servants to rebellious Israel than she deserved. His severity is seen when these wicked tenant farmers killed the son. Jesus is God's final messenger, the sum of His revelation to sinful man. If we reject Him, there is no further remedy. Only judgment lies ahead.

Jesus pronounces the judgment that the owner of the vineyard "*will come and destroy these vine-growers and will give the vineyard to others*" (**20:16**). That thought prompts the people to exclaim, "May it never be!" It shocked them to think of such a terrible thing! That judgment took place in A.D. 70, when the Roman general Titus destroyed the city and the Jews were scattered. They lost their place of privilege as God's covenant nation. God grafted in the Gentiles to accomplish His purpose "*until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in*" (**Rom. 11:25**). As Paul points out, we should not boast, but fear, or God could remove us and use some other group to fulfill His purpose (**Rom. 11:17-22**). The point is, if we who profess to be God's people live selfishly and do not bear fruit in His vineyard, He will set us aside and raise up others.

We need to apply this not just to the church "out there," but also to ourselves. We miss the point if we think that this parable was given to pagans. It was given to men who professed to know God, to national religious leaders. But they wrongly thought that *they* owned the vineyard. They thought that it was *their* ministry. They were using it for their own selfish purposes. As a result, they rejected Jesus' rightful place as the owner of the vineyard. . .

5. God's certain, final triumph in Christ should motivate us to live accountably to Him.

Our sin can never thwart the sovereign purposes of God. Jesus cites **Psalms 118**, from which the "Hosannas" of the multitude on Palm Sunday were taken, to show these wicked Jewish leaders that even if they kill the Messiah, God would reverse their sinful choice and make Him the chief cornerstone. (The word can also mean "capstone." It's difficult to determine which is intended.) These men thought they could get rid of the owner's son once and for all by killing him. Little did they know—although they should have, since it was predicted in this psalm over 1,000 years before—that God would raise up His Son and install Him in the chief place of honor that He deserves. . .

It's a great comfort to know that human sin can never thwart the sovereignty of God. We are responsible for our sin, yet God sovereignly ordains everything that comes to pass and rightfully judges those who do not submit to His purposes. Proud men take their stand against the Lord and His Christ, but God scoffs at them (**Ps. 2:1-4**). These wicked tenant farmers could kill the son, but God would raise him up to be the chief cornerstone, just as His Word prophesied.

God determined before the foundation of the world that Christ would die, yet those who

wickedly condemned and crucified Jesus in accord with God's sovereign plan are responsible (**Acts 2:23; 4:27-28**). God always triumphs; those who oppose Him always lose. That fact should motivate us to keep on bearing fruit in His vineyard, no matter how difficult it may be or how much opposition we face. God's side will win in the end.

The sad thing is, we can understand the truth and yet reject it. These men who heard this parable understood that Jesus spoke it against them (**20:19**). They knew that He was predicting God's judgment if they continued their course of action. Yet they persisted in seeking a way to seize Him. They feared the multitude; they should have feared God.

Kent Hughes: Did Team Sanhedrin get the message? Oh yes! They recognized a spiritual slam dunk when they saw one. They understood the parable/allegory and understood its implications. They knew it threatened the giving of the vineyard/Israel to new leadership. They understood Jesus' application of some famous Old Testament passages. They got it—but tragically they didn't believe it for a second....They set themselves to fulfill the parable to the letter—to throw him "*out of the vineyard and kill him*" (**Lk 20:15**). Golgotha, where Jesus was crucified, was outside the city (cf. **John 19:17; Hebrews 13:12, 13**).

Warren Wiersbe: When the rulers rejected John the Baptist, they sinned against the **Father** who sent Him. When they crucified Jesus, they sinned against the **Son**. Jesus had told them that they could sin against Him and still be forgiven, but when they sinned against the **Holy Spirit**, there could be no forgiveness (**Matt. 12:24-37**). Why? Because that was the end of God's witness to the nation. This is the so-called "unpardonable sin," and it was committed by the Jewish leaders when they finally rejected the witness of the Spirit of God through the Apostles. The evidence of their rejection was the stoning of Stephen (**Acts 7:51-60**). Then the Gospel went from the Jews to the Samaritans (**Acts 8**) and then to the Gentiles (**Acts 10**). In this parable (**Lk 20:9-19**), Jesus illustrated the insidious nature of sin: **the more we sin, the worse it becomes**. The tenants started off beating some of the servants and wounding others, but they ended up becoming murderers! The Jewish leaders *permitted* John the Baptist to be killed, they **asked** for Jesus to be crucified, and then **they themselves stoned** Stephen. They sinned against the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and that was the end of God's witness to them. It is a serious thing to reject the message of God and the messengers of God (see **John 12:35-43; Heb. 2:1-4**)

TEXT: Luke 20:19-26

TITLE: TRAP QUESTION REGARDING ULTIMATE LOYALTY

BIG IDEA:

OUR LEGITIMATE OBLIGATIONS TO CIVIL AUTHORITIES CAN'T TRUMP OUR SUPREME LOYALTY TO GOD

INTRODUCTION:

This is one of the classical Scripture passages dealing with the separation of church and state and what each contributes to the other realm in perfect harmony. Our society today sees numerous abuses on both sides:

- The state trying to usurp functions and loyalty due only to God
- Anarchists stirring up revolution in the name of “righteousness” while failing to yield rightful allegiance to the God-ordained governing authorities

How are we to navigate through the complexities of this important arena?

The enemies of Jesus have attacked his authority as being illegitimate and been blown away. Now they try to trump his authority by putting him in jeopardy with the Roman rulers. Jesus here gives a teaching that is so clear and irrefutable that He shuts the mouths of His scheming critics who are attempting to lead him down the pathway of insurrection to the Roman government. They imagine that they have posed the perfect trap question. But Jesus destroys their false binary option with a more comprehensive unified view of the relationship between church and state.

Deffinbaugh: There are two extremes to be avoided in our outlook on government. The first is to see government as the enemy of God, and to be always opposing ourselves to it. The other extreme is to view government too highly, as man’s salvation and security. It is all too easy to look to government for those things which only God can give. It is all too easy to turn from God to government. In our text, we see Israel’s leaders looking at Jesus, the Messiah, as the problem which they must be rid of, and a heathen government—Rome—as their deliverer. Just as Israel rejected God when they demanded a king, like the Gentiles (**1 Samuel 8**), so we reject God and look to government to save us.

I. (:19-20) SCHEMING TO SEIZE JESUS

A. (:19) Attempt to Capture Jesus

1. Urgency of the Opposition

“And the scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour.”

2. Unnerved by His Popularity

“and they feared the people;”

3. Understanding Jesus’ Indictment of Them

“for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.”

Deffinbaugh: It seems to me that the leaders actually tried to place Jesus under arrest, and that this provoked a strong reaction from the people, forcing the leaders to back off, and to develop a

strategy that would facilitate a more “discrete” arrest and crucifixion. The game plan is most clearly spelled out by Luke.

The direct challenge of Israel’s leaders, as to Jesus’ authority, had backfired, bringing embarrassment to them. So, too, it would seem, their attempt to arrest Jesus publicly had failed. The motivation of the leaders was clear: they had been “put down” by Jesus, and they intended to get even. They were intent on getting back for the words He had spoken against them (v. 19). Before, they had purposed to put Jesus to death because of the threat He posed (19:47), but now it was more—it was a personal vendetta.

B. (:20) Attempt to Discredit Jesus

1. Surveillance

“And they watched Him,”

2. Spies Under Disguise

“and sent spies who pretended to be righteous,”

3. Strategy

“in order that they might catch Him in some statement,”

4. Sinister Scheme

“so as to deliver Him up to the rule and the authority of the governor.”

Geldenhuis: The deadly nature of this new attack launched against Jesus becomes clear from the fact that, in order to carry it out, the Pharisees act in unison with the Herodians in an unholy alliance (**Mark xii. 13**), so that the two parties, as a rule bitterly hostile to each other, are temporarily united in the conspiracy to destroy their common foe (cf. also **Mark iii. 6**).

Lenski: these disciples of the Pharisees are to pretend to conscientious scruples about the tax as though wondering whether they as righteous men ought to pay it; and the Herodians are sent along as witnesses whose word would go much farther with Pilate than would that of any disciples of the Pharisees.

II. (:21-25) TRAP QUESTION – REGARDING PAYING TAXES – REGARDING ULTIMATE LOYALTY

A. (:21-22) Asking the Question – Supreme Lordship of God or Caesar?

1. (:21) Insincere Flattery

“And they questioned Him, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.’”

Lenski: This elaborate preamble will certainly induce Jesus to live up to the estimate thus made of him: he will consider no man, not even Caesar in Rome, when he gives his answer. He will speak without the least reserve to men who think of him so highly. And he is thus assured in advance that, whatever men like the Sanhedrists would do, the men who are not speaking to Jesus will prize his answer and will thank him for it with all their hearts. The scheme was certainly beautifully devilish.

MacArthur: And there are two reasons they talk the way they talk. One, they want to elevate Jesus in His own mind to make Him feel proud so that He’ll try to act in a way that’s consistent

with what they've said. Secondly, they want to show that they agree with the people because this is how the people thought about Him. "*Teacher -*" people thought He was a teacher, and an astute one at that "*- we know you speak and teach correctly.*" That was the popular view. You're getting the popular view right here. They're telling us what conventional wisdom was, what the people thought. "*You teach and speak correctly. You're not partial to anyone, but teach the way of God in truth.*"

Hughes: Their strategy was perfumed with **flattery**. Flattery is the reverse mirror-image of gossip. Gossip involves saying behind a person's back what you would never say to his face. Flattery is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind his back. How ingratiating their language was—like puffs from a perfume bottle: (squeeze) "Teacher, you're always right." (squeeze) "Preacher, you don't play favorites. You show us the true way." How sweet it seemed!" Like politicians, preachers are peculiarly susceptible to flattery. It is a professional titillation. A preacher, extravagantly flattered by a fawning parishioner, responds, "What you say is very kind, and of course, untrue. But tell me more about your thoughts ..." Of course, Jesus, the Preacher, smelled it for what it was—the stench of duplicity. Jesus well knew the wisdom of the Word: "*a flattering mouth works ruin*" (**Proverbs 26:28**). "*Whoever flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his feet*" (**Proverbs 29:5**). "*May the LORD cut off all flattering lips*" (**Psalms 12:3**).

2. (:22) Illogical Binary

"Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

This is not an either/or situation

Donald Miller: the spies sought to place Jesus in a dilemma, so that he would be condemned whichever way he replied (**vs. 22**). If Jesus approved paying the tax, he would incur the disfavor of the people by appearing to be unconcerned about the burden Rome had placed on them, as well as indifferent to God's Lordship as supreme over that of Caesar. On the other hand, if Jesus denied the lawfulness of paying the Roman tax, he could be reported to Pilate, who dealt summarily with such people.

Geldenhuys: So the object of their question was (**verse 20**) to compel Him to give an answer that would enable them to accuse Him to the Romans of incitement to insurrection. That such was indeed their aim, also appears from the fact that at Jesus' trial they did not shrink from bringing this accusation against Him falsely before Pilate, that He "*perverted the people and forbade them to give tribute to Caesar*" (**xxiii. 2**), notwithstanding that He had taught the very opposite.

Wuest: This payment [poll tax] was objectionable to them for two reasons, first, because it was a sign of subjection to a foreign power, and second, because the coin with which it was to be paid, the denarius, bore the Emperor's effigy stamped upon it. And this Emperor, it was Roman law to worship as a god. The compulsory use of the denarius could not but increase the scruples of patriotic and religious Jews.

B. (:23-25) Answering the Question – Legitimacy of Both Church and State

1. (:23) Perception of Their Motivation

"But He detected their trickery and said to them,"

Morris: "*their craftiness*" – (*panourgia* carries overtones of unscrupulousness, "*readiness to do*

anything”, AG).

Jesus sees right through them; He knows their hearts (**John 2:25**) and inner motivations. He can detect the trap they are trying to spring on Him.

2. (:24) Presentation of Object Lesson

*“Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?”
And they said, ‘Caesar’s.’”*

Anyabwile: The Lord is not an anarchist. We can never justify disobedience to civil authority with appeals to Jesus.

Deffinbaugh: Finally, this would indicate that while tax monies may belong to government, people belong to God. It is one thing for governments to (rightly) require men to owe them taxes, but it is another thing altogether when governments think they also have the right to own people. This is only the prerogative of God, and not of government. Money bears the image and the words of rulers, men bear the image and the Word of God. Men are created in God’s image, and those who have come to a personal faith in Him have His word written on their hearts (cf. **Jeremiah 31:33**).

3. (:25) Proclamation of Main Principle

*“And He said to them, ‘Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,
and to God the things that are God’s.’”*

Donald Miller: Although the Zealots based their tax resistance on religious grounds, there is little doubt that economic motives entered into it also. Jesus, therefore, was suggesting that one should not confuse the claims of Mammon with those of God. Furthermore, the resistance to Roman taxation was based on a political conception of the Kingdom of God. The Zealots – and even the Pharisees, who were not so extreme in their views – equated the coming of the Kingdom with freedom from Rome. Jesus was here intimating that the Kingdom did not depend on political deliverance from Rome. They could offer to God their whole loyalty within the framework of the Roman government. Deliverance was there through a Messiah who was not to battle against Rome, but was to surrender himself to the suffering of the Cross, and thus call to himself a new People who would see that the Kingdom had come in his deliverance from sin and death.

Morris: It left no room for an accusation of disloyalty to Caesar, but also stressed loyalty to God. Jesus is saying that a man is a citizen of heaven and of earth at the same time. This does not mean dividing life into compartments, as though the duties of either citizenship could be discharged without reference to those of the other. It means that man has more than one loyalty and that he can neglect neither. The State must be respected and its directions complied with in its own proper sphere. It follows that the State rightly collects taxes to discharge its functions. . . The Christian’s first and overriding loyalty is to God. This does not justify him in renouncing his loyalty to Caesar, but it does mean that he must always bear in mind that the most significant area of life does not belong to Caesar. If Caesar strays into that area he can command no loyalty.

Deffinbaugh: he gave Him two choices, one of which He must choose, but He refused, telling them, in essence, that both choices were true. One must give government its due, which includes taxes. One must give God His due, which is our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. And these

two obligations often are not in conflict, as the questioners seemed to assume.

II. (:26) SILENCING THE SCHEMERS

A. Frustrated

“And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people;”

Lenski: The vicious intent was completely frustrated.

B. Fascinated

“and marveling at His answer,”

They were astonished that Jesus could so expertly navigate their trap and avoid any entanglement.

C. Finished

“they became silent.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What was the strategy of these religious leaders to employ trick questions?
- 2) Can flattery ever be used to accomplish righteous purposes?
- 3) What are the implications of the fact that we bear the image of God?
- 4) What degree of involvement should Christians have in the political realm – especially in trying to implement God’s righteousness in a secular society?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuis: He asks them the simple question: “Whose image and superscription are on the coin?” After their acknowledgment that it is Caesar’s, the following two facts are vividly brought to light through Jesus’ masterly handling of the situation:

- (1) Coins with Caesar’s image and superscription are in use among the Jews;
- (2) The coins are evidently the property of Caesar, otherwise they would not have borne his image and superscription.

From these two facts it thus follows that the Jews had accepted the imperial rule as a practical reality, for it was the generally current view that a ruler’s power extended as far as his coins were in use. . .

In the last analysis the “*rendering unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s*” is in reality only a

subordinate part of the all-embracing obligation to “*render unto God the things which are God’s*”. Because obedience to the secular authority (in so far as it is not in conflict with the law of the Lord) is a command of God, the observance of it is in reality also a part of the obedience due to Him, the King of all kings and the Lord of all lords. Above all persons and all causes is God, and to Him alone divine reverence and final loyalty are due – this was what Jesus proclaimed throughout by word and act.

Lenski: Jesus acknowledges the state as a divine institution that is willed by God. His own conduct before Pilate exemplifies this fact, in particular his word recorded in **John 19:11**. His word about Caesar regards the state and our relation to it as a separate domain, and the doctrine of the separation of church and state is thus the only legitimate conclusion that can be drawn from what he says. Yet church and state are not mere parallels and equals. Our obligations to God are the whole life, those to the state one part of this whole. Whereas church and state are separate in the way indicated, there is no gulf between them. They are not like two watertight compartments. The church will always put conscience, namely as it is governed by God, into our relations to the state (**Rom. 13:5**). The church constantly contributes this to the state. **Rom. 13:3, 4** makes plain what the state normally contributes and always ought to contribute to the church. Thus each aids the other, but the church aids in the higher way. When either seeks to control the other, usurps the functions of the other, havoc results for both as history bears witness.

Steven Cole: Guile, Government and God

We must avoid religious hypocrisy, submit to proper government authority, and submit to God above all.

Luke weaves together three themes: the danger of religious hypocrisy; the duty of submission to government authority; and, the higher duty of obedience to God, especially when He confronts our sin of acting as our own authority.

1. Religious hypocrisy is a dangerous and foolish sin that we all must guard against.

A. RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY IS A DANGEROUS SIN BECAUSE WE’RE ALL PRONE TO FALL INTO IT.

B. RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY IS A FOOLISH SIN BECAUSE JESUS ALWAYS SEES RIGHT THROUGH IT.

2. We must submit to proper government authority.

A. GOD ORDAINED CIVIL GOVERNMENT FOR THE GOOD OF SOCIETY.

(1). GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROMOTE JUSTICE FOR ALL.

(2). GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROMOTE PEACE AND ORDER IN SOCIETY AND BETWEEN SOCIETIES.

B. SINCE GOD ORDAINED GOVERNMENT, CHRISTIAN CITIZENS HAVE A NUMBER OF OBLIGATIONS TOWARD IT.

(1). CHRISTIANS SHOULD SUBMIT TO THE GOVERNMENT AND COOPERATE WITH IT WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

(2). CHRISTIANS SHOULD HONOR GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHEN

POSSIBLE.

- (3). CHRISTIANS SHOULD PAY THEIR REQUIRED TAXES.
- (4). CHRISTIANS SHOULD PRAY FOR GOVERNMENT LEADERS.
- (5). CHRISTIANS SHOULD EVANGELIZE AND DISCIPLE GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHEN OPPORTUNITIES ARISE.
- (6). CHRISTIANS SHOULD RESPECTFULLY CONFRONT GOVERNMENT LEADERS WHO ARE UNRIGHTEOUS.

Daniel appealed to Nebuchadnezzar to turn from his sins and to do rightly (**Dan. 4:27**). He strongly confronted Belshazzar for his spiritual and moral negligence (**5:18-28**). Many Old Testament prophets confronted sinful kings for their wrongs. John the Baptist exposed Herod's sin of taking his brother's wife (**Luke 3:19**). Paul spoke with Felix and his wife about "*righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come*" (**Acts 24:25**). Except for the Old Testament kings, none of the rulers just cited were believers or a part of the covenant nation. Yet in each case, God's spokesmen reminded these leaders that they would one day give an account to God for their evil deeds unless they repented.

Those who want to silence the church from speaking out on moral issues have carried the argument for the separation of church and state to ridiculous extremes. While I agree that the government should not establish any religion, that does not mean that Christian citizens should not speak out on moral issues that threaten the well-being of our society. We are called to be salt and light (**Matt. 5:13-16**) and to bear witness in this evil world. Sometimes that witness involves confronting sin before we share the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

- (7). CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN GOVERNMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR GIFTS AND CALLING.

C. HOW FAR SHOULD WE PUSH CHRISTIAN MORALITY IN A SECULAR SOCIETY?

- (1). EVANGELISM, NOT POLITICAL POWER, IS GOD'S PRIMARY MEANS OF DEALING WITH SOCIETY'S PROBLEMS.

But, for Christians to withdraw completely from the political process seems to me to deny that God uses Christians and the institution of secular government to restrain evil. Thus I urge involvement according to one's gifts and calling as long as the person keeps the priority of the gospel at the heart of matters and remembers the limited value of political action.

- (2). IN THE POLITICAL ARENA, CHRISTIANS SHOULD MAJOR ON THE MAJORS, NOT ON MINOR ISSUES OR GRAY AREAS.
- (3). CHRISTIANS SHOULD ARGUE ISSUES IN THE PUBLIC ARENA ON THE BASIS OF SOCIAL MERIT APART FROM THE BIBLE.

Our secular society does not accept the Bible as God's standard for morality, and if we argue, "the Bible says," we will not be heard. But if we argue on the broader basis of wide social merit and commonly held values, then we can pass laws that protect the family and that promote overall well-being. You can argue against convenience abortion simply on the basis of protecting human life and having compassion for babies. You can argue against pornography because it degrades women. You can urge stiffer penalties on drunk drivers out of concern for public safety. As Christians, we have biblical reasons for each of these issues, but if we haul out the Bible to promote our view, we will be ignored.

(4). IN THE POLITICAL ARENA, A REASONABLE COMPROMISE THAT HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF PASSING IS BETTER THAN THE UNCOMPROMISED POSITION THAT PROBABLY WILL LOSE.

3. We must submit to God above all.

Deffinbaugh: The entire event oozes with HYPOCRISY.

Consider the following evidences of hypocrisy:

- In appearing to respect Jesus as a teacher, a man of truth.
- In appearing to desire to know the truth.
- In seeming to want to obey the government, but not being sure that they could or should, according to the Law. "Is it permissible? Will the law let me do this?"
- In appearing to have a problem with government, when the problem was Gentiles.
- In appearing to desire to give to God, rather than to government, but in previous parable not wanting to give God His due.
- In appearing to have God as a priority and government as secondary, when, in reality, they had chosen government over God, as would be most evident at the cross—"We have no king but Caesar" (**John 19:15**).

Carl Esbeck: the chief differences between the five types [of views of church-state relations] are easily summarized.

1) Strict separationists are alone in regarding religion as a private and individual phenomenon that should little influence public affairs and matters of state. Strict separationism is the only model unwilling to recognize ontological status in the law for churches and other religious organizations.

2) Pluralistic separationists reject the notion that the state is subject to and beneficiary of any "higher law," regarding such talk as civil religion, that is, a tendency toward self-righteous nationalism fueled by nativist religion. They view the modern nation-state as strictly a human invention, rather than an entity divinely instituted.

3) Institutional separationists maintain that an ultimate worldview transcends and unifies the state, and thus limits the state by holding it accountable to this "higher law." This overarching public philosophy is deemed properly theistic and is heavily influenced by Judeo-Christian thought, as is the history and tradition of all Western nations.

4) Nonpreferentialists would permit government to favor religion on a basis that does not prefer one religion over another. Thus, unlike the three separationist models, nonpreferentialists would allow the state to aid religion in general while not aiding those professing no religious belief.

5) Restorationists, finally, are the only type that would bind the state to a particular confession of faith and would assign civic officials limited duties in defense of the dominant religion.

<https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1170&context=facpubs>

TEXT: Luke 20:27-40

TITLE: WISDOM OF JESUS IN SILENCING THE SADDUCEES

BIG IDEA:

DOCTRINAL ERROR HAS PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES:

- **FAILURE TO APPLY GOD'S REVEALED TRUTH**
- **FAILURE TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S RESURRECTION POWER**

INTRODUCTION:

Most people today, even many Christians, find it popular to deny the practical value of doctrine and truth. They find truth divisive and unproductive and would prefer to water down everyone's convictions so that we can relate to one another around some type of minimalistic belief system. Jesus chose to attack doctrinal error because He understood the practical consequences of failing to apply God's truth.

He took this occasion to advocate for the doctrine of the resurrection and to expose the faulty thinking of His antagonists = the Sadducees:

- Rationalists dismiss any intervention of God by way of supernatural power
- The assumption that the future age will look like this present age in all respects is patently false
- The false confidence that entrance into the kingdom is based on ethnicity must be challenged
- The sufficiency and consistency of Scripture can be used effectively to refute heresy
- The wisdom of man is silenced in the presence of the majestic and all-encompassing wisdom of God

Bruce Hurt: This is the third group of religious leaders (those that made up the priestly party) who sought to trip Jesus with a trick question. First the "the chief priests (some of which were quite likely Sadducees) and the scribes with the elders" (Lk 20:1-8) Following the prophetic parable spoken against the Jewish religious leaders (Lk 20:9-19), we (Lk 20:20-26) we see the Herodians attempt to trip Jesus over a question of paying the poll tax to Rome. Now, we see the third attempt to trap Jesus, but this time it was the Sadducees. . .

Absurd is defined in English dictionaries as contrary to reason or propriety; obviously and flatly opposed to manifest truth; inconsistent with the plain dictates of common sense; logically contradictory; nonsensical; ridiculous; silly. Inconsistent with reason, inviting ridicule; manifestly false, ludicrous.

Mark's version of this interaction identifies **the two key errors of the Sadducees:**

"Are you not in error because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God?"
(Mark 12:24)

DOCTRINAL ERROR HAS PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES:

- **FAILURE TO APPLY GOD'S REVEALED TRUTH**
- **FAILURE TO EXPERIENCE GOD'S RESURRECTION POWER**

I. (:27-33) CONVOLUTED HYPOTHETICAL TRAP QUESTION - REGARDING MARRIAGE AND THE RESURRECTION

A. (:27) Examination by the Heretical Sadducees

“Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection),”

Donald Miller: The Sadducees, who were the priestly aristocracy, held only the Law – that is, the Five Books of Moses – to be authoritative. . . Moses had said nothing about the resurrection; therefore, to the Sadducees, it could not be true. If Jesus held to it along with the Pharisees, they could accuse him of conflict with Moses, the authoritative teacher of the Law, and of conflict with divine revelation. Furthermore, the Pharisaic belief in the resurrection could be reduced to absurdity by an example.

Morris: They are often said to have acknowledged as sacred scripture only the Pentateuch, but no evidence is cited for this and it seems highly improbable.

Stevenson: The Sadducees were the poster child for **modern rationalists** - A rationalist is someone who emphasizes observable facts and excludes metaphysical speculation about origins or ultimate causes. It is the reliance on one's own reason as the basis for establishment of religious truth. We all know rationalists or have heard of them (Plato, Socrates, Descartes, Spinoza, etc). Rationalism is the view that "regards reason as the chief source and test of knowledge" or "any view appealing to reason as a source of knowledge or justification."

B. (:28) Expository Scriptural Instruction – Quoting from Moses

“and they questioned Him, saying, ‘Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he is childless, his brother should take the wife and raise up offspring to his brother.’”

They start off with a reasonable and fairly easy to understand scriptural case study; but then they expand that situation many times over into a very convoluted hypothetical case study

Deffinbaugh: The question of the one bride and the seven brothers is not a search for the truth. The Sadducees do not expect, indeed, do not want, an answer. They hope to stump Jesus, and thus to demonstrate how “foolish” ideas of a resurrection from the dead are. The purpose of this question is not to “get Jesus into trouble,” but to further the dogma of this group. If Jesus, the most noted and unstoppable teacher alive, could be stumped by their question, then He would become (reluctantly) an endorsement for their view. . .

The main thing which Luke wants us to be aware of is that the Sadducees, who are pressing Jesus for an answer concerning the resurrection do not really believe in it themselves. The hypocrisy of the Sadducees is thus apparent and undeniable. They were asking Jesus about something they didn't believe. Indeed, they were seeking to establish their premise that belief in a resurrection from the dead is both unbiblical and impractical.

C. (:29-33) Extrapolated Extreme Case Study – Trying to Prove the Absurdity of the Doctrine of the Resurrection

1. (:29-32) The Hypothetical Situation

*“Now there were seven brothers;
and the first took a wife, and died childless;
and the second and the third took her;*

*and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children.
Finally the woman died also.”*

Lenski: The logic presented in this case is intended to be a *reduction ad absurdum* for the defenders of the resurrection. This is done by means of a supposed dilemma, either horn of which offers an impossible, untenable, really ludicrous situation.

2. (:33) The Gotcha Question

*“In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will she be?
For all seven had her as wife.”*

II. (:34-38) CONCISE HISTORICAL TRUE ANSWER – THE REALITY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

A. (:34-36) The Significance of the Resurrection as it Relates to Marriage in the Future Age

1. (:34) Marriage Regulations Apply to This Age

“And Jesus said to them, ‘The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,’”

2. (:35) Marriage Regulations Do Not Apply to the Future Age

*“but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age
and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage;”*

Donald Miller: Jesus insists, however, that the resurrection world is not merely a perfecting of this world. It is another world different from this – God’s world, which is beyond our understanding (vss. 34-36).

Lenski: No replenishment is necessary in heaven. As the number of the angels was complete and fixed from the time of creation onward, so will that of the blessed in the resurrection and from that day onward be.

3. (:36) Transformation Via Resurrection

*“for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels,
and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.”*

Geldenhuys: The reason why the life of the resurrection will not merely be a continuation of ordinary human life, and why there will be no such thing as marriage in it, is that all the redeemed who share in the life of the resurrection will be immortal (thereby the necessity for the marriage relationship disappears inter alia because it is then no longer necessary to maintain the race by begetting offspring). And the reason for their immortality is that at the resurrection the redeemed are invested with glorified, heavenly bodies and will thus, as children of God have a real share in His divine nature.

Deffinbaugh: Jesus’ words should have provided the Sadducees with much fuel for thought. What were some of the other ways in which “that age” will differ from “this age”? How is it that only some Israelites will enter into that age, to take part in it (by inference), and what is it that causes one to be worthy of it? Jesus did not give the answers to these questions, but He did challenge His audience to think about them. All of the answers would be very clear, after His crucifixion and resurrection. For the time being, they only knew that those who enter into the

kingdom are referred to as “children”—“children of God” and “children of the resurrection.” Resurrection, then, is the gateway to the new age. Surely those who reject it will not enter into the kingdom.

B. (:37-38) The Reality of the Resurrection as it Relates to Present Accountability

1. (:37) Proof From the OT

“But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Lawrence Richards: This is a fascinating passage for any who are uncertain about the integrity and full authority of Scripture. It’s popular with some scholars to assume that the books attributed to Moses are a much later fiction: the name of a mythical Jewish hero, Moses, was attached in the 600 B.C.’s to give the editors’ invention credibility. With scissors and paste many modern scholars romp through the Old Testament, cut up the Pentateuch and Prophets, and assign this verse to one supposed set of authors, and that to another. How different from the way Jesus viewed the Scriptures. **According to Christ, it was Moses who spoke what is recorded in Exodus, and even a seemingly minor thing like the tense of a verb is authoritative.** Do the dead really live again? They live now! The God of the Old Testament is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, long after their biological deaths. On this issue of Scripture, I suspect it’s wiser to trust Jesus’ pronouncement than to trust the theories of the self-proclaimed wise men of our day. When we do so, we rejoice in the confidence that we too will live forever with Abraham’s and our God.

2. (:38) Practical Application

“Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to Him.”

Donald Miller: a strong affirmation of the resurrection of the dead, based on the very Scriptures which they had used to deny it – the writings of Moses, and not from some obscure, insignificant passage, but from the very fountainhead of God’s revelation to Moses at the burning bush (**vss. 37-38; Exod. 3:1-6**).

Morris: Our certainty of resurrection rests not on some speculative doctrine of the immortality of the soul, but on the fact of God’s eternal love.

J. C. Ryle: Let us anchor our own souls firmly on this great foundation truth, *“that we shall all rise again.”* Whatever ancient or modern Sadducees may say, let us believe firmly that we are not made like the beasts that perish, and that there shall be *“a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.”* (**Acts 24:15.**) The recollection of this truth will cheer us in the day of trial, and comfort us in the hour of death. We shall feel that though earthly prosperity fail us, there is a life to come where there is no change. We shall feel that though worms destroy our body, yet in the flesh we shall see God. (**Job 19:26.**) We shall not lie always in the grave. Our God is *“not a God of the dead, but of the living.”*

Geldenhuys: If these patriarchs were not immortal, God would never call Himself their God (such a thing would be unworthy of Him), for He is not a God of the dead, but of the living. His covenant relationship with these patriarchs is everlasting and also personal. From this it follows that after their death they are still living and will one day share in the life of the resurrection. Real life (in the Biblical sense) is life in soul and in body alike; therefore immortality (in the

Biblical sense) includes resurrection (the union of the soul with the glorified, “spiritual” body). The most important reason why the faithful continue to live after their corporeal death and will one day arise in perfection is that the chief object of human existence is to live for God and to His honour – and how could this object be attained if the faithful die for ever after a brief span of human life?

Lenski: that would make God “*God of dead men*” – an impossible thought. That would mean that death was not conquered; that death, which was holding its prey, was stronger than God; that redemption had failed and had left death still triumphant. But no the resurrection proves that God is “*God of living men.*” Death has suffered its deathblow. Redemption has not failed.

(:39-40) EPILOGUE – SILENCING THE SCRIBES WITH INSCRUTABLE WISDOM

A. (:39) Empty Praise

“And some of the scribes answered and said, ‘Teacher, You have spoken well.’”

B. (:40) End of Questioning

“For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.”

Bock: On the topics of ministry, politics, and theology, Jesus has prevailed. There is nothing else they wish to raise before him publicly. Each encounter has left Jesus in the position of knowledge and authority. Rather than continue to confront him, they must withdraw. Jesus is too much in control of himself and his theology, so they do not dare to ask any more questions. The effect of these encounters is clear: who can guide the people in God’s way, the Jewish leadership or Jesus? The wise teacher has confounded the leaders with his answers and has shown himself knowledgeable

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Where might we be in error in thinking that the afterlife will too closely reflect the patterns of life in this age?
- 2) How is our confidence in the integrity, authority and reliability of Scripture reinforced by the way in which Jesus uses Scripture here?
- 3) Are we living right now in light of the reality of our future resurrection?
- 4) Do we ask questions of Jesus that deny His goodness or the depths of His wisdom in orchestrating the details of our life?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Why You Should Care About Doctrine

We live in a day when doctrine has become an unpleasant word, even among evangelical

Christians. Admit it: When you hear the word “doctrine,” does it evoke positive or negative feelings in you? A person who holds strongly to doctrine is viewed as difficult and divisive. Often such people are arrogant, thinking that they are right and everyone else is wrong. They are not usually regarded as kind and loving.

The popular cry of our day is, “They will know that we are Christians by our love, not by our doctrinal agreement.” Thus we are encouraged to set aside all doctrines that divide us and come together on the basis of our common love for Jesus. Tolerance and unity are the most important thing. Look where doctrinal debates have led us, into centuries of shameful division among those who believe in Jesus Christ. Life, experience, and feelings are what matter. Theology is stuffy, dry, and dead.

The main problem with such thinking is that it brings us into direct conflict with Jesus Christ! Apparently, sound doctrine mattered a great deal to Jesus! It mattered because He knew that a person cannot hold to serious doctrinal error and be rightly related to the God of truth. It mattered because He knew that it is impossible truly to love a person who holds to serious doctrinal error if you do not warn him of his error and teach him the truth as revealed in God’s Word. Since sound doctrine mattered greatly to Jesus, it should matter greatly to us.

You should care about doctrine because Jesus did and because your life both here and hereafter depends on holding in faith to sound doctrine.

1. You should care about doctrine because Jesus did.

A. JESUS TAUGHT THAT THERE IS SUCH A THING AS DOCTRINAL TRUTH AND DOCTRINAL ERROR, AND THAT TRUTH MATTERS.

He didn’t say, “Hey, it really doesn’t matter what you guys believe, just as long as you’re sincere.” He didn’t say, “I love you guys! You’re my brothers, even if we disagree over this little matter of the resurrection!” He didn’t say, “I respect your views. Everyone is entitled to his own opinion.” He told them authoritatively that they were greatly mistaken and He set forth the reasons why. . .

B. JESUS SHOWS US THAT THE SOURCE OF SOUND DOCTRINE IS NOT HUMAN REASON, BUT SCRIPTURE PROPERLY INTERPRETED.

The Sadducees’ error was based on some wrong assumptions. They wrongly assumed that life after death would necessarily be just like life now. Thus they took the Mosaic allowance for a brother marrying his deceased brother’s widow to raise up offspring for him, and wrongly applied it to life in the resurrected state. They wrongly assumed that people will marry monogamously in heaven, just as they do now. Based on their assumptions, the idea of a woman having seven husbands in heaven was logically absurd. But their assumptions were wrong. . .

The Sadducees erred because they were rationalists. If something went beyond human reason, such as God’s power to raise the dead and give them a whole new existence, they didn’t accept it. Rationalism limits knowledge to man and the power of reason. Believing in God and His supernatural power is not irrational, but it is supra-rational. It transcends human reason. The way we know the truth of Scripture is first by being born from above by God’s power so that we come to know Him and then by submitting our reason and our will to God’s revelation in Scripture. We must hold to all that God’s Word reveals, even if it doesn’t fit with our finite

reasoning, or we will fall into serious doctrinal error. Rationalism undermines God's power; faith in His Word affirms it. . .

2. You should care about doctrine because your life here depends on holding in faith to sound doctrine.

A. YOU CANNOT BE IN SUBMISSION TO JESUS CHRIST AND KNOWINGLY HOLD TO FALSE DOCTRINE ON CORE MATTERS.

B. HOLDING TO FALSE DOCTRINE STEMS FROM SIN AND RESULTS IN SIN.

C. OUR MOTIVES FOR WANTING TO KNOW SOUND DOCTRINE ARE IMPORTANT.

3. You should care about doctrine because your life hereafter depends on holding in faith to sound doctrine.

Deffinbaugh: One Bride for Seven Brothers

If the Sadducees were wrong to think of the “*kingdom*” in “present terms,” they were also wrong to think that Moses did not believe in the resurrection. This our Lord goes about proving from the Pentateuch, which was the Word of God written by the hand of Moses. It was not enough for our Lord to prove the resurrection of the dead was taught in the Old Testament; He was intent on showing that Moses believed in it, for Moses was the one to whom they appealed. . .

Why did Luke choose to record this particular question and Jesus' answer, when we have not heard from the Sadducees before in Luke? I believe that that are at least two reasons: First, the Sadducees will become a more prominent and aggressive force in the book of Acts (cf. **Acts 4:1; 5:17; 23:6-8**). Second, the issue of the resurrection of the dead is one that is crucial to the gospel. Paul clearly taught this, as can be seen in the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Jesus staked His credibility and His gospel on His own resurrection (**Matthew 12:38-40**). The Holy Spirit will utilize the empty tomb as a powerful witness to the righteousness of Jesus Christ (**John 16:10**). The gospel of Jesus Christ stands or falls on the truth of Christ's resurrection, and thus the resurrection of all men. In introducing the Sadducees to us here, Luke is preparing us for their appearance and activity in his second volume, the book of Acts.

The resurrection of the dead is also crucial because it is the gateway to the future kingdom of God, it is the means through which God's promises made to those who have died will enter into the blessings which God promised. All of the Old Testament saints died, without having received the promised blessings of God, but by means of the resurrection of the dead, they will (cf. **Hebrews 11**).

The degree to which we believe in the resurrection of the dead will determine the way we presently live. If we are assured of our own resurrection, we will boldly stand for Christ, neither fearing man, nor death. If we are certain of a future life in God's kingdom, entered into by means of resurrection, then we will look at this life very differently. We will be encouraged to lay up treasures in heaven, rather than to hoard wealth on earth.

On the other hand, the degree to which we live obediently to the commands of our Lord in this life, the more we will cling to His promises concerning the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. The commands of our Lord to “*sell our possessions, and to give to the poor*” can now be seen as God's gracious imperatives, designed to stimulate in us a hunger for heaven. Notice how

the obedience of Paul to his calling, and even the afflictions and adversities of his life caused him to have a greater hunger and hope for heaven:

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you. 13 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. 16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:7-18).

It is quite easy to look at the Sadducees with a very critical eye. How foolish, we might think, for them to reject the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, when it is so clearly taught in the Scriptures. How evil for them to love this present evil world so much that they do not want that which is sure to come. But let me ask you, as I ask myself, how much do we believe in the resurrection of the dead? How does the certainty of our resurrection, and of the kingdom of God to come, impact our present lives?

MacArthur: The Savior Silences the Sadducees

So they had Scripture as well as their traditional ideas about resurrection life. It is commonly believed among the Jews throughout their history and certainly at the time of Jesus that there will be life after death, there will be life in the presence of God or out of the presence of God, and there will be a resurrection body, a resurrection unto life or unto contempt and disgrace. That is the background of the text before us.

Now, there were some dissenters to that view among the Jews. They were known as Sadducees. . . Now, this group was not an impressive Jewish sect by numbers. It was very small. But it was impressive in power. It is the aristocrats who were the Sadducees, the wealthy, the influential, the chief priests mentioned at the end of chapter 19, verse 47, mentioned at the beginning of chapter 20, the first few verses, chief priests were Sadducees, for the most part. . .

So Jesus straightens them out. Marriage is not for resurrection. Let's get that right. That eliminates the need for your question. But that's not the main answer. The main answer comes in verse 37 and it is a powerful answer. Listen to this. "But that the dead are raised," in other words, let's get back to the point. Forget the marriage thing, we settled that. "But that the dead are raised - " which is the big issue here. You say they're not. "Even Moses showed - " Wow, now He's coming at them in their own zone, right? In their own zone, because that's the issue. It's not in Moses. It can't be so. So He says, "Even Moses showed in - " literally " - in the bush - " in the text about the bush, the passage about the bush, the burning bush, Exodus 3. . .

This is devastating stuff. They're just done in. "Vanquished" would be a good word, crushed. They gave Him their best argument, their most tried and tested absurdity, and He dismantled them by telling them they didn't understand the Scripture or the power of God. He dismantled false views of resurrection held by their opponents that you're going to be married in the resurrection and the life there is going to be very much like life here. And then He really struck the final blow when He proved to them that Moses affirmed in His -- and not just Moses but God Himself in the record which Moses wrote - that He is the God of the living.

He had been confronted by the hate-filled religious leaders who want to discredit Him. Each has his own style and approach. He is unaffected by their paltry assaults. He only manifests greater glory, produces greater wonder, greater astonishment. And Luke says that was it. They didn't have courage to come and question Him any longer about anything.

What do we draw out of this text? It's like always in the gospel of Luke, what we draw out of this is the wonder of Christ, right? Staggering. Here's what I see. The **majestic wisdom of Jesus**. His wisdom allowed Him to control every conversation, every discussion, supernatural wisdom evident. The second thing I see is **devotion to Scripture**, rightly interpreted. And third thing, the **affirmation of the promise of resurrection**.

David Guzik: This passage has made many wonder if marriage relationships will exist in heaven, or if those who are husband and wife on earth will have no special relationship in heaven. We are not told enough about life in the world beyond to answer in great detail, but we can understand a few principles. Family relationships will still be known in life in the world beyond. The rich man Jesus described in the afterlife was aware of his family relationships (**Luke 16:27-28**). The glory of heaven will be a relationship and connection with God that surpasses anything else, including present family relationships (**Revelation 21:22-23**). If it seems that life in the resurrection that Jesus spoke of here does not include some of the pleasures of life we know on earth, it is only because the enjoyments and satisfactions of heaven far surpass what we know on earth. We can't be completely certain what life in glory beyond will be like, but we can know with certainty that no one will be disappointed with the arrangements (**Revelation 22:1-5**).

<http://www.plymouthchristiancentre.org/filerequest/2366>

Singleness is not God's plan B.

Too often, Christians assume that because marriage is important, singleness is either a plan B or it's a transitional state. When we listen to Jesus' teaching, we find that it is neither a plan B nor a transitional state. It is marriage that is temporary and transitory. Marriage is still good – but so is singleness.

Contented singleness, like contented marriage, finds its adequacy in Christ. Married people – we must not rely on our spouse to fulfil our hopes, which only Christ can fulfil. And singles who might marry, you must not rely on marriage to fulfil your hopes: only Christ can do that.

Tim Keller: "Without a deeply fulfilling love relationship with Christ now, and hope in a perfect love relationship with him in the future, married Christians will put too much pressure on their marriage to fulfil them, and that always creates pathology [or suffering] in their lives. But singles, too, must see the penultimate [impermanent] nature of marriage. If single Christians don't develop a deeply fulfilling love relationship with Jesus, they will put too much pressure on their dream of marriage, and that will create

pathology in their lives.” (Meaning)

The church needs both married and singles if we are to understand the glory of God’s gospel:

John Piper: “Marriage has its unique potential for magnifying Christ that singleness does not have. Singleness has its unique potential for magnifying Christ that marriage does not have. To God be the glory in the Christ-exalting drama of marriage and in the Christ-exalting drama of the single life.” (This Momentary Marriage)

In that age, according to the Bible, we will have glorious new resurrected bodies. We will have no unrighteous desires, no debilitating habits, no proud thoughts, no depressions, no besetting sins, no brokenness, no addictions, no selfishness. And all relationships in heaven will be glorious and on a whole different plane. We will be our sinless, perfected selves at our ultimate best! We will be like the angels in beauty and strength. Children of God. Children of the resurrection. The Sadducees don’t believe this. This, says Jesus, is how it will be.

This life is not all there is.

TEXT: Luke 20:41 – 21:4

TITLE: EXPOSURE OF HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS

BIG IDEA:

AVOID HYPOCRITICAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS BY RECOGNIZING:

- **THE CONTRADICTIONS IN THEIR THEOLOGY (ESPECIALLY ERRORS IN CHRISTOLOGY)**
- **THE PHONINESS OF THEIR MINISTRY**
- **THEIR EXPLOITATION OF POOR WIDOWS**

INTRODUCTION:

After answering all of their trick questions with His infinite wisdom, Christ goes on the offensive and asks the Jewish religious leaders a tough question of His own. He is about to pronounce judgment on the entire false religious system that centered around the mercenary practices and abuses of the temple worship in Jerusalem. So He first exposes the hypocrisy of these self-righteous and pretentious blind leaders of the blind.

I. (:41-44) JESUS EXPOSES THE HYPOCRITICAL THEOLOGY OF THE SCRIBES – REFUSAL TO SUBMIT TO THE DEITY OF THE SON OF DAVID, THE MESSIAH – CONTRADICTIONS IN THEOLOGY (ESPECIALLY ERRORS IN CHRISTOLOGY)

A. (:41) The Contradiction

“And He said to them, ‘How is it that they say the Christ is David's son?’”

Calling the Messiah David’s son while refusing to acknowledge and submit to His deity;
False teachers are going to have many contradictions in their theology

Steven Cole: So now Jesus questions them. He takes up the offense. His intent was to show His audience in the temple courtyard that neither they nor their teachers of the Law understood their own Scriptures. They rightly thought that Messiah would be the physical descendant of David, but they wrongly thought that he would be just a great man, a political Savior, who would bring in an age of peace and prosperity. Jesus wanted them to see that the Messiah (or Christ) would not only be David’s son, but also David’s Lord, God in human flesh. They needed a right view of Messiah so that they would not be deceived by false religion.

That false religion was embodied in the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders in Israel. The common people easily could be deceived into thinking that true spirituality was to be like these leaders. Outwardly, they impressed everyone with their spirituality. They dressed differently in “holy” garb. Everyone gave them respectful greetings in public. They sat at the front of the synagogues and in the seats of honor at public banquets. They could offer long prayers. They seemed far more spiritual than everyone else. And yet their hearts were far from God. They were full of pride, greed, and selfishness. Jesus exposes them and warns of the greater judgment that they would receive.

B. (:42-43) The Confession

“For David himself says in the book of Psalms, 'The Lord said to my LORD, 'Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.'””

Look at David's own testimony about the Messiah;
The Scriptures are the only reliable source for doctrine and theology; no contradiction in the Scriptures

MacArthur: Being placed under the feet of a ruler was not where you wanted to be because it really was a symbol of execution. Listen to **Joshua 10**. Five kings are brought to Joshua. **Verse 24**, *"It came about when they brought these kings out to Joshua, Joshua called for all the men of Israel, said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, 'Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings.' So they came near, put their feet on their necks."* **Verse 26**, *"So Joshua struck them and put them to death, hanged them on five trees."*

Everybody knew what it meant to make your enemies your footstool, to put your feet on your enemies' neck. This is Messianic. They knew the Messiah would come and destroy the enemies of God because that's what the Old Testament prophesied. How then, if this is Messianic, and the Messiah is to be David's son, can David call Him "Lord"?

C. (:44) The Clincher

"David therefore calls Him 'Lord,' and how is He his son?"

David clearly acknowledged and submitted to the deity of the Messiah

II. (:45-47) JESUS EXPOSES THE HYPOCRITICAL PRACTICES OF THE SCRIBES – REFUSAL TO FOLLOW THE MODEL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP – PHONINESS OF MINISTRY

(:45) Prologue

"And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples,"

A. (:46a) Summary Warning

"Beware of the scribes,"

MacArthur: How did Jesus deal with those who didn't believe the truth? How did Jesus deal with those who didn't believe the truth who were totally religious, who set spirituality at the pinnacle of human experience? How did Jesus deal with people in religion, religious leaders? Did He have a **conversation**? Or did He issue a **condemnation**? Because I just want to do what Jesus did. . .

It is a blistering denunciation, a blistering diatribe on the false religious leaders. No conversation, no collegiality, no dialogue, no cooperation; confrontation, condemnation. Without compassion? No. Remember **19:41**, when He came to the city, what did He do? He wept. And we just heard again that He declared to them that He is the Messiah, Son of David, Son of God. That is a merciful effort again to declare who He is. These days are full of sadness on His part, and full of compassion, as He gives invitation to them to believe. But when compassion is exhausted and invitations have ended, you have condemnation.

B. (:46b-47a) 6 Characteristics of Hypocritical Religious Leaders (Phony Ministry) Contrast with the Ministry of Jesus Christ

1. Elevated Stature

“who like to walk around in long robes,”

They want to be seen as special and distinct from the common people; the ultimate in clergy/laity distinction; unapproachable in terms of intimate fellowship and friendship because their status is so elevated

Christ: no special distinguishing garments; hung out with tax collectors and sinners

2. Popularity and Respect

“and love respectful greetings in the market places,”

Deference; want to be highly visible and acknowledged

3. Leadership Preeminence

“and chief seats in the synagogues,”

4. Power and Influence

“and places of honor at banquets,”

5. Greedy Exploitation

“who devour widows' houses,”

6. Pretentious Religious Practices

“and for appearance's sake offer long prayers;”

Christ: compare His teaching and example in prayer; all about the heart of religious practices (cf. Sermon on the Mount); instead of external show

Morris: Long robes were a sign of distinction and marked the wearers as gentlemen of leisure, for anyone who worked for his living would not be cumbered with such clothing. Public greetings and good places in synagogues and feasts were further ostentation marks of eminence coveted eagerly by the scribes. . . It was forbidden to scribes to accept money for teaching. They must, and did, make their knowledge available without charge. But there was nothing to stop people making gifts to teachers and this was regarded as meritorious. Evidently some of the scribes encouraged impressionable widows to make gifts beyond their means. A further count against them is that their prayers featured length rather than depth. Such prayers gave the illusion of piety, but as they were offered in pretence they availed nothing before God.

C. (:47b) Summary Judgment – Elevated Condemnation vs. Elevated Stature

“these will receive greater condemnation.”

Transition: In contrast to a long list of pretentious religious practices that could be cited to condemn religious hypocrisy, Jesus offers the simple story of the contrast between the giving of the rich person vs. the poor widow

III. (21:1-4) JESUS EXPOSES THE EXPLOITATION OF POOR WIDOWS

[Check out MacArthur's commentary on this passage and the notes from Bruce Hurt at <https://www.preceptaustin.org/luke-21-commentary>]

MacArthur feels Luke 21:1-4 is a continuation of the theme of judgment begun in Lk 20:47-note (and the parallel diatribe against the Scribes and Pharisees in Mt 23:1-36) which continues into the pericope in Lk 21:5-36. He makes the point (which is difficult to argue with) that this woman was giving to an apostate religious system that was set up to bilk people out of their money, explaining that she was not giving to God but to a religious system that had distorted God's Word by adding men's traditions.

[so I have been convinced to change my view on this passage away from the traditional position that almost all the commentators take]

A. (:1-2) Corrupt Religious System Funded by Both Rich and Poor

1. (:1) Rich Gave Much

“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.”

Jesus is not giving any commentary here on the motive or value of the gift – just recording what He is witnessing about the funding of this corrupt temple worship system.

2. (:2) Poor Widow Gave Just a Little

“And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins.”

Liefeld: the widow's “two very small copper coins” (*lepta*, vs. 2, the familiar “mites”) were each worth only a small fraction of a day's wage.

B. (:3-4) Corrupt Religious System Burdens the Poor More Than the Rich

1. (:3) Poor Widow Gave More Than the Rich

“And He said, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them;’”

Jesus was disturbed by what He saw. The giving especially was burdensome for this poor widow. How often do you see religious charlatans living luxuriously at the expense of a bunch of small gifts from a wide range of deceived follower who have been manipulated emotionally to contribute far more than they can afford to give.

2. (:4) Poor Widow Gave All She Had

*“for they all out of their surplus put into the offering;
but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Where do you see false teachers saying nice things about Christ without acknowledging and submitting to His Lordship?

- 2) What Christian leaders have you seen that were overly interested in receiving special perks and considerations rather than serving the flock?
- 3) What are some examples of pretentious religious practices?
- 4) What evidence do you find in the Scriptures for degrees of eternal punishment?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: The total Lordship of Jesus, over this world and the unseen world, over the living and the dead, over things present and things to come, was established through his resurrection from the dead (**Rom. 1:4; I Cor. 15:20-28; I Peter 3:21-22**). But to be raised from the dead, it was necessary for him to die. As Messiah who had come to die, therefore, he could not reign as a political deliverer, but must be humiliated, rejected, despised, condemned (see **9:22, 44-45; 17:25; 18:31-33; Isa. 53; Phil. 2:5-11**). It was this humiliation and lowliness, this failure to use political power to free them from the Romans, which led the Jews to reject his Messianic claims.

To show that such humiliation really did not speak against his Messiahship, Jesus referred them to **Psalms 110:1**, a verse which all interpreted as Messianic.

Steven Cole: True and False Religion

True religion is to know Christ as Lord; false religion is to be religious to impress people.

1. True religion is to know Christ as Lord (20:41-44).

At its essence, true Christianity is not a system of thought or morals, although Christians have a system of thought and morals. Nor is true Christianity an organization of people into churches, although every Christian should belong to a church. Neither is true Christianity having some sort of spiritual experience, although it must be experiential. The essence of true Christianity is to have a personal relationship with the living God through His Son Jesus Christ. In Jesus' words, "*This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*" (**John 17:3**). True Christianity is knowing Christ as Savior and Lord in daily life.

This involves two essentials:

A. KNOWING CHRIST AS LORD MEANS HAVING THE RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF HIS PERSON.

B. KNOWING CHRIST AS LORD MEANS HAVING THE RIGHT RESPONSE TO HIS PERSON.

2. False religion is being religious to impress people (20:45-47).

Note three things about false, hypocritical religion:

A. FALSE RELIGION IS ROOTED IN THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH.

B. FALSE RELIGION IS MANWARD IN FOCUS, NOT GODWARD.

C. FALSE RELIGION IS A DANGER TO BE AVOIDED BECAUSE IT CARRIES GREATER CONDEMNATION.

Deffinbaugh: David's Son

I believe that Jesus chose **Psalm 110** over all other available texts for several reasons:

- (1) Since the Messiah was commonly understood to be a "*son of David*," who could speak with more authority on his son than David?
- (2) The **110th Psalm** went far beyond the issue of Messiah's humanity and His deity, referring to His coming in power to overthrow His enemies. In addition to speaking of Jesus as Israel's King, it also taught that He would be her priest, of an entirely different order than the Aaronic priesthood. This must have been a rather disconcerting thought to the priests.
- (3) **Psalm 110** reveals the attitude of David, as Israel's leader, to the superiority of his Son. In ancient times, some kings killed their offspring, so that they could not take over their throne. Other kings would have taken great pride in their son, saying repeatedly, as it were, "That's my son!" David gratefully anticipated the day of his Son's enthronement, and he wrote a psalm of worship in response to God's revelation to him. David welcomed His Son's greatness, his superiority to himself.
- (4) **Psalm 110** confronts the Israelite with a very perplexing problem, a problem which is central and foundational to the Israelite leaders' rejection of Jesus as the Christ. The Psalm clearly teaches both the humanity of Messiah (a son of David) and His deity (David's Lord). This was the fundamental problem which the leaders of Israel had with Jesus. If you could sum up the grievance of the Jewish leaders with Jesus, I believe it would be this: **ALTHOUGH JESUS WAS MERELY A MAN (in the eyes of the Jews who rejected Him), HE HAD THE AUDACITY TO ACT LIKE GOD.**

MacArthur: [He takes an entirely different view of the story of the poor widow – Interesting, but I agree with the traditional interpretation.]

So, between the condemnation of the false leaders, and the pronouncement of judgment that will last and has lasted 2,000 years until Jesus comes, is this little vignette about a widow dropping two copper pennies into an offering receptacle in the temple. The question is: What does this have to do with anything? How does this fit? Why does Jesus inject this moment of reflection on a widow giving an offering in the temple into this section between a diatribe against false leaders and all the people that follow them and a pronouncement of judgment on the temple, on the city, and on the nation, and a judgment that will last until the Second Coming? **Why is this here?**

...

Let me put it this way. How would you feel? You're a person that loves the Lord, you're a person that loves your brother and cares about people and cares about their needs. How would you feel if you saw a destitute widow who only had two coins left to buy her food for her next meal give those two coins to a religious system? How would you feel? You would say, "Something is wrong with that system when that system takes the last two coins out of a widow's hand." That's what you would say and you would be right to say that. Giving your last two coins to a false religious system! How would you feel if you saw a destitute, impoverished person give to her religion her last hope for life to go home perhaps and die? You'd be sick. You'd feel

terrible. You would be repulsed. Any religion that is built on the back of the poor is a false religion. **What a sad, misguided, woeful, poor victimized lady.** It's tragic, painful. And I think that's exactly how Jesus saw it, exactly.

He saw that corrupt system taking the last two pennies out of a widow's pocket. In desperation, hoping that maybe in that legalistic system her two coins would buy some blessing, trying to be dutiful. The rabbis had said with alms you purchase your salvation; trying to buy your way into heaven, trying to buy relief from your desperation, your destitution. Contemporary quote-unquote "evangelists" call this seed faith. "Give me your money and God will multiply it back to you." **God doesn't want a widow to give up her last two cents.** You couldn't find that in the Bible any place. That's the last thing God would want a widow to do. . .

We would conclude that this woman was part of a system that took the last two cents out of her hand on the pretense that this was necessary to please God, to purchase her salvation and to bring her blessing. **She was manipulated by a religious system that was corrupt.** This is not an illustration of heartfelt, sacrificial giving that pleases the Lord, this is not a model for all of us to follow. Jesus never expects that, in fact He told a servant who had very little, you should have put your money in the bank and earned interest because you need that to meet your own physical needs.

Something very different is going on here. This is not about Jesus honoring giving. This is about a victim of a corrupt system who is literally made absolutely destitute trying to live up to that system and earn heaven. . .

What do you have here? You have a destitute widow then, one of them ones just discussed in verse 47. How could you not make that connection? Here is just a couple of sentences later an illustration of a poor widow who is being devoured by a religious system. Her last two cents, her life she gives to this system, dutifully, along with everybody else. Trying to live up to the system, trying to buy her salvation in an act of charity in a hope that it will earn her favor with God, she gives up her last two small copper coins, smallest coin, she dropped two of them in one of those thirteen shofars. That was all, nothing is said about her attitude, nothing is said about her spirit, nothing said about whether she did it in desperation or devotion, whether she did it in legalism or love, it doesn't say anything about that. The Lord doesn't commend her, doesn't make her an example, doesn't validate what she did, doesn't say it was a worthy spiritual act that greatly pleased Him. All He said was, **this religious system is preying on widows.** This cost her more than everyone else. She put in relatively, comparatively more than anyone. Yes, the religious leaders were devouring widows and the more desperate they became, the more they needed, they thought, to buy God's blessing. Belittled by the establishment because they were thought to be in that state because of divine punishment; second-class women, they were defenseless, easily exploited and the system exploited them to the max. Took the last two cents of that poor woman and it was all, the end of verse 4 says, she had to live on. It was literally her life. She'll go home and die.

This was my former thinking on the passage before studying MacArthur's view above; this is the traditional view found in almost every commentary on the passage

III. (21:1-4) CONTRAST OF GENUINE GENEROUS GIVING

A. (:1-2) Generosity Not Defined By How Much You Give

1. (:1) Rich Gave Much

“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.”

Do you realize that Jesus is watching your giving?

Steven Cole: Years ago, the well-known preacher, John Broadus wanted to impress on his congregation the fact that Jesus knows what we give. So one Sunday he came down off the platform and walked beside an usher as the offering was taken. The pastor went up every aisle and watched as each person either gave or passed the plate by. Some were angry; others were confused or ashamed. All were surprised. He went back to the pulpit and began his sermon on this story. He concluded, “My people, if you take it to heart that I have seen your offerings this day and know just what sacrifice you have made—and what sacrifice you have not made—remember that your Savior goes up the aisles with every usher and sees every cent contributed by His people” (“Our Daily Bread,” 5/77).

Deffinbaugh: It would seem to me that these four verses are placed here by Luke in contrast to the Pharisees, to show how God’s ways differ so greatly from those of men. The Pharisees loved riches, and they viewed wealth as an evidence of piety. God, in their minds, would be impressed by the wealthy, and would be especially pleased by the size of their contributions. . .

Finally, there is an implied contrast between the widow’s offering in verses 1-4 and the disciples’ admiration for the temple in verses 5 and following. Jesus was impressed with what took place in the temple—with the widow’s offering; the disciples were impressed with the temple itself—with its beauty and splendor. Man truly looks on the outward appearance, and God on the heart, here, as always.

2. (:2) Poor Widow Gave Just a Little

“And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins.”

Donald Miller: The connection between this incident and the condemnation of the scribes which immediately precedes it is clear. In contrast to a piety which paraded in public for self-gain, the poor widow gave all she had in love for God. The widow had too little for display, and here offering could in no sense have been prompted by selfishness.

B. (:3-4) Generosity Defined by Sacrificial Giving

1. (:3) Commendation of Poor Widow

“And He said, ‘Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them;’”

2. (:4) Reason for the Commendation

*“for they all out of their surplus put into the offering;
but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”*

Lenski: When this widow gave all the living she had she gave herself completely into the hands of God. Her last act with the final bit of here living was an act of worship in true faith that never looked only unto God who cares for the destitute who trust in him. What makes so many gifts so small? The fear that the givers will not have enough for themselves. They depend on what they have, not on God who gave them even that and can give them much more.

Steven Cole: But whatever amount we give, we need to consider three things:

- **Focus:** Whatever we give should be out of love for the Lord, not for self-gratification.
- **Faith:** Whatever we give should be given looking to God to supply all our needs.
- **Faithfulness:** We should give faithfully, no matter what our circumstances.

TEXT: Luke 21:5-38

TITLE: *PREPARE FOR HARD TIMES AHEAD*

BIG IDEA:

PREPARE FOR HARD TIMES LEADING UP TO

- **THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE**
- **THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

BE PERCEPTIVE AND READY

INTRODUCTION:

Let's face it. We live in a soft society. Luxury, comfort and abundant leisure time characterize our present prosperity. We wrestle with tough decisions like where to go on vacation; what menu selection we should choose at our favorite restaurant; what movie to watch tonight. My grandson gives his attention to which Lego set to lobby for as the next purchase. Life is basically easy. We are not exhausting ourselves trying to eke out bare subsistence living. Maybe the COVID-19 pandemic is a wake-up call that hard times are coming in God's program for end time events.

Steven Cole: One of the biggest lies that Satan has promoted is that believing in Christ as Savior will bring a trouble-free life. The pitch goes, "Do you have problems? If you trust in Jesus, He will get you out of them." So the person trusts in Christ and his problems get worse, not better. The enemy comes to him and says, "See where trusting in Christ got you? You were better off before you became a Christian!"

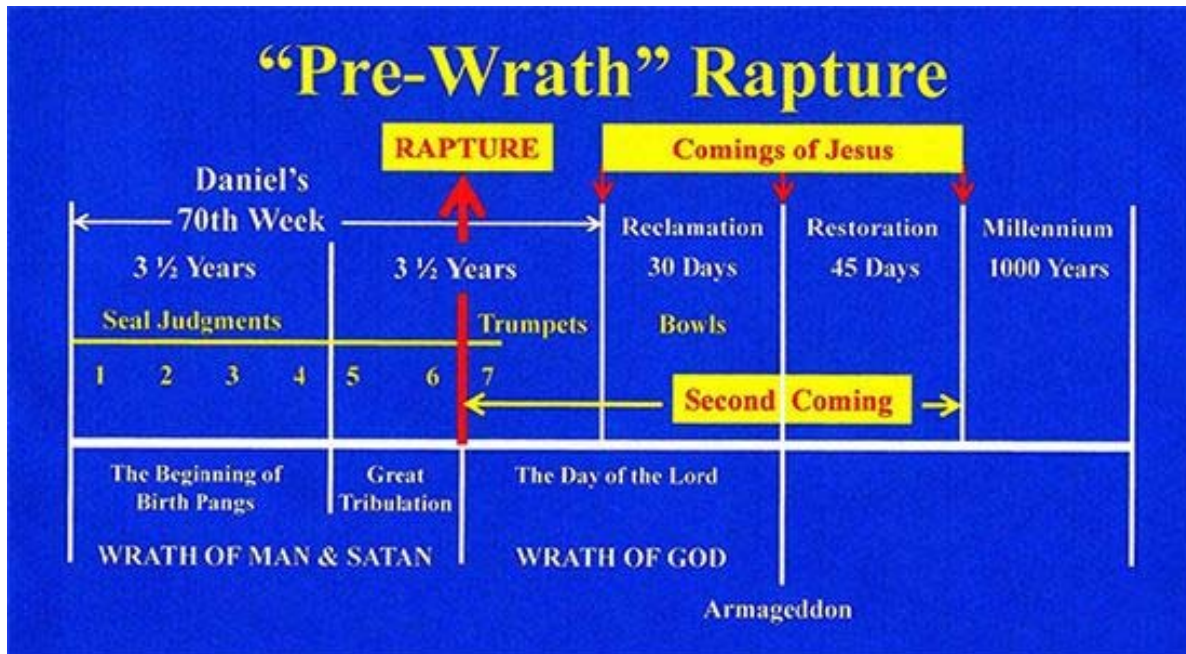
The Bible *does* promise believers peace and joy, but it does *not* promise the absence of trials, freedom from persecution, or even protection from violent death. It promises peace and joy *in the midst* of such trials as we rely on the Lord and His promises.

Some of the confusion and controversy over this discourse revolves around which verses pertain to the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 and which verses can only be applied to the end times. Then there are some prophecies which will have both a near and far fulfillment.

Morris: The discourse expresses Jesus' certainty of ultimate triumph, even though there were dark days ahead. And it concludes with a rousing challenge to His followers to be watchful and not let themselves be weighted down with the difficulties of this world. Much of the language is reminiscent of Old Testament passages (e.g. **2 Ch. 15:6; Is. 8:21f.; 13:13; Je. 34:17**), which may be a way of emphasizing that what Jesus was describing was a divine visitation.

Geldenhuys: **verses 5-24** deal practically throughout (except **verses 8, 9**) with predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the preceding events, although in a secondary sense even some of these predictions also refer to the Last Things. But in **verses 25-8** Jesus looks beyond the foreshadowings of the Final Judgment to that Judgment itself and its attendant signs, in association with His second advent. In **verses 29-33** He exhorts His hearers to watch for the former set of events, which are to be accomplished within "this generation", while in **verses 34-6** He warns them (and through them the whole Christian church) to watch faithfully for the latter set of events, which are to take place at a day and hour known to none save God the Father.

Remember the **timeline** of the **Pre-Wrath Rapture View**



I. (:5-24) PREPARE FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE

A. (:5-6) Shocking Prophecy of Temple Destruction – Transformation from Valuable Edifice to Worthless Rubble

1. (:5) Valuable Edifice

“And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,”

Steven Cole: By all accounts, it was a magnificent structure. At that time, it had been under construction for about 50 years. According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, some of the stones measured over 35 feet long, 12 feet high, and 18 feet wide. The current Wailing Wall is a part of the foundation left from that building. Its white marble walls rose about 200 feet above the Kidron Valley. The brilliance of the white walls and the gold trim in the morning sun was dazzling. The courtyard was about 400 by 500 yards square, so that thousands of worshippers could gather there. The rabbis said, “He who has not seen the Temple in its full construction has never seen a glorious building in his life” (cited by William Lane, *Mark* [Eerdmans], p. 451).

2. (:6) Worthless Rubble

“As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.”

Donald Miller: To announce the ruin of the temple was to say that Israel would cease being the people of God. And since the Jews could not conceive of the existence of God without his people to adore him, this was to them blasphemy against God. (cf. **Jer. 26:6**)

B. (:7-11) Stable Perspective as Events Draw Near and Unfold

1. (:7) Need to Understand the Signs of the Times

“And they questioned Him, saying, ‘Teacher, when therefore will these things be? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?’”

Don’t be tossed about in fear and panic; don’t be surprised when such events start to take place

Steven Cole: there are multiple fulfillments of these prophecies, leading up to the final fulfillment at the second coming of Christ. Since Jesus emphasizes that many of these cataclysmic events will take place well before the end (**21:9, 12**), His words apply to believers in trying situations down through the centuries, as well as to those living at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem or just before His second coming.

2. (:8) Need for Discernment – Don’t Be Misled

“And He said, ‘See to it that you be not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is at hand’; do not go after them.’”

David Guzik: Jesus knew that many would arise more than willing to assume the role of political messiah for Israel. One striking example of this was a man named Bar Kokhba, who 100 years after Jesus was considered by many Jews to be the Messiah. He started a widespread revolution against the Romans and enjoyed early success, but was soon crushed.

Lenski: The procession of such deceivers from Simon Magus and Barcochba onward to the great Antichrist and the little antichrists goes on to the end of time. Some are petty and have some little sect of fanatics following them, some sit on thrones like the popes in their long succession; some are out for the third cash; some are viciously lascivious. The sad thing is that they succeed in their deceptions, for all men have an affinity for religious error, and many yield to it with avidity and develop the strongest fanaticism. They find no limit in perverting to their own ends what the Scriptures say about the kingdom. *“Do not go after them!”*

3. (:9-11) Need for Patience – Don’t Be Terrified

“‘And when you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.’”

Then He continued by saying to them,

‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.’”

Lowery: The world is a chaotic place. It is the (**necessary**) consequence of living in a fallen world. Disciples should not think that human or natural disasters, however tragic, signal the end. These are but the prelude to a truly catastrophic finale (**Mt 24:21**). Disciples must keep their balance and stay faithful."

C. (:12-19) Systemic Persecution Will Lead to Opportunity for Testimony

1. (:12) Description of Systemic Persecution

“But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake.”

Darrell Bock: Jesus has already noted that false claims, social upheaval, and cosmic signs do not signal the coming of the end (21:7–11). He now describes something that precedes these “non-end” events: persecution. He seems to make the point that persecution is the church’s short-term destiny. Only Luke has a temporal note, which helps to organize Jesus’ reply and clarify the relationship between events.

2. (:13) Door for Gospel Testimony

“It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.”

MacArthur: The persecution of the church always brings gospel opportunity. Persecution of the church always purifies the church. The persecution of the church always makes the church strong, it makes the church bold....Persecution of Christians has allowed Christians to give, strong, bold, confident, faithful testimony to the glory of the gospel. You read Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. And you hear these incredibly stirring, beautiful testimonies of those who were brought to the edge of the flames, about to be burned to death, or to the edge of the sword, or the guillotine for their love for Christ and how powerful their testimony is now resounding.

3. (:14-15) Dependence on Divine Defense

a. (:14) Reject Confidence in the Flesh

“So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;”

b. (:15) Receive Irrefutable Divine Wisdom

“for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.”

4. (:16-19) Deliverance from Systemic Persecution

a. (:16) Possibility of Death

“But you will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,”

b. (:17) Pervasiveness of Hatred

“and you will be hated by all on account of My name.”

c. (:18-19) Preservation by Providential Endurance

*“Yet not a hair of your head will perish.
By your endurance you will gain your lives.”*

Geldenhuys: But although they are to suffer physical pain and death, they can never be plucked from the protecting hand of God – nothing will happen to them outside His will, and He will make all things work together for their highest welfare and their eternal salvation, and at His second advent they will arise with glorified, celestial bodies in which there will be no defect or injury.

Deffinbaugh: Now, the Lord speaks of the persecution which believers in Christ must suffer by virtue of their identification with Him. The persecution spoken of here is characteristic of that which has taken place down through the history of the church, but it is that which directly affected the disciples to whom Jesus was speaking. Luke, in his second volume, the book of Acts, gives a historical account of some of the sufferings of the saints in the days after our Lord’s ascension.

The difficulties of these hard times is no barrier to the gospel, however. Indeed, these hard times provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate and to proclaim the hope which we have in Christ. Believers will be brought forward, and charged publicly, and thus they have the opportunity for a public witness, whether before Jewish opponents in the synagogues,⁷⁶ or Gentile opponents, such as kings and governors. In such cases, the saint is not to plan his testimony in advance, but rather to look to the Lord to give the right words for the moment. Stephen's powerful message (recorded in **Acts 7**) is but one example of the faithfulness of God to give His servants the right words to speak.

The persecution which men will face will be even more personal, however. Not only will we be opposed by the enemies of the gospel, such as religious and political leaders, but we will be opposed by our own families. Saints in those hard times will be betrayed by their closest relatives, handed over to persecution, and even to death. Now, the hard words of Jesus concerning the disciple and his family (**Luke 14:26**), make a great deal of sense. The "hard words" of Jesus were intended for the "hard times" ahead, times such as those described here in **chapter 21**. If we are going to be betrayed by our own family, we must have chosen Christ above family, or we will forsake the faith in such times.

John MacArthur: Since He had just warned that believers would die in the coming persecutions, this cannot be a guarantee of absolute physical protection. The point of the saying is metaphoric—that though they may die physically, true believers will not perish spiritually. Some have interpreted the Lord's concluding statement, "By your endurance you will gain your lives," as a reference to physical survival. That, however, reduces it to a meaningless tautology, saying in effect that those who do not die will not die. What Jesus was actually pointing out is that those whose trust in Christ endures to the end (cf. **Matt. 10:22; 24:13**), so that they do not fall away, prove that their faith is the authentic gift from God. Such will receive the final aspect of salvation, glorification, and live forever in the joy of God's glorious kingdom.

D. (:20-24) Severe Plight Described

1. (:20) Desolation Imminent

*"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies,
then recognize that her desolation is at hand."*

Donald Miller: Luke makes it clear that this section of the discourse (**:20-24**) refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and not to the end time.

2. (:21-22) Days of Vengeance Unleashed

a. (:21) Flee

*"Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains,
and let those who are in the midst of the city depart,
and let not those who are in the country enter the city;"*

Donald Miller: When the armies of Rome surround the city, there will be no possible defense. . . For Jerusalem's doom is sure. It is the judgment of God (**vs. 22**). When Jerusalem was attacked in A.D. 66-70, the Christians followed this counsel of their Lord, leaving Jerusalem for Pella, east of the Jordan. The Jews, on the other hand fanatically expected that God would intervene to save them. They cried to God to the last – but no help came. The wall was breached, the Temple went up in flames, and the city was decimated.

- b. (:22) Fulfillment
*“because these are days of vengeance,
in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled.”*

3. (:23) Distress Upon the Land

*“Woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days;
for there will be great distress upon the land, and wrath to this people,”*

4. (:24a) Death and Captivity

*“and they will fall by the edge of the sword,
and will be led captive into all the nations;”*

5. (:24b) Domination by the Gentiles

*“and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles
until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.”*

Must interpret in light of **Romans 9-11**

Morris: a variety of explanations has been suggested: the time for the Gentiles to execute God’s judgments, or to be supreme over Israel, or to exercise the privileges hitherto belonging to Israel,

or to have the gospel preached to them. The reference to these times as being *fulfilled* points to a divine purpose in them.

II. (:25-36) PREPARE FOR THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

A. (:25-26) Cosmic Signs

1. (:25) Imagery

- a. In the Heavens

“And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars,”

- b. On Earth

*“and upon the earth dismay among nations,
in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves,”*

2. (:26a) Impact

*“men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things
which are coming upon the world;”*

3. (:26b) Intensity

“for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”

Morris: Such language is often used in apocalyptic to denote sudden and violent change and the emergence of a new order. In any case this will be the main part of the meaning here. Men will be perplexed and fearful. They will know that strange things are happening, but will not understand what is about to befall them.

B. (:27-28) Coming in Glory

1. (:27) Visualization

“And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.”

2. (:28) Anticipation

“But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Steven Cole: These cosmic signs will be so great that the world’s population will cower in fear to the point of passing out. The Greek word translated “*perplexity*” normally refers to being chained; it means that men will be gripped or bound by anxiety. But believers will stand apart from the unbelieving world at this point. Rather than being in distress, believers will be saying, “All right! Jesus is coming soon! Our redemption draws near!”

III. (:29-36) PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE – BE PERCEPTIVE AND READY

A. (:29-33) Be Perceptive

“And He told them a parable:”

1. (:29-30) Learn the Seasonal Lesson of the Fig Tree

“Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near.”

Deffinbaugh: This parable is a simple story, as most of our Lord’s parables were. It pertains to the timing of the events Jesus has foretold. Jesus here teaches what we might call a “seasonal” approach to prophecy, rather than a “specific” approach. Jesus never encourages the setting of dates, just as He refused to indicate a single sign which would accompany and accredit His coming. He did not want his disciples to be ignorant of the approach of His return, as would be the case with all unbelievers. How, then, were His disciples to recognize that His return was near? Not by a single sign, but by a sensitivity to a combination of events which indicated that the “season” of His return was at hand.

This is an agricultural analogy, the discerning of the season by observing the signs of its arrival. When the fig tree (and all the others as well) begins to put out leaves, we know that it is Spring, and that summer cannot be too far off. We can, of course, look at our calendars, but we should all recognize that seasons don’t always follow a calendar. The farmer recognizes the season by noting those evidences of its arrival. Jesus has likewise just informed His disciples (of all ages) of the evidences of the “season” of His second coming. Those who would like to know the exact time of His arrival will not be happy with our Lord’s answer. His nearness of His return will be sensed by those who are alert to and aware of the evidences of its arrival.

2. (:31) Sense the Nearness of the Consummation of the Kingdom of God

“Even so you, too, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near.”

This offers strong support for the Premillennial interpretation of eschatology. Kingdom of God is not yet here in its consummation.

3. (:32) Grasp the Certainty of Complete Fulfillment of End Times Prophecy

“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place.”

Steven Cole: Perhaps the best solution is to say that “*this generation*” refers to the generation that is living when all of these end time signs begin to occur. Jesus then is saying that “the generation that sees the beginning of the end, also sees its end. When the signs come, they will proceed quickly; they will not drag on for many generations” (Bock, 2:1691-1692). The main objection to this view is that “*this generation*” usually refers to the present generation, not to a later one. But in this context, Jesus is referring to these cataclysmic signs. Thus the phrase “*this generation*” could refer to the generation that sees these unusual events unfold. Since there is so much controversy over the verse, we should not be dogmatic.

4. (:33) Trust the Faithfulness of Christ’s Promises Regarding Future Events

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”

B. (:34-36) Be Ready

1. (:34) Warning Against Distractions

“Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap;”

- Distraction of dissipation and drunkenness
- Distraction of worries of life

Geldenhuys: On every occasion that the Saviour referred to His second coming and to the events preceding it He impressed it upon the minds of His disciples that they must so live in faithful vigilance that they will be prepared for His coming. His predictions concerning the End are not intended to satisfy human curiosity about the programme of the centuries or to give His disciples occasion to rejoice in the final downfall of the wicked. By no means, for He mainly emphasizes the challenge of the coming events – a challenge to true repentance and to faithful vigilance. What the Saviour gives is not a systematic exposition of future events in the smallest details but a message for practical life.

2. (:35) Certainty of Universal Impact of the Coming Day of the Lord

“for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.”

3. (:36a) Exhortation to Alertness and Prayer

a. Alertness

“But keep on the alert at all times,”

b. Prayer

“praying”

4. (:36b) Goal of Triumphant Perseverance

a. Strength

“in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place,”

- b. Standing
“and to stand before the Son of Man.”

(:37-38) EPILOGUE – FINAL DAYS OF MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM

A. (:37) Typical Schedule

1. Daytime Teaching in the Temple

“Now during the day He was teaching in the temple,”

2. Nighttime Solitude on Mt. Olivet

“but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.”

B. (:38) Temporary Loyalty to His Teaching

“And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.”

Donald Miller: Verses 37 and 38 give a brief summary of Jesus’ last days in Jerusalem. He taught in the Temple by day. He went to the Mount of Olives by night, possibly to avoid secret arrest before the time of his suffering came, and certainly to have opportunity for uninterrupted prayer and communion with his Father (see **22:39-40**). The people remained loyal to him, rising early in the morning to hear him teach, and still casting around him a bulwark of protection from the religious leaders (see **22:2**).

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are you living like Jesus is coming back soon?
- 2) How do the cosmic signs recorded in this passage compare to some of the cosmic signs recorded in the book of Revelation?
- 3) What type of persecution have you faced in your life, if any? How did God strengthen you?
- 4) If prophecy relating to end times is so difficult to interpret with any type of consensus, how can it impact how we live our lives now?

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: The Sequence of Events Is Certain

This is **not** a prediction of **when** the world will end. . . the Lord focuses on the sequence of events rather than the specific time.

First will be the false teachers and the rumors of wars (v. 9) . . . The events are spread out over time. Indeed, some of what’s said in this chapter refers directly to Jerusalem and the people in Jesus’s audience that day. For example, the Lord says in **verse 32**: *“Truly I tell you, this*

generation will ertainly not pass away until all things take place.” He referred especially to the persecution of the disciples and the destruction of the temple. All of that did happen in that generation. The temple was destroyed in AD 70 when Romans surrounded and destroyed Jerusalem.

But other parts of this refer to the end of the world. . . These things do not happen all at once. They are spread out form the day the Lord spoke these words through our day until the end itself. But *first are the false teachers and the rumors of war.*

Second will be the persecution, natural disasters, and so on (vvs. 10-12, 16-17).

Third comes the destruction of Jerusalem (vv. 20-24).

Fourth begins “the times of the Gentiles” (v. 24). . .

In **verses 25-26** we see the cosmic distress that is to come. Then, finally, the Lord describes the second coming and the eternal kingdom (**vv. 27-28**).

Deffinbaugh: Observations

Before we begin to look at the text in detail, let us be sure to get a feel of the passage by making several important observations:

- (1) Two principle events are in view in our text: the destruction of Jerusalem, which is soon to come, and the second coming of Christ, which will take place after some protracted period of time.
- (2) These two events are not neatly separated in our text, nor is our text chronological in its organization.
- (3) Our Lord’s dealing with these two events, separated in time, is not to distinguish them so much as to intertwine them.
- (4) Luke does not describe the destruction of the temple, and so his two works were either written before the temple’s destruction in 70 A.D. or he chose not to describe the event or to allude to it.
- (5) Jesus dwells more on the disciples’ conduct than He is on satisfying their curiosity as to either the exact time of fulfillment, its sequence of events, or even some specific sign which unmistakably identifies the end as at hand.
- (6) While we view the destruction of Jerusalem as past history and the second coming as unfulfilled prophecy, Luke and the disciples viewed them as both future.
- (7) The things which Jesus says to His disciples as “*you*” cannot all happen to them, and thus “*you*” must refer to Israel or Israelites corporately, and not just to the disciples individually.
- (8) The mood of this text is sober. There is no hype, and much warning about the dangers which lie ahead for Jesus’ disciples. It describes the times ahead, up to the second coming as dangerous and difficult. There is no “prosperity gospel” to be found here, but rather a sobering warning about the days ahead.

(9) The subjects of the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming are not introduced for the first time here. **Luke 17:20-37** and **19:41-44** both deal with these future events. . .

Jesus' words here contain a number of important lessons for those of that day, as well as for saints of all ages. Let us consider some of them.

First, the Lord's words here should have laid to rest the disciples' visions of an immediate kingdom, with Jerusalem and that temple as its headquarters. That temple was soon to be destroyed, Jerusalem to be sacked, and the times of the Gentiles to prevail for an indefinite period of time.

Second, the Lord's words clearly spelled out "*hard times*" ahead for those who would follow Him, rather than "happy days," as nearly all, including the disciples, hoped for. This was true for those disciples, and for the early church (cf. Acts), but it is just as true for saints of all ages (cf. **2 Timothy 3**). There are many today who offer men immediate glory, peace, and good times, but who do not talk of suffering, persecution, and endurance, as Jesus does. Men love to hear of the blessings of the future kingdom as being realized and experienced now. That simply is not the way Jesus told it, my friend. Jesus consistently spoke of hard times to those who would follow Him. He did not dangle promises of immediate relief from suffering and pain, but warned that the way of the disciple was difficult. Jesus was right, and all who differ on this point, are wrong. Those who would follow Jesus should expect the path of adversity and persecution. That is just what Jesus promised.

Third, Jesus here teaches us that times of adversity, chaos, and opposition are days of opportunity for the proclamation of the gospel.

Jeff Strucker: The End is Near

The Roman Emperor was so furious with the people of Jerusalem because they repeatedly rebelled. He made a decision, "I'm going to punish the city in such a way that the whole world will know that I poured my vengeance out." This is the language that the Roman historians used to refer to what happened. This is Rome's vengeance against the rebellious people. Church history teaches that when Jerusalem fell more than 1 million people died during the siege, the starvation, and ultimately the destruction of Jerusalem. It is said that almost 100,000 people were carted away into captivity on the day that Jerusalem fell. That's the day the Temple was destroyed. For 2000 years Israel was in exile spread all over the world. It really wasn't until 1948 that Israel was restored as a nation and Jerusalem once again became for the people of the Jews. The church building itself has never really been restored after this traumatic event. Jesus is saying that this wasn't Rome's vengeance against Jerusalem this was God's. God was so fed up with the rebellion and the sin of his people that he was the one who sent the Roman army. God was the one who destroyed the city of Jerusalem. You can't miss what Jesus is saying. God always punishes sin. Either you take the punishment for sin or Jesus takes the punishment for sin but somebody is going to have to suffer the wrath of God because of sin.

Chinese Bible Church of Greater Boston: What does this passage say to us who face no persecution? Working from greater to lesser, we can identify three applications.

First, God did not spare them persecution, so we should not expect God to spare us lesser ailments or disappointments.

Secondly, if they secure their salvation by persevering through persecution, how much more we, who are required to endure much less, must persist in faithfulness to God, in order to be saved.

Thirdly, if God promises to sustain them in their severe struggles, how much more he is able to sustain us in our lesser challenges. . .

They must be ready at any and all times, lest they be taken unawares. Toward that end, they are to avoid excessive preoccupation with this life, whether with partying or with pursuing success. They should keep alert at all times. They may pray to avoid suffering. Most of all, though, they should pray for the grace to live in such a way that they will be vindicated whenever it is that Jesus returns.

Darrel Bock: Overview of Luke's version of the Olivet Discourse

1. Setting (Luke 21:5-6)

2. Signs before the end (Luke 21:7–11)

- The disciples' question (**Luke 21:7**)
- False claims (**Luke 21:8**)
- Social chaos before the end (**Luke 21:9–10**)
- Natural disasters (**Luke 21:11**)

3. Persecution (Luke 21:12–19)

- Persecution and testimony (**Luke 21:12–13**)
- Divine wisdom (**Luke 21:14–15**)
- Division of family, possible martyrdom, and hatred (**Luke 21:16–17**)
- Divine protection of others (**Luke 21:18**)
- Endurance leading to salvation (**Luke 21:19**)

4. Picture of the end: Jerusalem's destruction (Luke 21:20–24)

- Jerusalem surrounded (**Luke 21:20**)
- The days of vengeance (**Luke 21:21–22**)
- Woe for the great distress of Jerusalem (**Luke 21:23–24**)

5. The end: coming of the Son of Man (Luke 21:25–28)

- Signs in the heavens (**Luke 21:25–26**)
- The authoritative return of the Son of Man (**Luke 21:27**)
- The drawing near of redemption (**Luke 21:28**)

6. Parable of the fig tree (Luke 21:29–33)

- As fig trees in summer, so the kingdom (Luke 21:29–31)
- The end: all within a generation (Luke 21:32)
- The certainty of Jesus' words (Luke 21:33)

7. Application: call to watch (Luke 21:34–36)

- The call to heed universal judgment (Luke 21:34–35)
- Pray for strength (Luke 21:36)

8. Jesus teaches at the temple (Luke 21:37–38)

- Teaching at the temple, lodging at Olives (Luke 21:37)
- People hear Jesus teach in the morning (Luke 21:38)

(From Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament - Luke)

Bruce Hurt: John MacArthur explains that birth pangs is "a very vivid analogy used often in the Scriptures, often by the Jewish writers and so was familiar to Jewish people. Birth pangs are an increasing sequence of contractions that finally become fiercely intense and result in the big event, birth. It is an apt analogy for understanding human history. The contractions or the pains, start out light and they increase and they increase and they increase till they reach a point of excruciation before the big event. So, Jesus is saying these are just the birth pangs. These are just the very early birth pains and they've been going on for 2,000 years and have been escalating. And if you want to see what they're going to look like at the very end just before the event then you read **Revelation 6-19.**" (The World in Conflict and Distress)

And so it should not surprise that in the time just before Christ returns in Revelation 19:11-16-note, the "birth pangs" of each of these things will have intensified to such a degree that they will be almost unimaginable. Below are just a few of the examples of the "birth pangs" that will occur at the end of this age...

- False Christs - The final greatest human deceiver, the Antichrist - **Rev 13:5** = given authority over the earth for 42 months
- Wars- Armies gathering for war at Armageddon - **Rev 16:12-14, 16**
- Famine - Rider on the ashen horse given to kill 1/4 of the earth with sword and famine - **Rev 6:8**
- Plagues - 1/3 of mankind was killed by three plagues - **Rev 9:18** (cf. **Rev 15:1, Rev 16:21** = 100 lb hailstones)
- Earthquakes - A great earthquake unlike any in the history of the world - **Rev 16:18**

TEXT: Luke 22:1-6

TITLE: FRIEND OR FOE?

BIG IDEA:

JUDAS IS THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BETRAY JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Are you a friend or foe of Jesus? You might counter that this is a silly question. You spend every Sunday in church. You read your bible. You hang out with some Christians. Yes, but are you a friend or foe in terms of your loyalty to Jesus Christ? Judas serves as the prime example of treacherous betrayal. If ever there was one so privileged with the opportunity of being a friend of Jesus, it was Judas. He was personally selected by the Master to be one of His 12 closest confidants. He was discipled along with the other 11 to the point where he should have been fully trained to assume a leadership role in the new church movement. He was trusted to hold the treasury bag. We could do a topical study of Scripture to see what constitutes friendship with God vs. what constitutes being an enemy.

What went wrong? You could try to blame the influence of Satan – for surely we find in this passage that “*Satan entered into Judas.*” But he remains culpable and morally responsible for the many little decisions in his life that led him down the road to this major decision to become the chief instigator in this plot to send Jesus to the cross. Ultimately his heart remained wicked and his materialistic motivation led him to contract with the chief priests and scribes to hand over Jesus in a secluded area apart from the influence of the multitude of pilgrims visiting Jerusalem at this time and listening with interest to His teaching.

I. (:1-2) PASSOVER PLOTTING – GOAL = KILLING JESUS

A. (:1) Opportunity – Passover Approaching

“Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.”

Donald Miller: Although technically the Passover, which lasted one day, is distinguished from the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which came on the seven days immediately following, the two were popularly named as one (see **Matt. 26:17**).

B. (:2) Obstacle – Popularity of Jesus

“And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.”

Anyabwile: Holy dates are coming; hateful men are scheming. What a shocking contrast between the celebration of **verse 1** and the sinister darkness of **verse 2**.

II. (:3-4) BETRAYAL INITIATED

A. (:3) Satan Recruits Judas to Betray Jesus

“And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.”

Donald Miller: The mystery of sin is known only to God. But Judas is a warning that no position of Christian privilege is immune from temptation, and fall. He illustrates Bunyan's comment that there is "a way to hell from the very gate of heaven."

Geldenhuys: The history of Judas, who, although he occupied such a privileged position as one of Jesus' twelve apostles, nevertheless betrayed the Master, serves as a permanent and powerful warning to every member of the church of Christ – there is always the terrible possibility that even among us who apparently live in the closest connection with the Lord there may be those who are inwardly false and are busily engaged in betraying Him.

John Martin: Satan's part in Jesus' death was actually his own downfall, for through dying Jesus conquered Satan and death (**Co. 2:15; Heb. 2:14**).

Calvin: Though Satan drives us every day to crime, and reigns in us when he hurries us into a course of extraordinary wickedness, yet he is said to enter into the reprobate when he takes possession of all their senses, overthrows the fear of God, extinguishes the light of reason, and destroys every feeling of shame.

B. (:4) Judas Starts the Betrayal Process

"And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them."

Piper: Satan does not take innocent people captive. There are no innocent people. Satan has power where sinful passions hold sway. Judas was a lover of money, and he covered it with a phony, external relationship with Jesus. And then he sold him for thirty pieces of silver.

III. (:5-6) BETRAYAL CONTRACTED

A. (:5) Contract Proposed

"And they were glad, and agreed to give him money."

B. (:6) Contract Put Into Operation

"And he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the multitude."

Morris: Since Jesus had such popular support it was important that He be arrested when there were no crowds present to start a tumult.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How can we improve in fearing God and resisting Satan?
- 2) Where have we seen supposedly solid Christian leaders fall away from their loyalty to Jesus Christ?
- 3) How do you demonstrate in your own life your loyalty and commitment to Jesus?

4) What types of temptation to sin could give Satan a foothold in your life?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Piper: The second question is why Satan would lead Judas to betray Jesus. Doesn't he know that the death and resurrection of Jesus would result in Satan's final defeat (**Colossians 2:13–15; Revelation 12:11**)? There's good reason to think Satan knew that.

When Jesus began his ministry on the way to the cross, Satan tried to turn him away from the path of suffering and sacrifice. In the wilderness, he tempted him to turn stones into bread and jump off the temple and get the rulership of the world by worshipping him (**Matthew 4:1–11**). The point of all these temptations is: Don't walk the path of suffering and sacrifice and death. Use your power to escape suffering. If you're the Son of God, show your right to reign. And I can help you do it. Whatever you do, don't go to the cross.

Then do you remember the time when Jesus predicted he would suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and be killed and Peter rebuked him and said, "*Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you*" (**Matthew 16:22**). In other words, I will never let you be killed like that. Jesus did not commend him. He said, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man" (**Matthew 16:23**). Hindering Jesus from going to the cross was the work of Satan. Satan did not want Jesus crucified. It would be his undoing.

But here he is in **Luke 22:3** entering into Judas and leading him to betray the Lord and bring him to the cross. Why the about-face? Why try to divert him from the cross and then take the initiative to bring him to the cross? We are not told. Here is my effort at an answer: Satan saw his efforts to divert Jesus from the cross failing. Time after time, Jesus kept the course. His face was set like flint to die, and Satan concludes that there is no stopping him. Therefore he resolves that if he can't stop it, he will at least make it as ugly and painful and as heartbreaking as possible. Not just death, but death by betrayal. Death by abandonment. Death by denial (see **Luke 22:31–32**). If he could not stop it, he would drag others into it and do as much damage as he could. It was a spectacular sequence of sins that brought Jesus to the cross.

According to His Sovereign Will

From all these prophecies, we know that God foresaw, and did not prevent, and therefore included in his plan that his Son would be rejected, hated, abandoned, betrayed, denied, condemned, spit upon, flogged, mocked, pierced, and killed. All these are explicitly in God's mind before they happen as things that he plans will happen to Jesus. These things did not just happen. They were foretold in God's word. God knew they would happen and could have planned to stop them, but didn't. So they happened according to his sovereign will.

And all of them were evil. They were sin. It is sin to reject, hate, abandon, betray, deny, condemn, spit upon, flog, mock, pierce, and kill the morally perfect, infinitely worthy, divine Son of God. And yet the Bible is explicit and clear that God himself planned these things. It is explicit not only in all the prophetic texts we have seen, but also in passages that say even more plainly that God brought these things to pass. . .

The Gospel: God at Work in Death

If God were not the main Actor in the death of Christ, then the death of Christ could not save us from our sins and we would perish in hell forever. The reason the death of Christ is the heart of the gospel — the heart of the good news — is God was doing it. Romans 5:8: “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” If you break God’s activity from the death of Jesus, you lose the gospel. This was God’s doing. It is the highest and deepest point of his love for sinners — his love for you.

*Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin,
he condemned sin in the flesh.*

(Romans 8:3)

God condemned sin in Jesus’s flesh with our condemnation. So we are free.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

(Galatians 3:13)

God cursed Jesus with the curse that belonged on us. So we are free.

*For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

(2 Corinthians 5:21)

God imputed our sin to him, and now we go free in God’s righteousness.

He was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities.

(Isaiah 53:5)

God wounded him. God crushed him. For you and me. And we go free.

Steven Cole: Evil Religion

Religion is one of the greatest forces for evil in this world. Satan has probably done more to damage genuine Christianity through religion than through blatant wickedness or any other evil. In fact, the greatest crime in history came about when Satan used a very religious man to betray the Son of God into the hands of other religious men who murdered Him.

Since it is possible to be religious and yet to be in league with Satan, we must guard against evil religion.

1. Satan uses religion more than any other tool to keep men in his domain of darkness.

2. People can even profess and belong to true religion and yet be in league with Satan.

Looking at the Jewish religious leaders and Judas, we can see a number of dangers for all who hold to belief in the one true God:

- Religious profession is not enough.

The chief priests and scribes professed to know and fear the one true God. They professed to believe in the Scriptures. Judas professed to be a follower of Christ. And yet they killed the sinless Savior. Anyone can make a profession of faith, but in and of itself, such a profession is not enough to guard us from evil religion.

- Religious knowledge is not enough.

The chief priests and scribes knew the Hebrew Bible better than any of us do. They studied it for years in the original language. They could cite lengthy passages by memory. But in spite of their impressive learning, they missed Christ. Their knowledge filled them with pride, when it should have humbled them before God. Spiritual knowledge is good if it brings us to the true knowledge of God and of ourselves, which always results in humility. But if it puffs us up with all that we know, it will bring us to ruin.

- Religious position is not enough.

These men were the religious leaders of the nation. They had spiritual oversight of more than a million Jews. But they crucified the Savior. Judas was one of the twelve apostles, hand-picked by Jesus Christ. Yet he betrayed the Savior of the world for a small bag of silver. You can be the pastor of a large church or the head of a large denomination and yet be in league with Satan.

- Religious ritual is not enough.

These men were about to celebrate the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. But at the same time, they were going to murder an innocent man, their Messiah, no less! The Passover pictured God's salvation as seen in the Exodus. The Feast of Unleavened Bread that immediately followed pictured removing sin from our lives. If they had taken to heart the message of Passover, how could they have been plotting murder at the same time? It is easy to go through religious rituals and miss the message behind the ritual. Mafia members can go to the Mass and go home and arrange the murder of a rival. Church members can partake of communion and go home and verbally abuse their mates or children. Ritual is not enough.

- Religious service is not enough.

The chief priests and scribes had devoted their lives to religious duties. Judas had served Christ for three years in as close a capacity as possible. He had gone out with the other disciples, preaching and healing the sick in Jesus' name. But all the religious service in the world is worthless if we betray Jesus.

- Religious affiliation is not enough.

The chief priests and scribes were affiliated with the cream of religious leaders in Judaism. Judas was a member of the twelve. He was personally acquainted with Peter, James, and John, not to mention, Jesus. He could tell you inside stories about these great men. You would think that some of it would have rubbed off on him. But you can know godly men and run in godly circles and yet not be godly yourself.

- Religious experience is not enough.

Judas witnessed the many miracles Christ performed. He had seen Jesus heal the sick and raise the dead. He had watched Jesus feed the 5,000 and walk on the water. He had seen Jesus hold large crowds spellbound with His teaching. But all of his spiritual experiences did not keep Judas from betraying Jesus. Even so, people today report all sorts of interesting and amazing spiritual experiences. They speak in tongues, laugh uncontrollably, bark like dogs, roar like lions, get slain in the Spirit, and lay prostrate on the floor. They go forward at evangelistic crusades and feel a warm glow come over them. But ask Judas. He will tell you that you can have amazing religious experiences and still betray the Savior. Religious experience is inadequate by itself. If it is possible to profess to be a Christian and to do all of these other things, and yet to be in

league with Satan, how can we guard against such evil religion in ourselves?

3. At the core of evil religion are the lack of genuine conversion, the rejection of Jesus as Lord, and the promotion of selfish desires under the guise of religious commitment.

A. EVIL RELIGION LACKS GENUINE CONVERSION.

B. EVIL RELIGION REJECTS JESUS CHRIST AS LORD.

C. EVIL RELIGION PROMOTES SELFISH DESIRES UNDER THE GUISE OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT.

The Jewish leaders and Judas were religious men, but their religion was a thin veneer over selfish desires and a means to fulfilling those desires. There were three areas of selfish desires these men shared in common:

- The desire for money and material things.

We have already seen that the Pharisees were lovers of money (**16:14**). The fact that Judas received money for betraying Jesus confirms what **John 12:6** states, that Judas was a thief who pilfered out of the disciples' money box. Evil religion does not kill greed. But God always confronts our greed. Covetousness is one of the Ten Commandments. Greed is often linked with idolatry and sexual immorality (**Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5**). If you are not consistently confronting your greed, you need to re-examine your faith.

To betray the Son of God for money seems despicable beyond imagination. And yet, isn't that what millions do? They profess to be Christians, but their lives are consumed with the pursuit of material things. They cling to their things and are deeply offended if anyone suggests that they give away their things for the cause of Christ. They will even cheat or lie or compromise their morals and their testimony so that they can get ahead. They are betraying Jesus for money, just as Judas did.

- The desire for prestige and recognition.

The Jewish leaders wanted the prestige that came from being a religious leader in Israel. They loved the respectful greetings and the chief seats in the synagogue (**20:46**). They were overly concerned about what people thought of them (**22:2, 6**). They feared the multitude, but they did not fear God.

I am inferring this, since Scripture does not directly say, but I think that Judas also may have liked the prestige that came from being in the inner circle with Jesus during the time of His popularity. Many in the crowd would whisper, "He's one of the twelve." It made Judas feel good to be so important. But now that Jesus' popularity was in question, Judas wanted to get on the good side of the religious leaders. By leading them to Jesus, he could assure himself of recognition with the rulers after Jesus was out of the way.

We all need to judge our own hearts. We can serve in the church for the recognition and prestige that it brings, rather than out of love for Jesus Christ.

- The desire for power and influence.

Evil religion involves men a contest for power. If you can work your way to the top, you'll gain power and influence. So you play religious politics. You network with those who have influence. You cater to the rich and famous. You use guile and manipulation to get ahead in the religious world. The Jewish religious leaders played such political games. Jesus threatened their power base. He challenged their greed and corruption. He exposed their selfish motives. But rather than yielding to Him, they decided to get rid of Him. And, Judas was using his inside information for his own ends. He should have judged his evil desire for power and influence.

When I first came to this church, I went out to lunch with the man who was then the regional director for the Southwest Conservative Baptist Association. During our conversation, he said, "You've got to build your power base in the church." I didn't reply, but I thought, "I'm sorry, but I'm not into building power bases or playing church politics." We should walk in integrity before God and not be using people to build our power base.

We've seen that Satan uses evil religion to keep people in his domain of darkness. They can even profess true religion, yet be in league with Satan. At the core of evil religion are a lack of genuine conversion, the rejection of Christ as Lord, and the promotion of selfish desires under the guise of religious commitment.

4. Evil religion brings initial happiness and gain, but final ruin.

MacArthur: Sinister Players in the Sovereign Plan of Redemption

To the superficial reader of the account leading up to the cross of Jesus Christ, it might appear that the architects of this event were none other than the hypocritical religious leaders of Israel, the blackmailed Roman governor Pilate, Judas the betrayer, and behind it all, none other than Satan. To the superficial reader, it might look like this was Satan's plan and he pulled it off using some of the agents in his kingdom. . .

Jesus' death was no surprise to God. It was not a plan of Satan. It was no surprise to Jesus. He said, "*No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down by Myself.*" Jesus said to Pilate, "*You could do nothing against Me if My Father didn't allow you to do it.*" He is on God's schedule, and He is voluntarily yielding up His life for the divine purpose of paying the penalty for the sins of all who would ever believe so that they can be brought to heaven to praise and glorify the Trinity forever. . .

The death of Jesus Christ was God's plan. Jesus Christ is God's Lamb. He did not die because Satan had a plan. He did not die because the Jews had a plan, or Judas had a plan. He died because God had a plan. He died on schedule – on God's schedule. . .

They needed somebody who knew where He was at night, somebody to be a betrayer. In **Matthew 26**, "*They plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him,*" "*Seize Him by stealth and kill Him.*" Not going to wait any longer. Caiaphas changed that plan; just get Him and kill Him by stealth. How do you do that? All these masses of people around Him in the temple, you can't do it then. At night He disappears. Once the sun goes down there's no lights. Once the sun goes down He disappears.

Where did He go? The end of **chapter 21** says, "*He went every night with His disciples into the Mount of Olives,*" in that thick dense grove of olive trees which are very bushy at the top. They could be any place and every place, and all these people who were there – all these pilgrims were

disseminating along with Him – how in the world could you ever find anyone in the dark? You can't go tramping through there with some kind of armed force unless you know what you're doing and where you're going. . .

Look, Satan is who he is because he tried to assault the sovereignty of God. Do you understand that? Do you understand that if there's any one thing you know to be true about Satan, it is that he cannot overpower God? He cannot rebel against God. He cannot claim equality with God or superiority to God. That's what he tried to do in the rebellion, along with a third of the angels, and he was thrown out of heaven along with all of them and they are permanently demonized and God prepared a lake of fire where they will burn forever and ever and ever, along with all those who reject Christ. The devil tried to operate outside the framework of divine sovereignty and all he got for it was eternal wretchedness and was thrown out of heaven.

The devil is God's devil. He works only within the parameters which a sovereign God determines. . .

So we see the player. The big player is God, the deity; and the devout leaders, and the devil. And finally, the defector – the defector, the despicable Judas. Never met a person anywhere in the world named Judas. Have you? I met one dog named Judas. Even that's a bad choice. If you're going to name something Judas, name a snake. Satan now is in total control of the defector, the betrayer, Judas Iscariot. . .

Everything is now in motion. The power of Satan, the greed of Judas, the hypocrisy of the leaders of Israel; they're just players in a divine plan. They're culpable; they're guilty of their own rejection of Christ, and their own sin. But they will not thwart the purpose of God; they will bring it to pass.

Spurgeon: Was it not a sad thing that the betrayer of Christ should be one of the twelve? Yet deeply trying as it must have been to the heart of Christ, there is something useful about even that horrible transaction. It says to all the professing Church of Christ, and it says to us who claim to be Christ's followers, "Do not think yourselves safe because you are in the visible church; do not imagine that even holding the highest office in the church can prevent you from committing the basest crime. Nay, for here is one of the twelve apostles, yet he betrays his Master. Sometimes, we have found this betrayal to be a source of comfort. I have myself desired, in receiving members into the church, to be very careful if possible only to receive good men and true; yet, though pastors and elders of the church may exercise the strictest watch, some of the worst of men will manage to get in. When that is the case, we say to ourselves, "No new thing has happened to us, for such a sinner as this marred the Church from the very beginning." Here is Judas, when Christ himself is the Pastor, when the twelve apostles make up the main body of the Church, here is Judas, one of the twelve, ready to betray his Master for the paltry bribe of thirty pieces of silver, just the price of a slave. Yes, we might have been put out of heart in building up the Church of God if it had not been for this sad but truthful narrative concerning Judas and his betrayal of our Lord.

TEXT: Luke 22:7-23

TITLE: *TRANSITIONING FROM PASSOVER TO THE LORD'S SUPPER*

BIG IDEA:

THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER BUILDS ON THE IMAGERY OF PASSOVER AND ANTICIPATES FINAL KINGDOM CONSUMMATION

INTRODUCTION:

Here we have the famous last meal before Jesus goes to the Cross. So much happens at this event that is not even recorded in Luke. But what we see here is the huge transition from the OT economy represented by the Passover celebration to the NT economy represented by the introduction of the Lord's Supper. Jesus is preparing His intimate band of apostles for His offering of Himself on the next day as the sacrificial Passover Lamb of God. But He is also casting their vision into the future when they will partake together in resurrected bodies at the consummation of the kingdom on earth when He returns in glory to reign in righteousness and peace.

Donald Miller: That which the Passover foreshadowed was to become a reality through him. Paul called Christ "*our paschal lamb*" (**I Cor. 5:7**). The Passover represented God's deliverance of his people from Egypt (**Exod. 12:1 – 13:10**). A greater deliverance was now about to take place in Jesus – deliverance from sin. The celebration of the earlier deliverance on this occasion was invested with a new meaning on the verge of its fulfillment. So the sadness of farewell was also the joy of the coming Kingdom. The Lord's Supper continues to be an anticipation of the coming Messianic Banquet, when Jesus shall return to complete the work he has accomplished in his death and resurrection.

I. (:7-13) PASSOVER PREPARATION

A. (:7) Perfect Timing

"Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed."

B. (:8-12) Perfect Venue

1. (:8) Delegation

"And He sent Peter and John, saying, 'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.'"

2. (:9) Dialogue

"And they said to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare it?'"

3. (:10-11) Directions

"And He said to them, 'Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'"

Lenski: This was a woman's task and was exceptional in the case of a man. The apostles were not

to accost this man but were simply to follow him into whatever house he entered.

4. (:12) Details

“And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there.”

C. (:13) Perfect Arrangements

“And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.”

Bruce Hurt: It is interesting to note that the events preceding the **Triumphal Entry** parallel the events surrounding the preparation for the **Last Supper**.

(1) In both Jesus commissioned two disciples (**Lk 19:29**),

(2) In both Jesus had foreknowledge of what they would encounter (**Lk 19:30-31**).

(3) In both the response of those encountered by the two disciples is similar (See **Lk 19:32-34 cf Lk 22:11-12**).

In summary, in both situations, all was exactly as Jesus had said it would be. Beloved, that is always the case. Every promise Jesus makes to us is true and trustworthy. And *"all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Him. That is why we say "Amen" when we give glory to God through Christ."* (**2 Cor 1:20**)

II. (:14-18) PASSOVER PARTICIPATION

A. (:14-16) Game Plan

1. (:14) Intimate Dinner

“And when the hour had come He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him.”

2. (:15) Intentional Deed

“And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;’”

Albert Barnes: suggests three reasons for **Jesus' earnest desire** to eat the Passover:

(1) That, as he was about to leave them, he was desirous once of seeing them together, and of partaking with them of one of the religious privileges of the Jewish dispensation. Jesus was *man* as well as God, and he never undervalued the religious rites of his country, or the blessings of social and religious intercourse; and there is no impropriety in supposing that even he might feel that his human nature might be prepared by the service of religion for his great and terrible sufferings.

(2) He doubtless wished to take an opportunity to prepare *them* for his sufferings, and to impress upon them more fully the certainty that he was about to leave them, that they might be prepared for it.

(3) We may also suppose that he particularly desired it that he might institute for *their* use, and for the edification of all Christians, the supper which is called by his name-*the Lord's Supper*. All

his sufferings were the expression of love to his people, and he was desirous of testifying *always* his regard for their comfort and welfare. (Barnes Notes on the NT)

3. (:16) Indefinite Period Before Kingdom Consummation

“for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

Geldenhuys: On the eve of His crucifixion Jesus knows that the whole course of His life of self-sacrifice and humiliation on earth is now drawing to an end. But He also knows that the day will come when He as the Triumphant One will lead His followers to the beautiful heritage of complete redemption and blessedness. This full blessedness which will commence with the end of the age has often been represented by the symbol of the celebration of a Messianic banquet. For this reason the Saviour here refers to the celebration of the feast on that coming day when the sovereign dominion of God has come to full revelation and the redemption wrought by the grace of God, as symbolized in the Passover celebrations, has become a blessed and perfect reality.

B. (:17-18) Execution

1. Thanksgiving

“And when He had taken a cup and given thanks,”

2. Sharing

“He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves;’”

3. Refraining While Anticipating

“for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.”

MacArthur: What’s He talking about here? He’s talking about some spiritual meal, some spiritual Passover? No. No. They would have understood it very simply in the future, in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, *“I will eat and I will drink with you,”* – that’s eschatological – in the millennial Kingdom, in the thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth when He returns and sets up His Kingdom; in that millennial Kingdom, there will be a reinstitution of the Passover – not to point back to the exodus, but to point back to the cross because the Passover was designed not only to commemorate the exodus, but to point to the sacrifice of Christ.

III. (:19-20) LORD’S SUPPER INSTITUTED

A. (:19) Distributing the Bread – Significance

“And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’”

MacArthur: That phrase, *“Which is given for you,”* is the most important concept in the entire Bible, the most important concept in the entire Bible. It is the concept of **substitutionary death**.

Hendriksen: Jesus' point in commanding us to remember is *"Lest we forget."* That seems unthinkable, but frankly, most of us have *"leaky"* memories! We are a forgetful people (I am guilty of this) and Jesus knows that is the tendency of our nature and will be until that great day when we are glorified, so He commemorates the Lord's Supper as a *"means"* to stimulate our memory regarding all He has accomplished for us in dying **in our place** on the Cross and all that

He will accomplish when He returns (cf "*until He comes*" - **1 Cor 11:26**). In **Psalm 103:2** David exhorts us to "*preach a sermon to our souls*" - "*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits.*" While regular celebration of the Lord's Supper obviously is important so that we "forget none of His benefits," we as priests of God (**1 Pe 2:9+**) can every morning "*offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name*" (**Hebrews 13:15+**) for His benefits that are ours in Christ. So tomorrow morning consider beginning your day by remembering the countless benefits that are yours because of Christ's death on the Cross and His promise to return! You may be surprised at how uplifting such a simple exercise is to your soul and what a difference it makes on the rest of your day!

B. (:20) Distributing the Cup -- Significance

*"And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying,
"This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."*

MacArthur: What is the new covenant? The new covenant is the covenant of **Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36**. It's the saving covenant. It's the covenant of forgiveness and salvation. It's the covenant by which God forgives sinners, and it's ratified in the death of Christ. God forgave sinners before Christ died. God forgives sinners since Christ died. But God forgives all sinners because Christ died.

IV. (:21-23) WARNING OF BETRAYAL

A. (:21) Calling Out the Traitor

"But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table."

Anyabwile: Even the betrayal by Judas mentioned in **verse 21** was a fulfillment of Scripture. The psalmist saw a day when even his own familiar friend would betray him (**Ps. 41:9**; see **John 13:18**). Jesus says David's words were written about him (**24:44**). In truth Satan influenced Judas, but God was in control. Jesus was not killed simply because he was betrayed. He was killed because he was appointed to die for our sins (**Acts 4:27-28**). Even the most wicked and desperate acts of men cannot overthrow the plans of God. Even the cruelest betrayals come through the sovereign hands of God. God is always at work in such suffering to bring to pass his ultimately good plans. He works through tragedy to accomplish our salvation and bless his people.

B. (:22) Culpability Coupled with Divine Decree

*"For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined;
but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!"*

C. (:23) Confusion

*"And they began to discuss among themselves
which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing."*

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Jesus go to such elaborate lengths to keep the location of the venue for this final Passover secret?
- 2) Do you appreciate how Jesus orchestrates all the details of your life so that everything works out according to His master plan?
- 3) How can we better grasp the magnitude of this transition from Old Covenant times to New Covenant times?
- 4) Why was there no clarity regarding which one of them would betray Him?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Come to the Table

Some feel that a weekly observance is too frequent and runs the risk of making the Lord's Supper into a meaningless ritual. But many Christians from many different backgrounds—John Calvin in the Reformed tradition, Charles Spurgeon the Baptist, the Anglican church, Plymouth Brethren churches, and others—have observed the Lord's Supper weekly. The church in Acts seemed to gather weekly *“to break bread”* (**Acts 20:7**). Of course anything you do repeatedly runs the risk of becoming a meaningless ritual—singing familiar songs, prayer, Bible reading, or whatever. But the solution isn't to do those things less frequently, but to deal with the problems that cause our hearts to grow cold. If you neglect coming to the Lord's Supper, I believe you're missing one of the keys to spiritual health.

So I want to show you how to come to this important ordinance or sacrament ordained by our Lord. **Webster** defines a sacrament as “a formal religious act that is sacred as a sign or symbol of a spiritual reality.” **Augustine** said that it is an “outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Walter Elwell, [Baker], p. 965).

When we come to the Lord's Supper, we should first look to ourselves and then look to Christ.

1. When we come to the Lord's Supper, we should look to ourselves.

- A. WE SHOULD EXAMINE OUR ATTITUDES.
- B. WE SHOULD EXAMINE OUR ACTIONS.
- C. WE SHOULD EXAMINE OUR AFFECTIONS.

2. When we come to the Lord's Supper, we should look to Christ.

- A. LOOK TO CHRIST WHO SOVEREIGNLY LAID DOWN HIS LIFE OF HIS OWN ACCORD.
- B. LOOK TO CHRIST WHO KNOWS OUR HEARTS.
- C. LOOK TO CHRIST WHOSE SACRIFICIAL DEATH IS THE HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.
- D. LOOK TO CHRIST WHOSE RESURRECTION AND PROMISED RETURN ASSURE US OF THE EFFICACY OF HIS DEATH.

Deffinbaugh: The Last Supper

Neither Luke nor any other gospel writer makes a great deal out of the celebration of the last Passover, just before our Lord's death. I am not saying this celebration was unimportant, but rather that because of its importance, I would have expected it to have been a more detailed account. This brevity is the first of several **"tensions of the text."**

There are other tensions as well. Why is nearly as much space devoted to the preparation for the Passover meal as for the partaking of it? Furthermore, why was Jesus so eager to partake of the Passover, when it preceded and even anticipated His death? Finally, why is there such confusion and consternation (including a deletion of some of the text) over Luke's account of the Lord's Table, in which it appears that the (traditional) order of the bread and wine may have been reversed? . . .

At the meal itself, a number of events took place. It would seem that the Lord's washing of the feet of the disciples was the first item on the agenda (**John 13:1-20**). During the meal, once (cf. **Matthew 26:20-25; Mark 14:17-21**), if not more (**Luke 22:21-23**), the Lord spoke of His betrayer. The meal seems to have included some (perhaps most all) of the traditional Passover elements, and in addition, the commencement of the Lord's Supper, with words that I doubt the disciples had ever heard at a Passover meal (**Luke 22:19-20**). John's gospel avoids giving us yet another description of this ceremony. He, unlike the other gospel writers, includes an extensive message known as the "upper room discourse" (**John 14-16**), concluded by the Lord's "high priestly prayer" of intercession for His followers, which may have been prayed during the meal time, or perhaps later on in Gethsemane (**John 17**). The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) report the disciples' argument about who would be the greatest, along with our Lord's response (cf. **Luke 22:24-3**), the Lord's specific words to the over-confident Peter (**Luke 22:31-34**), and then His words about being prepared to face a hostile world (**Luke 22:35-38**). With this the party is said to have sung a hymn and to have departed to the Garden of Gethsemane, where our Lord prayed, with little help from His disciples (**Luke 22:39-46**). The arrest of Jesus then follows, concluding in His being handed over for crucifixion.

The point in all of this is simply to remind you that the meal was a lengthy one, during which time the Passover was memorialized, and also the Lord's Supper was inaugurated. It was also during this time that a great deal of teaching took place, as recorded primarily by John. The so-called "Last Supper" was but a part of a larger whole. We must therefore study and interpret it in this broader context. . .

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LAST SUPPER

As we begin to consider the "last supper" let us start by considering some of the characteristics of this event.

(1) **The "last supper" was a segment of a larger whole.** Even in the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the account of the actual celebration of the "last supper" is brief, but in the gospel of John, it is not even recorded. John's gospel gives us a much fuller account of our Lord's rather extensive teaching on this occasion, known as the "Upper Room Discourse."

(2) **The account of the "last supper" is not only brief, it does not "read back" into the event the greatly enhanced understanding of this event in the light of later events, such as the death of Christ on the cross.** It is not until Acts and the epistles of the New Testament that the full meaning of "communion" is seen. Luke waits until later to spell out this unseen significance.

Luke describes the event from the historical perspective of those who were there, not from that of those saints who can look on the event in terms of its added meaning in the light of the cross.

(3) The “last supper” was the last supper in that it marked the end of one dispensation and the entrance into another. It instituted the age of the “new covenant” and anticipated (at the cross) the end of the period of the “old covenant.” The “last supper” is unique, never to be reenacted. It is the closing of one chapter, and the beginning of a new one.

(4) The “last supper” was the inauguration of a new “church” ordinance, although it was not recognized as such at the time. The church will go back to this celebration as the historical roots of its celebration of “communion,” but the disciples had no grasp of the newness of this celebration at the time.

(5) The meaning and significance of this celebration of the “last supper” was almost totally missed by the disciples. They did not understand what Jesus was doing, and they were busy thinking about the identity of the betrayer, their own sadness, and who was the greatest among them.

(6) Jesus did not seek to explain to His disciples, at this point, all that He was doing meant. Indeed, in the fuller teaching of John’s gospel, it was clear that they would not understand.

(7) The last supper was not, in its observance, a glorious occasion. Regardless of how the artists might have portrayed it, this was a time of confusion, of fear, and of self-seeking on the part of the disciples. Jesus was the only one present who knew the meaning of what He was doing.

(8) The “last supper” was a modification of the Old Testament observance of the Passover. But there is little information given to us about the “ritual” that was observed by our Lord, or even that Jesus followed the normal Jewish ritual of that time. The part of the celebration that is emphasized is that which was utterly foreign to the Passover celebration, that which our Lord added.

(9) The mood of the “last supper,” especially for the disciples, was dominated by the gloom of our Lord’s betrayal and of His imminent death on the cross. The disciples did not know what was about to take place, but there was a sadness, a heaviness, in their spirits, knowing that something ominous was about to occur.

(10) In spite of and in contrast to the disciples, Jesus approached this meal with eagerness: “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (v. 15).

MacArthur: The Lord had to celebrate the Passover to fulfill all righteousness. The Lord had to then after celebrated the Passover transition it, transform it into the Lord’s table, the new memorial which would be for all the redeemed of all time to come. The Lord had to give them the great legacy of **John 13 to 16** – all those massive, sweeping, glorious promises, the richest portion of Scripture in the New Testament as far as believers are concerned. And also, the Lord needed to pray that great High Priestly prayer in John 17, which is the most staggering prayer in all the Scriptures where the Lord prays for us. All that needed to happen.

Therefore, He could not be arrested until that full evening had unfolded where the Passover was

celebrated, the Lord's table was instituted, and all of that was disseminated that's contained in that great section of John. He doesn't want anybody to know what's going to happen, except two people. And He doesn't tell them where it's going to be for fear that somebody might lobby them before they leave.

He identifies Peter and John and tells them to go on a mission of extreme secrecy. Judas can't tell the leaders because he has no idea where he's going. There's nothing in the Scripture to indicate Peter and John ever came back. They went early – Thursday. They acquired everything they needed, and they went to the place they were told to go to and spent the day preparing for the meal. And the rest arrived and nobody knew where they were until they got there. And once they got there, obviously Judas had to stay.

The Lord has a secret plan because there are things He has to accomplish. He will only be betrayed and arrested on His schedule. That's not going to happen until very late Thursday night, very late. When He finally finishes everything at the last supper, goes to the Mount of Olives, there He will be arrested and He will be executed that same day before the sun sets. Only in that little window can He be arrested, tried, and executed – not before – so that He will die; He will die at the very hour all Passover lambs were being slaughtered on Friday. It's a stunning thing to see all of the details under His control. . .

A little bit about the Passover, just quickly. It commemorated God delivering them from Egypt, which is recorded back in the book of Exodus. When the people of Israel were taken captive into Egypt, they were made slaves in Egypt, as you all know, for many generations. Eventually Moses came, led them out. The sea parted, drowned Pharaoh's army. They were liberated into the land of Canaan. But their liberation preparation came because they were warned by God to cover their doorposts with blood so the angel of death would not kill the firstborn of every house. You know that. They killed a lamb to sprinkle. They ate the lamb. They had unleavened bread. They had a Passover feast. And that became a permanent memorial to God's deliverance of His people from the land of Egypt.

Unleavened bread was used then because it's the kind of bread you can make in a hurry. You don't have to wait for it to rise – and they had to leave Egypt in a hurry. Also, unleavened bread has a sort of spiritual connotation. Leaven in the Bible is always seen as influence, permeating influence, such as leaven permeates dough, and usually it's bad. Unleavened bread, then, is a symbol of leaving behind all the permeating evil influence of Egypt.

They were then required, according to Exodus 12, to celebrate this every single year on the fourteenth of Nissan – which they had done for generations and generations, and Jews today still do it as well. The Lord was going to celebrate this Passover. this is the last legitimate one. This is the last legitimate one because He transforms it into the Lord's table; takes the leavened bread which once spoke of Egypt, and it speaks of His body; takes the wine which once spoke of deliverance from Egypt, and it refers to His blood; and the transformation of that commemoration is over. No Passover since then is legitimate. The Lord's table is the new symbol. God does not want us to remember His deliverance in Egypt as the great act. He wants us to remember His deliverance at Calvary as the great act. . .

Study Josephus. Study the Mishnah – the codification of Jewish law – and other historical sources. You find that the Jews in the north and the Jewish people in the south – the Galileans, say, as opposed to the Judeans – had different ways of calculating their days. These

chronological aspects have been a wonderful study, and anybody who makes an effort to studying this in the New Testament is greatly enriched by it. But **in the north**, they calculated days from **sunrise to sunrise**. Sunrise to sunrise; that was a day, whereas **in the south**, they calculated the day from **sunset to sunset**. So, that's a very clear distinction.

In Galilee, where Jesus and all the disciples except Judas had grown up, they calculated days from sunrise to sunrise. So the fourteenth of Nissan was sunrise on Thursday to sunrise on Friday. That puts the Passover Thursday night. For the Jews in the south, it was sunset to sunset, so that puts it in late Friday for the southern Jews. Same day calculated two different ways, and that worked well for the Jews.

By the way, the Pharisees tended to go with the northern approach. The Sadducees who were all around Jerusalem tended to go, of course, with the southern approach. What that did was solve a couple of problems. It split the number of animals to be killed into two different periods: Thursday night and Friday night. It also reduced what were called "regional clashes" because the southern people didn't think too highly of the northern people. So it just was easier to have them separated.

So Jesus is celebrating a Galilean Passover Thursday evening, and that is Friday – the beginning of Friday, sunset, for the Jews who celebrate it late the next day. The timetable is perfect. The Lord can celebrate the Passover, fulfill all righteousness with His disciples on Thursday, and it's a true Passover. The lambs were slain, and He can still die on the Passover the next night because there are two times when the Passover lamb is slain. . .

Now here's the way a Passover would have gone in Jesus' day, and we have lots of indications of this in history around the time of our Lord. They would start with a prayer of thanks, a prayer of thanks thanking God for His preservation, deliverance, protection, goodness, blessing; just a very general prayer.

Then would come the first cup of red wine. There would be four at every Passover. The first cup comes right after the initial thanks. And by the way, it was doubly diluted with water, doubly diluted with water because, of course, drunkenness was a sin and no commemoration of the work of God would in any sense want to impinge upon anyone's ability to think and reason by making them at all inebriated. And so, it was doubly diluted with water. This first cup of red wine was called the cup of blessing – the cup of blessing – in which they would speak of the blessings of God.

Then they would wash their hands. And it is both a useful washing of the hands, and a ceremonial washing of the hands in which they would recognize the need for cleansing. If they're going to commemorate the deliverance of God, they want to make sure their hearts are right before God, and so they go through kind of an external washing of the hands as a symbol of their cleansing.

This is very interesting to me because some time after this ceremonial washing – this is kind of an aside – sometime after this ceremonial washing in which they are affirming their need for cleansing and purity and holiness, **Luke 22:24** says, "*There arose a dispute among them as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest.*" So, whatever cleansing went on the outside, not a whole lot went on on the inside. . .

The next thing is the eating of bitter herbs – bitter herbs symbolizing the bitterness of being in slavery in Egypt for all those centuries. There would be pieces of bread also dipped in a paste made out of fruits and nuts, kind of ground together into a brown paste. They would dip pieces of bread in the herbs and the paste and eat that, reminiscing about the bitterness of the people of God in captivity before God set them free.

After that would come the singing of the Hallel. The Hallel is a sequence of psalms from **Psalm 113 to 118** – psalms of praise and thanks to God. Here they would sing **113 and 114**. They would sing the first two. Then would come the second cup of doubly diluted wine. At this point the father of the family, if it was in a family, or the head of the table in the case of Jesus, would give the Haggadah which is the explanation of the meaning of all of this, the showing forth, the telling forth. After the second cup of wine, an explanation of what this feast was about, they would then eat the lamb with unleavened bread. That's the main meal.

After that would come a third cup of doubly diluted wine, followed by the singing of the Hallel 115 to 118. And then a fourth cup of wine and it was over. . .

At this point, I always feel pretty weak, but I feel really weak to convey anything that comes close to the monumental transition that's going on here, to bring to an end in just those simple statements the whole old covenant, the entire Old Testament, to pull the curtain down, and to launch something brand new is stunning.

What happens here? I'll tell you what happens. This is the end of the whole ceremonial law: all the dietary laws, all the Sabbath laws. In fact, there's no more Sabbath. Immediately after this, the church starts to meet – when? The first day of the week. This is the end of the ceremonial law. This is the end of all the ceremonies, all the rituals, all the rites, all those social things that separated the people, the Israelite people, from the Gentiles. They're all gone. The moral law doesn't change because God doesn't change.

This is the end of all the rituals. This is the end of all the sacrifices. This is the end of all the altars, all the temple had to offer. This is the end of the priesthood. This is the end of the holy place. This is the end of the Holy of Holies, and God would split the curtain from top to bottom and throw it wide open for anybody and everybody to walk in and out.

This is the end of everything that they knew in all of their religious life that was symbolic. No more ceremonies, no more rituals, no more priests, no more sacrifices, no more altars, no more temple, no more holy place, no more Holy of Holies. It's all gone.

TEXT: Luke 22:24-34

TITLE: *SERVANT LEADERSHIP ADVOCATED*

BIG IDEA:

INSTEAD OF STRIVING FOR LEADERSHIP PREEMINENCE, FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST TO LEAD BY SERVING OTHERS

INTRODUCTION:

This topic of church leadership is one of my hot buttons (see the Leadership Studies page on my website). Because of pride and ego, we tend to want to promote our own leadership in a way that reflects the selfish ambition of the flesh. Despite the directives given in the NT, we think that we know better how to maintain unity in a church and how to pragmatically get things done. We think we need a differentiated, strong leader at the top of the governmental hierarchy structure to be effective. We pay lip service to the NT model of plurality of church government, but we find ways to deny the spirit of that model and to maintain some form of hierarchy in leadership that parallels what we see in secular business and government. This is WRONG!

I. (:24) DISPUTE OVER LEADERSHIP PREEMINENCE

“And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.”

This is the Diotrephes’ syndrome that is so prevalent in church leadership (**3 John 9**)

I believe that the prevalent model of church government in the Christian church today that features a dominant senior pastor that is differentiated in office from the other elders is a violation of the plurality of elder model prescribed in the NT. I am definitely in the minority on this conviction.

Donald Miller: The disciples’ questioning among themselves about who was the betrayer (**vs. 23**) is contrasted with a dispute about who should be “*regarded as the greatest*” (**vs. 24**). This indicates the terrible twist of the human heart which, rather than humbly facing its own lack, is inclined to vaunt itself over others.

MacArthur: Their eschatology is right. They expect the kingdom. And they know that in the kingdom there will be honor, and there will be blessing. Their eschatology is correct. They're having a hard time understanding it. Before there could be the kingdom, there has to be the suffering and the dying. And that the kingdom is a long time away, as our Lord told them, you remember, in chapter 21. This is very troubling selfishness. It's sound eschatology, but it's very troubling selfishness. How can such a shallow, self-centered group, with a history of weakness, and vacillation, and failure – how can they possibly be used to change the world?

Michael McCartney: Scriptures warning against selfish ambition in church leadership:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Phil. 2:3)

For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. (James 3:16)

An unfriendly man pursues selfish ends; he defies all sound judgment. (Prov. 18:1)

Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. (Psalm 119:36)

Servant leaders are those who repeatedly cry, "No Pride" every day. They are leaders who practice humility. They are ones who seize every opportunity to tear down pride in the church so that it will not destroy it. It's a leader who uses servant characteristics to lead not worldly business practices. It's one who continually reminds himself of **Prov. 16:18**

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

With humility being modeled in leadership each individual is treated with respect and dignity. It also gives permission to each person to contribute to the ministry without being intimidated or driven away.

II. (:25-27) DEMONSTRATION OF THE MODEL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP BY CHRIST

A. (:25-26) Contrast in the 2 Models of Leadership – Gentile vs. Christian

1. (:25) Gentile Model of Leadership = Lording it Over Others

“And He said to them, ‘The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’”

MacArthur: You can't think like the world thinks. The world operates on autocratic power. That's how the world operates. It operates by dominance, by dictatorship; authoritarianism, despotic rulers lord it over people by threat and force. *Katakurieuō*, lord it over them. A compound of lording – very strong, tyrannical. That's the world's way.

You have a pecking order. You have a hierarchy; you have somebody at the top who dominates everybody. They knew this. This is how life was in the ancient world. In fact, there were no democracies anywhere in sight at that time in human history. This is the world's way. Somebody is the greatest; somebody's on top; somebody has the authority; somebody dominates.

And the kings of the Gentiles, the nations, that's their approach. And then He adds, “And those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors’” – are called, probably a middle voice, “call themselves benefactors.” These are the people – the word “benefactor” – *euergetēs* – energizers. These are the ones who think all the influence lies with them, all the power lies with them. they are responsible for being the source of everything that happens. It all flows out of them. They're the energizers. They have authority, meaning total, absolute authority.

So, in the world you have dictators and kings and rulers and Caesars and monarchs and pharaohs and all the rest. And they dominate by power and force and threat, and rule by fear. And they call themselves the influencers, the energizers, the benefactors. That is to say they're the source of all the good that comes. This is how the world operates, with this kind of hierarchical structure.

Gilbrant: This desire for worldly greatness causes people to try to dominate others. It makes them demand proper honor and fancy titles. They love to play the tyrant and lord it over those less fortunate than they. They try to maintain their superiority and power by violent oppression. Such is the greatness of this world—full of arbitrary arrogance and as temporary as it is empty.

Life Application Bible Commentary: The world's system of leadership varies greatly from leadership in God's kingdom. Worldly leaders are often selfish and arrogant as they claw their way to the top. *Benefactor* was a title used in the Greek and Roman societies for princes, Roman emperors, and the gods. It was a reciprocal relationship in that the clients who received support from the benefactors were required to recognize their authority and give public adulation to the benefactor. But among Christians, the *leader* is to be the one who *serves* best. There are different styles of leadership—some lead through public speaking, some through administering, some through relationships. Whatever the style, every Christian leader needs a servant's heart.

2. (:26) Christian Model of Leadership = Serving Others

“But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.”

Geldenhuys: The rulers and leading men of earthly kingdoms act with outward power and make their inferiors realise very thoroughly that they are their rulers. Obviously, under such circumstances there is a constant competition among the earthly rulers – whosoever acts with the most dominating force is regarded as the most important. In addition, earthly potentates are often so conceited that they claim the title of “*benefactors*” – they look for fame and honour which they even extort forcibly. Among His followers, however, such a state of affairs must not prevail, Jesus declares. Instead of exploiting their positions (as the eldest or as leaders) to rule over others, the eldest one among them (i.e. the one to whom special honour is due by reason of his more advanced years) must regard himself as the younger one (who does not expect this special reverence). Likewise the one who is called upon to act as leader must carry out his task like one who serves and not like one who has to be served. Leadership should not be regarded as a means of enjoying special privileges over others, but as a specially responsible form of service to be rendered in deep humility before God.

B. (:27) Example of Christ

“For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves?”

Is it not the one who reclines at the table?

But I am among you as the one who serves.”

Morris: The feet-washing that John records was a striking illustration of Jesus’ readiness to take the place of one who serves. He did this although He was entitled to the supreme place and men naturally esteem the diner as higher than the waiter. All three examples of the word *serves* translate *diakonon*, a verb which means in the first place the service of the table waiter and thus is very much to the point. From this it came to mean lowly service in general and this is what is in mind here. Jesus is not saying that if His followers wish to rise to great heights in the church they must first prove themselves in a lowly place. He is saying that faithful service in a lowly place is itself true greatness.

David Guzik: The world regards the one who is served as greater, but Jesus showed us that true greatness is in serving, more than in being served. Cultures have always envied the person whom

others serve. In ancient China, rich people sometimes grew long, long fingernails, so long they could do nothing for themselves – and this was seen as a sign of status.. But the people who are really great in our lives are the servants. If the President took a month off, no one would really miss it; but if all the trash collectors in the country took the month off, we would notice. Jesus is trying to re-arrange our thinking, our priorities.

III. (:28-30) DOMINION AND PRIVILEGE PROMISED FOR THE FAITHFUL IN THE COMING KINGDOM

A. (:28) Faithfulness Recognized by Christ

"And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials;"

B. (:29-30) Favor of Dominion and Privilege Granted in Coming Kingdom

*"and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom,
I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom,
and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

IV. (:31-34) DENIAL AND RESTORATION PROPHECIED BY CHRIST – EVEN THE BEST SPIRITUAL LEADERS HAVE SERIOUS WARTS

A. (:31) Danger for Spiritual Leaders

"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;"

J C Ryle: There is something very awful in this expression. It shows us that the devil is often “desiring” to accomplish our ruin, and striving to accomplish it, while we know nothing of his doings, because he is invisible. On the other hand, there is some comfort in the expression. It teaches us that Satan can do nothing without God’s permission. However great his “desire” to do mischief, he works in chains.

B. (:32) Directives Regarding Failure and Recovery

1. Encouragement to Perseverance

"but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail;"

Spurgeon: How encouraging is the thought of the Redeemer’s never-ceasing intercession for us. When we pray, He pleads for us, and when we are not praying, He is advocating our cause and, by His supplications, shielding us from unseen dangers. We little know what we owe to our Savior’s prayers. When we reach the hilltops of heaven and look back upon all the way whereby the Lord our God has led us, how we will praise Him who, before the eternal throne, has pleaded our cause against our unseen enemies. *"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not"* (**Luke 22:32**).

2. Exhortation to Revitalized Ministry after Recovery from Failure

"and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers."

C. (:33-34) Denial of Christ Exposes Deceptive Self-Confidence

1. (:33) Deceptive Self-Confidence

"And he said to Him, 'Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!'"

Donald Miller: Peter failed to understand the dimensions of the testing through which he and the others were to go. The surest way to failure is to underestimate the odds against us! The only response the warning drew from Peter was a self-confident assertion that he would stand by Jesus even to the death (**vs. 33**).

2. (:34) Denial of Christ

“And He said, ‘I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.’”

Geldenhuys: In the story of Peter’s fatal self-confidence and pitiable fall every believer has a permanent and powerful warning never to rely arrogantly on his own strength. A healthy confidence is indeed necessary to every Christian, but this must be in the sense of reliance on God – i.e. faith, not in our own resources, but in the power given to us by Him.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What sparked this shift in the conversation from considering who might be the potential betrayer of Christ to who should have the preeminence in leadership?
- 2) Where do we see the spirit of selfish ambition in church leadership?
- 3) Where have we been deceived by self-confidence in the ministry?
- 4) How can we give hope to those who have experienced a significant failure in leadership?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: Who’s the Greatest?

This wasn’t the first time that the twelve had gotten into this sort of silly debate. They had argued about the same matter while they walked at some distance from Jesus, thinking that He couldn’t hear what they were discussing (**Mark 9:33-37**). But He knew what they were discussing and used the occasion to teach them about childlike humility. On another occasion, the mother of James and John had come to Jesus to ask that her sons could sit on His right and left in the kingdom. The other disciples were indignant (**Mark 10:35-45**). What right had these two brothers to claim the top spots in the kingdom? Jesus taught them that the greatest should become the servant and the one who wished to be first should be the slave of all, adding, *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”*

But in spite of these repeated lessons, here they were again, right on the eve of the Lord’s death, arguing over which of them was the greatest! This shows us that although we can have this lesson in our heads, it takes a while to put it into practice. We just think that we’ve learned it once and for all when someone does something to bug us and we think, “I’m a better servant of Christ than he is!” Although we may not get into a verbal debate, the thought of our heart is,

“I’m greater than he is!” So we all have to keep coming back to this fundamental lesson:

The greatest in God’s sight are those who humbly serve.

1. The great example of servanthood: Jesus Christ.

A. JESUS FAITHFULLY SERVED ALTHOUGH HE ALONE DESERVES ETERNAL SUPREMACY.

B. JESUS FAITHFULLY SERVED THROUGH MANY TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS.

C. JESUS FAITHFULLY SERVED THOUGH LONELY AND MISUNDERSTOOD.

D. JESUS FAITHFULLY SERVED BECAUSE OF HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US.

2. The great enemy of servanthood: Self.

The disciples’ squabble came from one source: self! **James 4:1** asks, “*What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you?*” He answers, “*Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?*” Selfish desire leads us into conflict with one another. That is why Jesus spells out the beginning requirement if we wish to follow Him: “*If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me*” (**Luke 9:23**). But denying self isn’t a once and for all decision that we make and then get on with life. Self keeps rearing its ugly head, even in those who have tried to kill the monster for years! So even the most mature saints constantly have to do battle with self.

A. SELF REVEALS ITSELF IN PRIDE.

B. SELF REVEALS ITSELF IN COMPETITION.

C. SELF IS MODELED FOR US IN WORLDLY LEADERSHIP.

3. The great encouragement to servanthood: Christ’s grace in spite of our sins.

4. The great enjoyment of servanthood: To have fellowship and service with Christ throughout eternity.

Conclusion:

I read about a church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, that has a hand-lettered sign over the only door into the sanctuary: Servants’ Entrance. There isn’t any way in or out of that church except through the service door (*Christianity Today* [9/16/91], p. 42). That’s how every church should be! It’s a place for servants only. Who’s the greatest in God’s kingdom? Those who humbly serve as Jesus did.

Deffinbaugh: Perspective, Personal Ambition, and Prophecy

Remember as we approach these three paragraphs that these are the last words of instruction Jesus gave to His disciples, at least as Luke’s account is concerned. These are very important words, indeed, words that had great meaning for the disciples, and words which contain important lessons for us as well. It is not just the disciples of days gone by who have a problem of sinful personal ambition and who reflect an ungodly and destructive spirit of competition. When we look at the Corinthian church, we find this problem of self-assertion and status-seeking

was still one of the major hindrances to the unity and ministry of the New Testament church. In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul wrote that of all those whom he might have sent, those who were both saints and ministers (of a kind), he had only one man who was not self-seeking, and that man was Timothy. All the rest “*seek after their own interests*” (**Philippians 2:21**), Paul said. If we but look about the church today, we see that power struggles, ambition, and self-seeking are everywhere—everywhere. Jesus has the answer to this problem, and Luke has recorded the answer in our text. . .

Where one sat at a meal table in that part of the world indicated how important he was (cf. **Luke 14:7-11; Matthew 23:6**). It would seem that as the disciples entered the upper room where they were to partake of the Passover Lamb, they rushed past the basin where a slave would normally have washed the feet of the guests (and where no slave was present), in order to gain the best seats. Perhaps the disciples argued because those who thought themselves to be the greatest lost out in the race for the chief seats. Peter, who may have been the oldest, and thus a likely candidate for “first chair,” seems to have been more removed from Jesus than John who was reclining on Jesus’ breast and who also may have been the youngest (cf. **John 13:23-25**). If this were the case, then Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet was indeed a timely lesson. This act would certainly exemplify our Lord’s claim to be among them as “*one who serves*” (**Luke 22:27**). . .

I. Jesus’ Correction of the Disciples’ Competitiveness (22:25-30)

How different the disciple of Jesus must be. Jesus does not here argue against greatness. He accepts the fact that some men are great, greater than others. All are not equal. The issue here is not whether some saints should be greater than others, but rather how they use their greatness. Jesus said the first characteristic which should mark the great Christian is that they don’t use their position. While they may be the greatest, they are not to act like it, or to demand they be treated like it. They are to be like the youngest; they are to regard themselves and act like the one who has the least power. (Many of us know how “bossy” older brothers or sisters can get, and how they think they can tell younger siblings what to do.) They would thus speak gently, when they could get away with being harsh and severe. They will not seek to force others to serve them. Instead, they will be characterized by servanthood. They will use their position and their power as a platform of service. The benefits which they could claim for themselves they will pass along to others. In short, Jesus taught His disciples that they should manifest greatness in exactly the opposite way the Gentiles do. They should live in an “upside-down” kingdom. . .

The disciples’ preoccupation and debate over their own position, prestige, and power was inappropriate for several reasons. Those Jesus has mentioned thus far are:

- (1) this is the way the heathen behave;
- (2) it is the opposite of the way Jesus has manifested Himself, even though He is the greatest of all; and,
- (3) the preoccupation with greatness is untimely, for that which the disciples were seeking will not come in this life, but in the next. . .

II. Jesus’ Words of Prophecy to Peter (22:31-34)

It seems to me that Peter was one of the main characters in this debate over the disciple’s perception of greatness. (I suspect James and John were also very much a part of this argument.) Jesus’ words to Peter then would be very directly related to His role in the debate over greatness.

Jesus' words must have smarted as the elder statesman of the group, who thought he was the greatest, heard from Jesus that he would not even survive the next few hours without denying His Lord, three times no less! If Peter felt he was considered the greatest, surely he must also have looked at himself as one of the most loyal, committed members of our Lord's band. It must have been inconceivable for him to think of himself as such a weakling that he would deny his Lord when the going got tough. . .

MacArthur: The world's way of greatness is like a pyramid. The prestige and power of the great person is built on the many subordinate persons beneath him. But in the kingdom, the pyramid is inverted. As the great commentator **R. C. H. Lenski** has observed, God's "*great men are not sitting on top of lesser men, but bearing lesser men on their backs.*" Unfortunately, however, there are still many people in the church who continually seek recognition, prestige, and power by manipulating and controlling others to their own selfish advantage. A tragic number of Christian leaders and celebrities have gained great followings by appealing to people's emotions and worldly appetites. But that is not to be so among Christ's disciples today any more than among the Twelve.

Rod Mattoon: Jesus warned Peter and the disciples that Satan desired to sift them like wheat. This sifting of wheat basically referred to the repeated, swift, and violent shaking of the wheat in a sieve. The sifter would shake the sieve from side to side in order to get the chaff to surface to the top. It was then discarded. The sieve was then put through a teeter-totter motion. The sifter would blow over the material, so that what remained of the chaff gathered in an easily removable pile. The purpose for the sifting was to save the wheat that had been separated from unwanted material. The sifting of Satan offers some important lessons that we need to consider.

1. Sifting was for the purpose of purifying the wheat

When the Lord puts us through a sifting process, He desires to purify our lives and get the chaff out. Satan, however, sifts a person to destroy them. His temptations are for the purpose of destroying us spiritually. This is what happened to Judas Iscariot and what he tried to do to Peter.

2. Sifting was for the purpose of exposing the chaff

That is what Satan desires to do in us. He wants to expose our chaff, our faults, our sins, or our weaknesses, for the purpose of hurting our testimony for Christ and to lead others astray.

3. Sifting was done to separate the wheat from the chaff the good from the bad

Satan sifts us to separate us from that which is good. He wants us to discard that which is good in our lives. When a Christian has been sifted by Satan, he discards the Bible, he stops hanging around Christians, and he gets out of church. He separates himself from that which is good.

4. The up and down, teeter-totter motion of the sieve was to sift the wheat

Satan desires that we be up and down or unstable in our lives. He tries to get us distracted and from focusing our faith in the Lord by bringing temptations, trials, and turmoil into our lives. In fact, it was James who said, "*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*" (**James 1:8**). . .

Did Peter fail? Yes, as we will see down the road, he will lose his courage and deny the Lord, but his faith did not fail. He was not a permanent casualty like Judas was. He did not quit serving the Lord, and his faith in Christ did not end. He was knocked down, but not knocked out. He was spiritually bloodied, beaten, bruised, and battered but not permanently beaten. He got back into the battle.

Have you drifted far away from Christ? Have you damaged your life by indulging in destructive sins? Repent and get your life right with the Lord. No one is going to turn your life around except you. If you are unwilling to change your course, you are destined for spiritual failure.

The records of wars sometimes tell of officers who lost their rank and were dropped from the rolls of the regiment in disgrace, but afterward, by heroic conduct won back their lost rank. There is always in the soul that possibility of reclaiming and regaining the honors and the righteousness it has lost. No matter how deep into the far country the son has wandered, there is always a path that leads back to the Father's house. There is a robe kept in readiness for you.

TEXT: Luke 22:35-38

TITLE: BE PREPARED FOR SUFFERING AND REJECTION

BIG IDEA:

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST BE PREPARED FOR SUFFERING AND REJECTION AS THEY ENTER INTO SPIRITUAL WARFARE

INTRODUCTION:

On Sunday morning we were challenged to choose the discomfort and suffering of **combat boots** over the comfort of **household slippers**. If we want to truly follow Jesus Christ we must deny self and take up our cross daily and follow the path our Master has already traveled. The difficulties will be great ... but we can make this choice in faith knowing that this is the path of joy.

What does it look like for each of us to put on our combat boots and follow after Jesus? In my daily Bible reading this morning I came across this passage which helped to flesh out the picture of our spiritual warfare. It is a passage that I cannot remember having heard preached – it really struck me as new and fresh and impactful.

[**MacArthur:** Perhaps you've never even read that passage. I don't think in my life I've ever heard a message on that passage. And yet it is one of the most important ones in the New Testament for reasons that will become apparent to you.]

The motto of the Boy Scouts (I guess that now has been changed to Scouts BSA – ugh) has always been “**Be Prepared.**” Christ is calling for His followers to enter into spiritual warfare with their eyes wide open – prepared to endure fellowship with Him in suffering and being mocked and rejected.

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST MUST BE PREPARED FOR SUFFERING AND REJECTION AS THEY ENTER INTO SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Jesus is still in the Upper Room after enjoying the Last Supper and giving final instructions to His followers before He goes to the Mount of Olives, where he will be arrested and brought to trial. He wants them to understand that they are about to face extreme conflict. The attitude of the world will now be one of hostility rather than hospitality. Some areas of the world experience this to a far greater degree than do believers here in the United States.

I. (:35-36) PREPARATION MANDATED: FOLLOWING CHRIST LOOKS DIFFERENT AFTER HIS REJECTION

A. (:35) Before Picture – Followers of Christ Could Expect Welcome Reception and Support

“And He said to them, ‘When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?’ And they said, ‘No nothing.’”

Followers of Christ are the “*sent out*” ones – called to fulfill the Great Commission; staying in one's comfort zone is not an option. We are ambassadors for Christ and have a story to proclaim to the nations.

They should have learned great lessons in faith by being obedient in their former mission trips. But those experiences did not entail the same level of danger and suffering that the disciples should anticipate going forward.

MacArthur: They had been generally received very well during the three-year ministry of our Lord in Galilee and in Judea. When they were with the Lord, the Lord was received, welcomed by massive crowds who were thrilled to have Him there as He taught and as He healed and as He cast out demons. They wanted Jesus in their town, they wanted Jesus in their presence. And so they were happy to receive those who were with Him. You might say that they had been welcomed everywhere they went by the world in general. And when I say world, I mean in the broad sense those who are outside the Kingdom of God and therefore are against the purposes of God.

Geldenhuys: During the time when the Saviour, because of His miracles of healing and other charitable work among the needy multitudes, did not yet experience much opposition and enmity, His disciples, when He sent them out (**ix. 3; x. 4**), were treated with great respect by the people. Although the Lord at that time commanded them to go without purse, scrip and shoes, they were so hospitably received wherever they went, that they suffered no want. Everything was made easy and prosperous for them, and they returned with joy (**x. 17**).

B. (:36) After Picture – Followers of Christ Should Expect Rejection and Attacks

“And He said to them, ‘But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one.’”

MacArthur: here’s the two transition words, “*But now...but now...*” You’re not going to enjoy that in the future. You’re not going to find a welcoming world of unbelievers. You’re not going to find people in Israel or in the Gentile world throwing open their doors to invite you in to preach Christ to them. The nation has now rejected Me and having rejected Me, they will reject you because you belong to Me. They reject Me, you preach Me, they reject you.

1. Purse – Appropriate to earn and retain money – not called to be beggars
2. Bag – Appropriate to own personal property – not called to relinquish all personal property
3. Sword -- more valuable than a robe – Why? Need to defend yourself where appropriate ... but look at how Peter used his sword in wrong way

Geldenhuys: But, says the Saviour, the hour has now struck when everything is going to be different. From now on He will no longer be with them in the same way as before and they will no longer be honoured and entertained, as before, because they are the disciples of an honoured and beloved Master. He has already been rejected by the Jewish authorities and ere long He will be killed and looked upon as a hated criminal by practically the whole people. The immediate result will be that they, as the followers of the Crucified One, will likewise be despised, pushed out and persecuted. So they can no longer depend on any generous provision for their needs on the part of the people. Therefore they will henceforth, with all their strength and energy, have to find their own way through a hostile world. They must, the Saviour declares in a striking figure, as His followers in the struggle of life, be just as determined and whole-hearted as a fighting man

who gives up everything, even his garment, as long as he only possesses a sword to continue the struggle with.

Constable: Probably Jesus used the purse, bag, and sword metaphorically rather than literally to symbolize the disciples' personal resources. Apparently Jesus wanted His disciples to arm themselves with personal preparedness including dependence on God and His Word for the impending crisis. He was calling them to be ready for hardship and self-sacrifice.

MacArthur: This is not to say the gospel advances by the sword...like Islam. Our Lord is using this **figuratively**. You're going into a **hostile world** where you're going to have to understand that you need to support yourself, supply yourself, and protect yourself. . . Swords were used for things other than weapons. They were used for cutting wood, to make a fire. They were used for defending yourself against a wild animal. It could be brandished in the event that you were attacked by a robber for self protection. He says it's going to be hard from now on. Different attitude in the world. [cf. **John 15:18**]

II. (:37) PREPARATION MODELED: THE REJECTION OF CHRIST WAS BOTH PROPHECIED AND FULFILLED

A. Necessity of Fulfillment of Scripture

“For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me,”

Christ could not escape suffering and rejection and death via any type of exception clause and His followers will not be able to fare better than their Master. He did not shrink back despite His full knowledge of what lay ahead. He set His face like flint to go to Jerusalem and suffer and die.

Christ is our model of one who was fully prepared to enter into suffering and rejection to the point of death in order to accomplish the kingdom objectives and fight the spiritual warfare His Heavenly Father had ordained.

There is a certainty about the future that Christ is laying out here for His followers.

B. Heart of the Passage = Rejection of Jesus Christ

“And He was classed among criminals;”

What is involved in being viewed and treated as a “*criminal*”?

Isaiah 53:12 – “*numbered with the transgressors*” Must understand this OT text

Bob Deffinbaugh: The word in the original text which is found here is not the normal word we would have expected to be used of a criminal, although this meaning may be acceptable. The original (Hebrew) term employed in **Isaiah 53:12** is one which refers to a “*rebel*,” one who defiantly sins against God. This may very well result in criminal acts, but the term “*transgressor*” is, I think, a better translation. Mark is, of course, correct. The fact that Jesus was crucified between two criminals did fulfill the prophecy of **Isaiah 53:12**, but it did so in a kind of symbolic way, so that it also left room for a broader, more sweeping fulfillment. Jesus was numbered (perhaps, as has been suggested, “*allowed Himself to be numbered*”) among transgressors, and the two thieves were surely that. But it could also be said that since Jesus was now dealt with as a criminal, His disciples were regarded in the same way. Jesus and His

disciples were considered transgressors. . .

There is one thing about this prophecy which characterizes it as a whole, yet which I have never before noticed. The entire prophecy utilizes a kind of literary contrast. The Messiah will be the King of Israel, who will mete out judgment to sinners, and yet He will also be the Suffering Savior who dies for the sins of His people. He is innocent, yet He will bear the guilt of men. He is greatly esteemed by God and is elevated to the pinnacle of position and power, and yet He is regarded by men as a sinner (a criminal, if you would), whose rejection, suffering, and death is viewed as just. He who is God is viewed as justly condemned by God. He who bears the sins of men is viewed by men as bearing the guilt of His own sins. The Messiah is perceived by men in a way precisely opposite that of God. Men look down upon Him as worthy of God's wrath, yet it is He who alone is worthy (righteous), but who bears the sins of men. . .

Men would reject the Messiah because He would not conform to their expectations of Him and of His kingdom. While God would look upon Messiah as the sinless Son of God, men would view Him as a sinner, condemned by God. Men wanted a kingdom in which they would have riches, freedom, power, and pleasure. Messiah would bring, at least initially, rejection and suffering. And so men would reject Him. . .

The disciples were debating among themselves who was perceived to be the greatest. They were thinking in terms of a "scepter," but Jesus spoke to them of a "sword." The disciples were thinking in terms of a crown, but Jesus was headed for a cross. Jesus, in so doing, was fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Messiah and His kingdom, but the disciples were wholly missing the point of His coming. What the disciples did not understand was precisely what this messianic prophecy was saying, that the glorious kingdom of righteousness was to be brought about by a "king" who was rejected as a sinner. The crown, as it were, was to be preceded by a cross. Indeed, the cross was God's means of gaining the crown. All of this was revealed through this prophecy of Isaiah. Yet the disciples failed to grasp it, because they were looking at matters through the eyes of their own ambition.

If God's Messiah was to be regarded and even rejected as a criminal, this also meant that His disciples would be regarded as such. Were the disciples debating who would have the highest position, the most power, the greatest prestige? Then the disciples were wrong. They, by association with Christ, were to be regarded as criminals, not kings. They would thus need to think in terms of swords (not literal ones, however), not scepters. They must be ready to endure men's rejection and persecution, not men's honor and praise. In so identifying with Christ and suffering with Him, the disciples would eventually enter into the victories and joys of His future kingdom, as He had just told them (**Luke 22:28-30**).

Jesus was not a criminal in reality or in character or in deed;
But He was certainly "*classed*" as a criminal and that had severe consequences for how He was treated.

No life of comfort; no popular acceptance; no crowning by the public as the promised Messiah.

C. Reality of Fulfillment of Scripture

"for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment."

III. (:38) PREPARATION MISUNDERSTOOD: FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST FAIL TO GRASP THE NATURE OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

A. Missing the Point

“And they said, ‘Lord, look here are two swords.’”

Probably Peter and one other disciple had a sword on them that they could pull out and show Jesus. But they took His words too literally and missed the point about preparation for ongoing spiritual battle.

B. Moving On

“And He said to them, ‘It is enough.’”

Morris: Jesus’ response, It is enough, means not ‘Two will be sufficient’ but rather, ‘Enough of this kind of talk!’ He dismisses a subject in which the disciples were so hopelessly astray.

MacArthur: The disfigured scarred substitute, the sacrificed suffering substitute, the obedient, submissive substitute becomes the exalted sovereign substitute. But what about them? Would they triumph? Go back to Luke 22. Would they triumph? He would through His cross and resurrection and the redemption of sinners, would they? . . .

There’s a certain **resignation** in Him saying that, like...You guys just never really get it, do you?” Certain **exasperation**, you might say. Why would He say it is enough? What do You mean it’s enough?

Well the answer is this, that’s all the sword you’re going to need, guys, because your future protection doesn’t depend really on you. Go back to John again, 14, and let me tell you what else Jesus said to them that night. What about us...what about us? We’ve only got two swords. **John 14 verse 12**, *“Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also and greater works than these shall he do because I go to the Father.”*

Steven Cole: So Jesus told the disciples to sell their robe and buy a sword. And, when they produced two swords, He said, “It is enough.” What did He mean? In light of Jesus’ command to Peter in the garden to put away his sword, and Christ’s non-resistance to the Jewish guards (22:53), it is obvious that Jesus was speaking symbolically, not literally, when He told them to buy swords. He was referring to the swords as a symbol of preparation for the intense spiritual conflict just ahead. When the disciples took Jesus literally and produced two swords and He replied, “It is enough,” He was dismissing the subject in light of their continuing spiritual dullness. They just didn’t get it.

What did the disciples think when Jesus left them dangling at this point?

CONCLUSION:

To be genuine followers of Jesus, we must allow Him to radically reorient our thinking. Taking up our cross daily and being prepared and willing to submit to rejection and suffering and humiliation requires drawing on all of the resources of God’s grace. We cannot skip the cross. But certain victory and glory lie ahead. For now it is time to put on the combat boots rather than the house slippers.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) We need to ask the Lord to remove our blind spots so that we don't lose the impact of His message to us.
- 2) We should never be surprised by hostility or opposition as we fulfill our role as ambassadors for Christ.
- 3) Selfish ambition and striving for personal glory have no place in the ministry of the gospel.
- 4) We can be confident that all of the prophecies relating to the Second Coming of Christ and His Kingdom will be fulfilled just as certainly as Isaiah 53 was fulfilled.

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Enterthebible.org: Jesus' enigmatic words in these verses have led interpreters to a variety of different conclusions. His question in **v. 35** recalls **Luke 9:3** and **10:4**, where he sends his followers out to proclaim God's reign and work miracles. In those instances, they bring nothing with them. Now Jesus tells them to take their possessions and use them to buy swords. He cites a scriptural text, **Isaiah 53:12**, indicating that the political powers will move against him and treat him as a lawless one, a criminal. This means that his followers should expect to face similar opposition and perhaps legal prosecution.

Jesus' comments about the swords are probably meant symbolically. He hardly appears to be trying to muster a fighting force, and the disgust he expresses after a sword is used in **Luke 22:49-51** must be taken into account. The contrast he draws with **Luke 9:3** and **10:4** is also important to consider here. Earlier he prepared his followers for preaching. Now he prepares them for persecution. Their lives will be marked by the sword from this point forward. His concluding remark, "*It is enough,*" does not say that two swords will protect them. Instead, it voices his exasperation that they have misunderstood him as if he were issuing an actual call to arms. His followers will know the realities of swords, but they are not themselves to wield actual swords.

Geoff Thomas: This lovely personality who went about doing good would soon be arrested as a criminal, and whipped as a criminal, and put in prison as a criminal, and tried as a criminal, and condemned to death as a criminal, and bear the placard above his head announcing that he was a criminal, and crucified as a criminal, and mocked as a criminal, and killed as the very worst of criminals. The accusations and sufferings and dying of this alleged transgressor Jesus of Nazareth were the most momentous events in the future of these disciples. Not having to defend themselves with a sword, or getting the powers that be to defend them, emotional and unforgettable as such events might be. No. Such things would be as nothing whatsoever compared to this, that the Lord Jesus, holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners, the incarnate God, the promised Messiah, had come into the world to deal with the greatest of all problems, that of human sin. He must go to the cross and be numbered amongst criminals. God's

love for us must result in his being there. Christ dealt with it by keeping all the law of God utterly righteously, and he dealt with it by taking to himself the condemnation of the broken law – as if he had trampled on the law of God and was justly suffering its penalty. But he was wholly innocent. Then why did he get numbered with the criminals especially as he had the power to escape, to turn them to pillars of salt, to take away their lives? He was doing this out of love for us transgressors. He was taking responsibility for our crimes against the law of God. He was standing in our place. He was bearing our guilt and blame. He was being punished instead of us. God was making him a criminal for us and God was making his righteousness ours. How far men will go in their sin, to nail God the Son to a cross until he's dead! How far will God go for man's salvation not to spare his Son from such a death so that sinners like us can be spared!

Steven Cole: I believe that the disciples' blindness to their own weakness and to the spiritual danger that lurked just ahead is the point of the difficult **verses 35-38**.

TEXT: Luke22:39-46

TITLE: PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

BIG IDEA:

**LEARN THE LESSONS FROM JESUS ON PRAYER SO THAT WE TOO MAY TRIUMPH OVER TEMPTATION --
TEN LESSONS ON PRAYER FROM JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE**

INTRODUCTION:

This short passage captures the deep emotion of Jesus as the weight of His propitiatory sacrifice for sin on the Cross hits home with intensity. We cannot imagine the internal agony as the Son of God aligns His will with that of the Father and triumphs over the desires of Satan to thwart God's redemptive purposes. We can learn much about prayer as we see the failure of the disciples to watch with Jesus and continue in prayer themselves.

I. (:39) PATTERN OF PRAYER

“And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him.”

Donald Miller: The fact that Jesus planned his own arrest is seen in his going to the Garden on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, “*as was his custom*” (vs. 39). He had been spending each night there recently (21:37). He knew that Judas had gone to inform the authorities where they might find him. Instead of going elsewhere to avoid arrest, he went exactly where he had been going, to the place Judas well knew (see **John 18:2**), to await his seizure. He is master, not Judas and not the authorities.

II. (:40) PURPOSE FOR PRAYER

“And when He arrived at the place, He said to them, ‘Pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”

III. (:41a) PRIVACY IN PRAYER

“And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw,”

MacArthur: Likely, typically, it belonged to a man, a family, surely believers in the Lord Jesus who let Jesus and His disciples find privacy there, secrecy there, and sleep there in seclusion.

IV. (:41b) POSTURE IN PRAYER

“and He knelt down and began to pray,”

V. (:42a) PETITION IN PRAYER

“saying, ‘Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me;”

VI. (:42b) PREDETERMINATION IN PRAYER

“yet not My will, but Thine be done.”

VII. (:43) PARTNER IN PRAYER

“Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.”

Bruce Hurt: Strengthening (**enischuo** from **en** = in + **ischuo** = to strengthen) used only here and **Acts 9:19** (*“he took food and was strengthened”*) and means to be strong in anything, to be invigorated, become strong. Its basic meaning is “to grow strong, to regain one’s strength” as when Jacob, who was sick, strengthened himself to meet Joseph and his two sons who came to visit him (**Genesis 48:2**). **Cleon Rogers** says “The strengthening role of the angel is like that of a trainer who readies the athlete.”

VIII. (:44a) PAIN AND PATHOS AND PASSION IN PRAYER

“And being in agony He was praying very fervently;”

Bruce Hurt: Fervently (*ektenos* from *ek* = out + *teino* = to stretch; English = tension, etc) literally pictures one “stretching out”! It pictures “an intense strain” and unceasing activity which normally involving a degree of intensity and/or perseverance. Stretched out and extended to the limit is the idea. Jowett suggests the picture of the tension and energy of a stringed instrument, “as when the string of a violin has been stretched to a tighter pitch that it might yield a little higher note.” **Cranfield** suggests the figure of “the taut muscle of strenuous and sustained effort, as of an athlete.” It is not doing something lightly and perfunctorily but straining as it were to do it!

Morris: Why was Jesus in such perturbation as He faced death? Others, including many who owe their inspiration to the Mater, have faced death quite calmly. It cannot be death as such that caused this tremendous depth of feeling. Rather it was the kind of death that Jesus would ide, that death in which He was forsaken by God (**Mk. 15:34**), in which God made Him to be sin for us (**2 Cor. 5:21**).

IX. (:44b) PERSPIRATION IN PRAYER

“and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.”

Geldenhuis: We shall never be able to understand or feel the full depth of the struggle and distress which Jesus as our Substitute experienced in Gethsemane, while remaining perfect in loyalty towards His Father. But this we know: it was there that He made His final choice to take our sins upon Him, and for the sake of our redemption to suffer and to die.

X. (:45-46) PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER

A. (:45) Emotional Exhaustion

“And when He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow,”

Geldenhuis: The experiences of the previous days, and especially of that final night, coupled with the words of warning uttered by Jesus, and His whole demeanour that evening, had overwhelmed the disciples and left them strengthless and sorrowful. For this reason, and also because it had been a busy day and night was now far advanced, they had fallen asleep.

B. (:46) Exhortation to Keep Praying

“and said to them, ‘Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.’”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What relationship do we see in our own life between neglect in prayer and strength of temptation?
- 2) Are there elements of privacy or posture that make a huge difference for us in our prayers?
- 3) Do you feel like you are just tacking on an empty phrase when you affirm, “not my will be done but yours”?
- 4) When have we especially prayed with fervency and passion?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Four Features of Triumphant Prayer

As we enter the garden with Jesus on this occasion, we enter hallowed ground. We go where the apostles did not go. Eight of them were left at the entrance to the garden. Three of them went a little further, but only Jesus went all the way in and agonized alone.

In the accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – for all Gospels record this event – we are taken into that inner place where Christ struggled by Himself. It is the unparalleled, private struggle with the power of darkness. . .

1) ANTICIPATION

You’ve got to anticipate temptation and be ready with prayer. Prayer that confesses weakness, inability; confesses a lack of strength; humble, meek prayer. Anticipation is the first principle of praying in the face of temptation. Anticipate it. Don’t get caught, when the temptation hits with its full force, not having prayed. Help awaits the one who prays.

2) AFFLICTION

There is an agony in legitimate prayer. . .

What was tearing Him up was the realization of the coming wrath of His own Father falling on Him. This is just more than He can bear physically. And so, He’s prone on the ground, crying at the top of His voice. And the lesson here is that if you’re going to triumph over temptation, you must hate it. You must feel afflicted by it. You must feel the pain of it, the assault of it, the repulsiveness of it. Their needs to be an agonizing in prayer because you love holiness and you hate sin. . .

3) SUBMISSION

4) RESTORATION

There were only two times in His life when angels showed up. Two times between His birth and His resurrection. The first time at His temptation in the wilderness. The second time, at His

temptation in the garden. . .

my assumption is, in both cases the angel came, sent from the Father, to affirm the Father's love and care. And He was strengthened in that. That is the horror of all horrors for Him, separation from the Father.

The angel is an affirmation that His Father cared for Him, just as the angels that came after His first temptation to strengthen were an affirmation of the fact that the Father would, in time, give Him everything He wanted and everything He deserved, and everything He was entitled to. This time, He knows, because holy angels are around the throne of God; hovering, hovering, hovering, waiting to be dispatched by God to minister to those whom God loves.

This strengthened His confidence that the Father, though bruising Him, would not forsake Him.

Steven Cole: Prayer or Temptation

The question is, how do we prepare for these unannounced tests so that we pass the test, not fail? How can we be ready so that we endure and even triumph, not get wiped out by life's trials? In our text, Jesus and the disciples are on the brink of the supreme test of their lives. Before the night was over, Jesus would be betrayed and arrested, and nailed to the cross by the next morning. The disciples would be scattered, fearful, and confused, with Peter openly denying the Lord. Jesus was prepared and passed the test; the disciples were unprepared and failed. . .

What made the difference?

If we do not pray as Jesus prayed, we will fall into temptation as the disciples fell.

1. The trials we face can be either a test that strengthens us or a temptation that brings us down.

At all times we are subject to various tests and temptations, due to the world, the flesh, and the devil. But some times are more intense in terms of temptation. When the world, the flesh, and the devil all press in on us in the same situation, we are in serious spiritual danger. This hour that Jesus and the disciples faced especially was under the power of darkness (22:53). Satan wanted to destroy God's plan of salvation by tempting Jesus to avoid the cross. The Jewish leaders, representing the world, wanted to get rid of Jesus so that they could continue in their place of power and prestige. There were internal temptations that Jesus faced that made the cross reprehensible to Him. The disciples wrestled with fear and confusion. So this was an extremely intense trial. Jesus is our example on how to endure; the disciples are our negative example of what to avoid.

2. Just as Jesus prayed and resisted temptation, so should we.

A. JESUS PRAYED OUT OF A GREAT SENSE OF NEED.

B. JESUS PRAYED INTIMATELY TO THE FATHER.

C. JESUS PRAYED HONESTLY, PRESENTING HIS DESIRES BEFORE THE FATHER.

D. JESUS PRAYED SUBMISSIVELY, SEEKING THE FATHER'S WILL ABOVE HIS OWN

E. THE RESULT OF JESUS' PRAYER WAS THAT HE WAS STRENGTHENED TO ENDURE VICTORIOUSLY.

3. The disciples give us a negative example in that they failed to pray and they succumbed to temptation.

A. THE DISCIPLES WERE OBLIVIOUS TO THEIR GREAT NEED.

B. THE DISCIPLES WERE OPERATING ON THE HUMAN PLANE, NOT ON THE SPIRITUAL PLANE.

They were allowing the flesh to dominate the spirit. They were tired and depressed, and so they slept rather than prayed.

Conclusion

So the options are: prayer or temptation. Cyprian said, "If He prayed who was without sin, how much more it becometh a sinner to pray." Years ago in Central Africa, the gospel reached a number of tribes and there were many new believers. Just as a newborn baby cries, so these babes in Christ began to cry out to the Lord in prayer. Since they had no church building, they cleared a central spot in the jungle where they could gather for prayer. Soon there were trails from many different huts that converged on that spot. Whenever a convert seemed to be losing his first love and enthusiasm, other believers would admonish him saying, "Brother, the grass is growing on your path."

Is the grass growing on your path to God? If it is, you will fall into temptation. Prayer or temptation—those are the options. "Pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Deffinbaugh: The Garden of Gethsemane

Short text but important because of:

First, the prominent activity of our passage is prayer.

Second, this is our Lord's final act, before He is arrested, tried, and put to death. So too these are His last words spoken to the disciples, His final instructions to them. A person's last words are very often of great import, as these words of our Lord are to the disciples, and to us.

Third, there is an emotional intensity to what is described here.

One can quickly see that Luke's account of the agony of our Lord in Gethsemane is considerably shorter than those of Matthew and Mark. . .

The unique contribution of Luke to the account of the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane is to be found in **verses 43 and 44**.

THERE WAS NOT OTHER WAY FOR MEN TO BE SAVED THAN THROUGH THE INNOCENT AND SUBSTITUTIONARY SUFFERING OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

I believe that our Lord's sorrow was so great that He was virtually at the point of death. I believe that apart from supernatural sustenance (brought by the angel from heaven) Jesus would not have died on the cross, He would have died in the Garden of Gethsemane. So great was His agony at the thought of the cross and all that it implied, our Lord was sorrowful to the point of death. The

physical strengthening was, no doubt, intended to carry our Lord on through all of the physical and emotional demands of His arrest, trials, and crucifixion, but it was also given to Him to sustain Him through His night of prayer. Thus, after He was strengthened, Jesus returned to His prayer in the garden, praying, as Luke tells us, even “*more earnestly*” (22:44).

The suffering of our Lord was not merely Him, in his humanity, struggling with the ugly realities of the cross. It was a supernatural suffering, the unique, unparalleled, suffering of the sinless God-man, who alone could fathom the depths of God’s righteousness, man’s sin, and the measure of divine wrath which these required. Jesus was supernaturally strengthened because He supernaturally suffered. We do Him a great injustice to liken Him to us, and His sufferings to what ours would have been in such a setting. . .

Prayer, in this text, did not deliver our Lord from suffering, but it did deliver Him through it. So often we pray that God might get us out of adversity, rather than through it. Prayer is one of God’s primary provisions for our endurance and perseverance. His words to His disciples apply to us as well: “*Pray that you will not fall into temptation.*”

Bruce Hurt: TO NOT BE OVERCOME BY TEMPTATION - Scripture explains what to do to not be overcome by temptation.

- **Genesis 3** Satan wants to see all believers stumble and will actively work to make it happen.
- **Genesis 39** When you are tempted, focus on your relationship with God and obey him.
- **2 Samuel 11:2-4** Temptation will come at weak spots and unexpected times.
- **Psalms 51:4** Temptation can lead to sin and its consequences.
- **Proverbs 7:1-5** Avoid temptation by storing up God's commands in your heart.
- **Matthew 4:1-11** Combat temptation by using the Word of God.
- **Matthew 6:13** God doesn't lead us into temptation, but sometimes he allows believers to be tested by it.
- **Matthew 8:7-9** Being tempted is not a sin, but you must not let temptation lead you into sin.
- **Matthew 26:40** Watch and pray to avoid falling into sin.
- **1 Corinthians 10:13** God will not allow temptations you cannot handle.
- **1 Timothy 6:11-12** To avoid temptation, you must fight as in a battle.
- **2 Timothy 2:22** At times you may need to turn and run from temptation.
- **Hebrews 2:16-18** Because Jesus Christ was tempted, he understands how you feel and knows how to help you resist.
- **James 1:12-16** You sometimes cause your own temptations.
- **James 4:7-8** Submit to God; resist the devil.

TEXT: Luke22:47-53

TITLE: THE POWER OF DARKNESS -- BETRAYAL BY JUDAS AND ARREST OF JESUS

BIG IDEA:

ONLY JESUS HAS THE POWER TO HAND HIMSELF OVER TO THE AUTHORITIES

INTRODUCTION:

Who is ultimately in control? That is a fundamental question in every situation of life. Never was the answer clearer than at the time of the betrayal and arrest of Jesus Christ. The man whose name has become synonymous with betrayal – the traitor Judas – imagined that he was in control as he handed Jesus over to the authorities. The religious authorities imagined that they were in control for having contracted with Judas for the arrest. The soldiers in the arrest party imagined that they were in control as they surrounded Jesus with excessive numbers and force and took him captive. Satan and his demons certainly imagined that the powers of darkness were in control in this – the darkest moment of the world’s history. But ultimately, we know that Jesus was in control of handing himself over to the authorities so that He could go to the cross in fulfillment of OT prophecy and in harmony with the will of His Father. His redemptive mission must trump all other plans and agendas. Certainly the disciples came to realize that they were not in control. Who do we think is in control of our life right now?

I. (:47-48) REACTION TO JUDAS’ BETRAYAL LEADING TO THE ARREST OF JESUS

A. (:37) Treacherous Kiss from Intimate Apostle

“While He was still speaking, behold, a multitude came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him.”

Lenski: About 200 Roman soldiers and certainly no less a number of Temple police and besides that a nondescript rabble that ran along to see the excitement block the entrance to Gethsemane.

B. (:48) Touching the Conscience of the Traitor

“But Jesus said to him, ‘Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?’”

Donald Miller: Jesus knew his design and tried to strike a blow on his conscience. He called him by name, he upbraided him for using a kiss for such false purposes, and reminded him that what he was doing was done against the “*Son of man*” – the Messiah (**vs. 48**).

Morris: the kiss of greeting expressed friendship and esteem and accordingly this method of betrayal has always seemed particularly heinous.

J. C. Ryle: To betray Christ at any time is the very height of wickedness, but to betray Him with a kiss proves a man to have become a very child of hell.

Jon Geraci: Betrayal is a word reserved for friends and loved ones. A stranger can’t betray you. Betrayal is a breach of faith, bad faith, treachery, double-dealing, duplicity. In the lonely garden, among the ancient olive trees, Jesus neglected, becomes Jesus rejected, Jesus betrayed. He is still

Jesus majestic, Jesus the loving Christ, Jesus the patient Christ, Jesus the willing sacrifice.
<http://www.calvarycsd.org/>

II. (:49-51) RESISTANCE BY DISCIPLES ARRESTED BY JESUS

A. (:49) Quick Question – Should We Fight?

“And when those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, ‘Lord, shall we strike with the sword?’”

When in doubt, it is always good to ask Jesus.

B. (:50) Bold Blunder – Off with His Head!

“And a certain one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.”

Peter probably imagined that the Lord was going to strike down the entire arresting party and establish His physical kingdom. The disciples still did not grasp the necessity of the Cross before the consummation of the kingdom in glory.

J. C. Ryle: Work for Christ may be done from many spurious motives — from excitement, from emulation, from party spirit, from love of praise — but suffering for Christ will seldom be endured from any but one motive. And that motive is the grace of God. We shall do well to remember these things informing our estimate of the comparative grace of professing Christians. Some poor, unknown believer who has been lying for years on his back, enduring pain without a murmur, may prove at last to have brought more glory to Christ through his patience and to have done more good through his prayers than the public action of others. The grand test of grace is patient suffering. Remember God’s words about Saul, **Acts 9:16**. *“I will show Saul what great things he will suffer for My name.”* Peter, we may be sure did far less good when he drew his sword and cut off a man’s ear than when he stood calmly before the council as a prisoner and said, *“I cannot but speak the things that I have seen and heard.”*

There is a great reminder in this about our acceptance of the hard providences of God in our lives and the role that that plays in our witness to Christ.

C. (:51a) Authoritative Answer – Stop Fighting!

“But Jesus answered and said, ‘Stop! No more of this.’”

J. Ligon Duncan: the important thing that Jesus understands at this point is not to go on the offensive and attack. The important thing for Him to do here is to accept the providence of God in this moment. And that’s actually the important thing for the disciples. This is not the time for them to draw the sword. This is time for them to accept God’s providence. You understand how important this is — the false charge that the Jews are going to bring against Jesus to the Romans is that He is the leader of a rebellion against Roman rule, as well as a blasphemer claiming to be the Messiah, the Son of God, a charge which the Romans, frankly, could not have cared less about. But they very much cared about the idea of rebels leading groups of people against their rule. And so Jesus must immediately establish that He has no intention of fighting this Roman cohort because He’s never lead anybody in violent action before in His life. In fact, He has ministered, and He’ll say later on, in the broad daylight saying everything that He said for everyone to hear who wanted to hear it. There’s nothing secretive and sneaky about what Jesus is doing. He’s not fomenting a secret rebellion against Rome and so it’s very important that He and

His disciples respond in that way so that it is seen again, even by His accusers, that their accusations are false.

Deffinbaugh: Apart from the quick action of our Lord, I believe that a blood bath would have occurred. Jesus first took charge of the situation with the words, “*No more of this!*” This expression has been taken in a number of ways, but I think that Jesus is calling a truce. Both the disciples and the arresting officials heeded the Master’s command. He surely was in charge here, and fortunately so. Jesus healed the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest. In the other accounts, Jesus told His disciples that to resist His arrest would have been to resist the eternal purpose of God, which was for the Messiah to die as a sin-bearer. He also reminded them that if He wished to defend Himself, He could have called 12 legions of angels to His side (**Matthew 26:53**). But the Scriptures must be fulfilled (**Matthew 26:54**). . .

I think, however, that there is something even greater here. I believe that the diffusing of this explosive situation, even after Peter had swung his sword, was the direct result of the power and authority which Jesus possessed here. Jesus is portrayed by the Gospels here not only as a person of great composure and dignity, but also as a man of great personal power. When Jesus spoke, men did listen. Just as the power of our Lord caused the soldiers to draw back from Him and to fall on the ground (**John 18:6**), so His dignity and power here caused the soldiers to “cease fire” at the command of our Lord. Jesus was in charge here, so that when He said, “Enough of this!” everyone stopped dead in their tracks. Jesus’ power was so great that no one even thought about taking Peter into custody, even though he had just assaulted a man with a deadly weapon. Its really amazing when you think of it, isn’t it?

MacArthur: 3 Reasons Jesus put a stop to this violent resistance:

- It’s **fatal** – it will stop our movement
- It’s **foolish** – I don’t need you help; if I chose to defend myself I could send 10,000 angels
- It’s against **fulfilment** of Scripture

D. (51b) Miraculous Mending – Tender Touch.

“And He touched his ear and healed him.”

J. C. Ryle: There are several remarkable things about this miracle. It is the only instance in the Gospels of our Lord healing a fresh wound caused by external violence. It is a striking instance of a miracle worked on an enemy, unasked for, without faith in the person healed, and without any apparent thankfulness for the cure. It is an extraordinary proof of the wickedness and hardness of our Lord’s enemies, that so wonderful a miracle as this could be wrought without any effect being produced on them. Some think that in the darkness the miracle was not seen by anyone except those immediately around Malchus.

Geldenhuys: Through Peter’s thoughtless act the Saviour is placed in a difficult position. For now His enemies may easily accuse Him of being the leader of a group of violent men. The Lord therefore immediately forbids His disciples to offer any further resistance. And in order to remedy the injury already inflicted, He immediately heals the wounded servant. The Saviour must be killed as the Sacrificial Lamb of God. But there must not be the slightest cause for His enemies to accuse Him! So the Saviour repairs the mischief wrought by His impulsive disciple in his foolish short-sightedness, and thus He could subsequently declare before Pilate without fear of contradiction: “*My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then*

would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John xviii.6).

Lenski: This is a remarkable miracle, the last that Jesus wrought, and it is performed in the interest of one of his captors. . .the ear was slashed off and hung by a shred of skin so that a mere touch of Jesus restored it perfectly. . . This is one of the plain miracles which ought to settle the contention that faith is necessary in the person to be healed.

III. (:52-53) RIDICULE OF THE COWARDICE AND DUPLICITY OF THE ARRESTING OFFICIALS

A. (:52) Embarrassing Overkill

“And Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, ‘Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber?’”

B. (:53) Extraordinary Opportunity

1. Not Seizing Repeated Opportunities

“While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me;”

Morris: The clear implication is that there is something underhand in this clandestine arrest.

2. Being Allowed This Unique Opportunity

“but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.”

Anyabwile: The “*hour – and the dominion of darkness*” (v. 53) refers to that moment when the betrayal of Jesus and his sacrifice are carried out. They could not take him before it was time, but at the appointed time the Lord gave himself over to them to accomplish the Father’s will. The power of darkness has the upper hand now, but it’s only an “*hour.*” It’s only for a brief time, and it’s only for God’s purpose. Satan thinks he has conquered the Son of God. What he has really done is help complete the plan of God. Even cowardice and darkness are made to do God’s bidding.

Jon Geraci: Jesus will win. The light will drive out the darkness. When the light appears the presence and the power of darkness are broken. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. In the end—the hour will come and the hour will go—and eternity future remains. The power of darkness and those who oppose Christ may have an hour—but that will be all

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What would motivate an apostle to turn traitor against the Lord Jesus?
- 2) What are the implications of Jesus saying that His kingdom is not of this world?
- 3) What stands out to you about this healing of the servant’s ear?
- 4) How are we right now fighting against the unseen power of darkness?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: A Traitorous Kiss for a Triumphant Savior

The best way to experience the scene is to look at the characters involved: the crowd, the traitor, the disciples, and the Savior. The arrival of the crowd, the kiss of the traitor, the rebuke of the disciples, and in the end the triumph of the Savior. Like any drama, it is built around the personalities. They really are the story. . .

One of the Twelve, which means he was with Jesus for the three years that all the rest were there. He was with him day and night for that period of time, heard everything He said, saw everything He did. He had the same privilege, the same honor, the same inestimable opportunity to walk with the living, incarnate Son of God. To say he's one of the Twelve was all you need to say. He was not an outsider; he was an insider. . .

Instead of welcoming the Son of God as their long-awaited and expected Messiah, they sent a group of vigilantes and soldiers to capture Him for the purpose of murdering Him. This is just an amazing look – isn't it? – at how people view Jesus Christ. It transcends this scene.

Just breaking it down a little bit, this is an act of injustice. They have no right to arrest Him. There's no reason to arrest Him. He's committed no crime. He committed no crime against God; He committed no crime against Judaism; He committed no crime against Caesar. There is no crime; He broke no law. They are unjust, unfair, evil, murderers who have demonstrated now that they are the children of their father the devil, who is a liar from the beginning and a murderer.

Their deeds against Jesus Christ have no relation to reality, or truth, or justice. They have no ability to recognize who is just, who is righteous, and who is in fact God. This is injustice. It is also mindless. What did the soldiers and the majority of Jewish leaders have against Jesus legitimately? Nothing. He banished illness from the land of Israel; He fed the poor; He healed people; He cast out demons; He taught the truth of God; he upheld the glory of God, and the law of God, and the Word of God. But everybody got caught up in the hatred of the leaders. The Romans got caught up in it. . .

Hendriksen: Torches and lanterns—to search for the Light of the world. And it was full moon! Swords and cudgels—to subdue the Prince of Peace. For the Man of Sorrows the very sight of this band of ruffians, who considered him their quarry, meant indescribable suffering.

Mattoon: The disciples remembered Jesus' words about the sword (**Luke 22:35-38**), so they asked Him if now was the time to make use of their two swords. They totally misunderstood what Jesus said. Why did Peter resort to the sword? The answer is he was unprepared for what was happening in Gethsemane. He was unprepared because he slept when the Lord wanted him to pray. He was unprepared because earlier, when Jesus was trying to get through to him and the other disciples, Peter was talking when he should have been paying attention to Christ. He now fights, when he should have yielded. He did not discern the events of his situation with what Jesus had been saying up to this point. He was fighting the wrong enemy with the wrong weapons. Peter's real enemy was Satan, and His real weapon was the Word of God. The same truth holds true for us, too. Beloved, our real enemy is Satan. The Scriptures are the most

effective way in dealing with him and our own sinfulness.

Application: In Gethsemane, the cut ear is an emblem of the **LACK** of preparedness, prayerfulness, peacefulness, pleasantness, patience, and the lack of perception. How many times do you "cut ears" or lash out at others with cutting words or harsh actions because you are not prepared for the unexpected, you haven't prayed, you lack patience, and you are weak on perception or wisdom to properly handle the difficulties of your situation? We have all been in that boat many times. (Mattoon's Treasures from Luke)

Warren Wiersbe: Each of us must decide whether we go through life pretending like Judas; or fighting like Peter; or yielding to God's perfect will, like Jesus. Will it be the kiss, the sword, or the cup?"(TBEC VOL 1; p.270).

Steven Brazzell: The Hour Has Come

Even here Luke continues to address Judas as one of the twelve, yet another reminder that being close to Jesus is not the same as trusting him. Being connected to a church family is not the same as being a true part of the church family. **2 Timothy 2:19**, "*But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Lord depart from iniquity.'*" The one who should have been leading people to honor the Lord was leading people to betray the Lord. Judas drew near to Jesus to kiss him. Judas used his intimacy to betray his friend. And Jesus reminded him of the magnitude of his decision with a question, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" Jesus is reminding him that He is not merely his teacher, but the Sovereign Christ, the Promised Messiah. Judas was not ready for his hour of darkness; are you ready?

The irony is hard to miss. They approached Jesus as a robber with swords and clubs in secrecy under the cover of night while Jesus has publicly stated his case day after day in temple courts. It is clear that Jesus is not a robber or a rebel, but the divine Son of Man. He has not only demonstrated his power in his wisdom in the temple courts, but in healing the ear of the soldier. Jesus gives them even more evidence that he was the Son of Man, but they refused to see. They were blinded by the power of darkness.

And even as the day of darkness begins, it should be clear that the darkness is not ultimately in control. There is only One who is really in control. The Sovereign Lord of lords and the King of kings was ready to let darkness temporarily outshine the light so that the light would completely snuff out the darkness. Jesus would be victorious, but his victory could only become our victory if he willingly suffered and died in our place. He had to let the darkness take him to deliver us from that darkness. And as he has delivered us from that darkness, he will continue to strengthen us in the midst of the darkness, **Colossians 1:11-14**.

"May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

TEXT: Luke22:54-62

TITLE: PETER'S 3 DENIALS

BIG IDEA:

FAILURE TO BOLDLY IDENTIFY WITH CHRIST DOES NOT HAVE TO DEFINE US IF WE RESPOND TO GOD'S MERCY AND REPENT

INTRODUCTION:

God is not only the God of second chances – but of third and fourth chances! We see here in the story of Peter's denials of the Lord that God continues to give opportunities to serve Him as we repent and respond to His mercy and grace. Judas betrayed Christ in the ultimate sense and from a wicked, unrepentant heart. Peter's denials were different. They were the failings of a genuine believer who through lack of prayer and faith was unprepared at a point in time to combat the temptations of Satan. Peter's story of restoration to such a prominent leadership role in the church should give us hope that Jesus wants to restore us when we fall as well.

I. (:54-55) CLOSE WITHOUT CONFESSING CHRIST – SOCIAL DISTANCING – PETER FOLLOWS - BUT NOT TOO CLOSELY

A. (:54) Plot Developed via 2 Tracks

1. Trial of Jesus

“And having arrested Him, they led Him away, and brought Him to the house of the high priest;”

2. Tale of Peter

“but Peter was following at a distance.”

B. (:55) Peter = the Initial Focus

“And after they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.”

Many Christians think that they can hang out close to Jesus but keep their lips sealed and not confess him before men when under pressure.

II. (:56-60a) DENYING BY LYING – ANOTHER TYPE OF BETRAYAL

A. (:56-57) First Denial

1. (:56) Identification by Servant-Girl

“And a certain servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight, and looking intently at him, said, ‘This man was with Him too.’”

2. (:57) Denial by Peter

“But he denied it, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’”

B. (:58) Second Denial

1. (:58a) Identification by a Male Servant

“And a little later, another saw him and said, ‘You are one of them too!’”

Darrell Bock: basically agrees with **MacArthur** writing that "Luke notes that **“another”** (heteros) man raises the issue of Peter’s association to Jesus, in contrast to **Mark 14:69**, where the same **servant girl** raises the issue a second time. **Mt. 26:71** also says it is **“another”** (but allē is feminine), while **John 18:25** says that **“they”** raised the issue....It seems that on this second effort the girl persisted and others joined her."...The public pressure is heating up, and Peter is wilting; he is trying to stick close to Jesus while remaining incognito.

2. (:58b) Denial by Peter

“But Peter said, ‘Man, I am not!’”

C. (:59-60a) Third Denial

1. (:59) Identification by Cousin of Malchus

“And after about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, ‘Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.’”

Bruce Hurt: As noted above it is about 3 AM. Why 3 AM? Because in the next verse Peter gave his third denial and the rooster crowed. In Jewish reckoning of time, "cock crow" was the third watch of the night, ending at 3 AM which was when roosters typically began to crow.

2. (:60a) Denial by Peter

“But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are talking about.’”

Donald Miller: The futility of his denials, however, lay in the fact that his Galilean dialect betrayed him (**vs. 59**). Peter had failed to heed Jesus’ warning (**vss. 31-34**), or to take his advice about praying for strength to overcome temptation (**vss. 40, 46**). Self-reliance leads always to moral failure.

II. (60b-62) CROWING LEADS TO WEeping --

A. (:60b) The Cock Crows – The Cock Doesn’t Lie

“And immediately, while he was still speaking, a cock crowed.”

B. (:61) The Lord Looks – The Look Doesn’t Condemn

“And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, ‘Before a cock crows today, you will deny Me three times.’”

Lenski: It is debated as to how Jesus could be close enough to look upon Peter at this moment. The best answer is that the Temple police were just then leading him from the hall of trial through the open courtyard to some place of detention until he should be wanted again. With his face contused, black and blue from the blows he had received, with spittle still defiling his countenance, Jesus looked upon poor Peter.

C. (:62) Peter Weeps – The Tears Lead to Repentance

“And he went out and wept bitterly.”

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have we been over-confident in following Jesus?
- 2) How is the betrayal of Peter different from that of Judas?
- 3) How would you describe the look that the Lord gave to Peter?
- 4) When we think that we have failed the Lord, how can we repent and recover while taking hope from the example of Peter?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Liefeld: Throughout this and the succeeding sections, dramatic tension mounts. A contributing feature is the simultaneous action taking place in the house of the high priest with Jesus (v. 54) and in the courtyard with Peter (v. 55). Luke separates the two sequences of events instead of intertwining them as Matthew and Mark do. While this literary device differs from his alternation of stories about the births of Jesus and of John the Baptist (ch. 1), it does enable the reader to follow Peter's experience and then Jesus' trial separately.

Geldenhuys: Judas had, in his wickedness of heart, betrayed the Saviour, and when he realized the dreadfulness of his wicked act he fell into dark qualms of conscience and entered into the eternal night by way of suicide. Peter, however, had denied his Lord and Master through frailty, not because he did not love Him or did not believe in Him, but because he was spiritually too weak to resist the terrible temptation to deny Jesus that rushed upon him during that calamitous night. And when he came to realize how he had denied his Lord, he was overwhelmed by deep sorrow for his disloyalty, and through genuine repentance he qualified himself for complete reinstatement in his former leadership among the disciples.

J. Ligon Duncan: It has a message about sin, it has a message about grace, and it has a message about repentance in it for us. This passage depicts for us the mystery of iniquity, the infinity of mercy, and the necessity of repentance. . .

And even here, we get a glimpse of Peter's love, don't we? All of the other disciples have deserted Jesus at this point, except for Peter and one other. One of the disciples had contacts with the high priest and was able to get himself and Peter into the courtyard of the high priest. And you can see Peter's love even in that because Peter does not want to abandon his friend. He wants to be near Him. I have no idea what Peter's plan was, I don't even know if Peter had a plan, but I do know that he loved Jesus enough that he had no intention of leaving Him alone. If Jesus was going to be carried off to a kangaroo court to be tried unjustly and unbiblically and illegally by some group of His assailants and captors and haters, Peter was not going to leave Him there on His own. And so Peter is very bravely in the courtyard, and yet, and yet, Peter fails exactly as Jesus had told him he was going to fail. Peter does exactly what Jesus told him he was going to do and exactly what Peter told Jesus he would never do. . .

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

This is why before they had ever left the Upper Room He had told Peter the trial that he was

going to undergo and He had urged Peter and all the disciples to pray to prepare themselves for it. But Peter was not ready. And though Peter genuinely loved Jesus it was not enough for him to resist this particular sin and this particular denial and this particular defection. And I don't know what sin and defection you are struggling with or contemplating today, but I hope that in your battle against it you are not relying on the love that is in your heart for Jesus because that will not be enough. . .

THE INFINITY OF MERCY

But that glance is the difference between Peter ending up like Judas and Peter being restored. You see in the end the difference between you and me and the difference between you and me and those who do not repent, is not that we are better; it's that Jesus has shown us His infinite mercy. The seeds of every known sin are in our hearts and it's the mercy of Jesus that spares us from going where we could have gone. . .

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

You know the difference between a remorse for being caught in sin and a godly sorrow that leads to repentance, one of the differences is there is a renovation of life, there's a change of behavior that comes as a part of that process of repentance. Gospel repentance always leads to a change of behavior, not just words where we profess to believe one thing and then act another way, but an actual change of behavior so that our behavior comes in line to what the Word says. And though it's not recorded here, we know that it will be recorded in the restoration of Peter that Peter not only wept bitterly over his sin, but his life changed. He did not go on in this denial. And that teaches us something about repentance. Repentance isn't just feeling badly about sin, it's not just feeling badly about the consequences of sin or the embarrassment of sin; it is coming to see the sin for what it is and recognizing how ugly it is and turning from it and to God. And Peter does that in this passage.

Steven Cole: Spiritual Failure and Restoration

John Newton was a wild-living sailor and slave-trader who got saved and became a godly pastor and the author of many hymns, including the beloved, "Amazing Grace." He said late in his life: "My memory is nearly gone, but I remember two things: that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Savior." . . .

The story of Peter's denials is recorded in Scripture to underscore these two great facts: the weakness and sinfulness of even the most prominent saints; and, the greatness and abundance of God's love and grace toward those who fail. For those who are walking with the Lord, this story warns us to take heed lest we fall. For any who have fallen, the story holds out the hope of pardon through God's abundant grace if you will turn back to Him.

Even when we fail the Lord badly, if we will repent God will restore us and use us again in His service.

1. Sometimes we fail the Lord badly.

A. THE COURSE OF SPIRITUAL FAILURE: A SLOW LEAK, NOT A BLOWOUT.

B. THE CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL FAILURE:

There are more, but let's look at six:

- We refuse to submit to the hard teachings of Scripture.
- We do not face up to our pride.
- We come under satanic attack.
- We grow spiritually dull and distant.
- We respond to crises in the flesh, not in the Spirit.
- We compromise our witness by our words and behavior.

2. If we will repent of our spiritual failures, God will restore us and use us again in His service.

The turning point for Peter involved two things: the crowing of the rooster, which reminded him of Jesus' prediction; and, the Lord's turning and looking directly at Peter (which only Luke records). What a look that must have been! I don't know whether they were moving Jesus from one place to another, and He caught Peter's eye as He was being pushed along; or, whether He was inside, but within visual range. Normally a guilty person won't look you in the eye. But the Lord turned, which probably caught Peter's attention. Then He looked at Peter and Peter looked at the Lord (Luke twice refers to Jesus as "the Lord" to emphasize His deity, v. 61). Peter instantly fell apart in repentance and godly sorrow over what he had done. He went out and wept bitterly.

A. THE PATH OF RESTORATION REQUIRES REPENTANCE.

I can only briefly comment on several aspects of repentance:

- Remembrance of God's Word.
- Conviction of our sin.
The Lord's look penetrated down to Peter's conscience. Jesus didn't have to say anything. Peter was deeply convicted in his heart. He didn't try to paper over it or make excuses or rationalize it away. Conviction acknowledges that God is right and I'm wrong.
- Godly sorrow over sin.
This will vary with the seriousness of the sin and the personality of the sinner, but when our consciences realize that we have sinned against a Savior who loved us enough to die for us, we will mourn over our sin. We won't be flippant or shrug it off.
- Appropriation of Christ's sacrifice for our sin.
Jesus had already begun to suffer for Peter's sins as He endured abuse at the hands of sinners. That sacrifice would be completed on the cross, where Jesus cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30). We cannot atone for our sins by our sorrow or penance. Christ fully paid the penalty that we owe. We can only appropriate Christ's sacrifice to cover our sins.
- Appreciation of God's abundant grace.

B. THE PATH OF RESTORATION RESULTS IN RENEWED SERVICE.

Deffinbaugh: Nowhere in this account do I see either **fear** or **cowardice** as being the reason for Peter's denials, at least so far as the Gospel writers' words would indicate. We project the response we would have had into the account and thus conclude that Peter was acting as we would. I hear preachers speak of Peter, "warming his hands at the enemy's fire," using this as an illustration of the danger of worldliness or wrong associations. I think we have missed the point.

There was no more dangerous place for Peter to have been than in that courtyard, where the soldiers must have stood by, and where Peter could not only be identified as a disciple of Jesus, but also could be detained. And if Peter were lying, out of fear for his life, all he had to do to “save his own skin” was to leave. The amazing thing is that Peter stayed there in that courtyard, even after he had been spotted, and even after he knew that this young servant girl was not going to give up in getting him arrested. One more thing. The text seems to make it clear that Peter did not realize that he was denying his Master, as Jesus had said he would, until after the third denial. If Peter were acting out of fear, you would have thought that he would have realized what he was doing, and that he would have felt guilty each time he denied the Savior, rather than only after the third time. Had he been aware of what he was doing, I think he would have fled, weeping bitterly, after his first denial.

I do not know why Peter denied His Lord. And none of the Gospels tell us. I should probably stop right here. I admit it. But I will nevertheless press on to say that it could have been out of **anger** that Peter acted. Peter had been frustrated all along that Jesus had it in His mind to die. Peter tried to talk Him out of it. Jesus could have called down fire from heaven, or 12 legions of angels, but He did not. Jesus’ arrest, Peter knew, was Jesus’ will. Knowing this, and having your own hopes of quick power and glory and prestige dashed, could have made Peter angry at the Lord. Have we not heard someone say to us, “I don’t know you” when they are angry at us?

And then again, it could have been out of **misdirected loyalty** that Peter denied His Lord. In Peter’s mind, his lies may have been a kind of necessary evil, justified by the good end they were aimed to accomplish. And what would this “good end” be? The release of Jesus. Peter may have staying in that courtyard, not only to find out how things were going, but with the intention of “breaking Jesus out of jail.” Does this sound fantastic? Well so does drawing a sword against a mob. If this were the case, Peter would be warming himself by the fire to learn the whereabouts of Jesus and the plans which the religious leaders had for transporting Jesus elsewhere, as they would.

So much for speculation. My point is that we need to be careful not to accuse Peter of doing as we might, when he was acting for other reasons, reasons which he may have considered commendable, at the moment.

MacArthur: The Danger of Spiritual Over-Confidence

Now, Luke’s account of Peter’s denial, which I just read to you, is all in one paragraph. And if all you had was Luke, you might think that all of this happened just almost immediately and sequentially in a few minutes. However, that’s not the case. Luke shrinks down the three denials of Peter, which actually took over a period of two hours, into just a few moments and a few words. But when you look into the account of Matthew which is recorded in Matthew 26, and the account of Mark which is recorded in **Mark 14**, and the account of John which is recorded in **John 18**, and you put all of that together, and you blend all of those threads, they weave a tapestry that gives you a magnificent, full picture of how this denial unfolded.

The other three writers show us that Peter’s three denials were stretched out. And while they happened in generally the same place – the courtyard of the high priest – they happened at three different locations.

Another interesting thing about it is they are woven through the trials of Jesus. During the middle of the night, the leaders of Israel, with the Roman soldiers, had come to the garden, of course, and arrested Jesus. That's how verse 54 begins. They tied Him up and led Him away. The first stop is the House of Annas. And at the house of Annas, there will be an attempt made to come up with an indictment that will stick, some crime that He has committed that can justify His execution.

Following that, there will be a trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin. And then finally, after dawn, there will be a third trial, in the daylight, which is the only time you could have a legal trial, according to Jewish law, so that they can make their trumped up, unjust actions look legal on the surface.

It is between those first two trials, in the middle of the night, that Peter's denials are woven. In fact, it's almost as if the trial of Jesus is the main story, and the second line or the subplot is Peter's denials going on at the very same time so that you have the failure of Peter juxtaposed with the triumph of Christ. . .

So, Peter's confidence is an impudent kind of confidence. It is an insistent kind of confidence, and that leads to what I call Peter's indolent confidence. While you're in **Matthew 26**, you might as well look at **verse 40**, "*He came to the disciples*" – Jesus did, after He'd gone to pray in the garden – "*and he found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, 'So, you men couldn't keep watch with Me for one hour. Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'*"

Peter was in touch with his nobler side. Peter was in touch with his spirit, that which in him loved Christ. But Peter had way, way over judged his ability to cope with his flesh. Peter slept when he should have been praying. That's indolent confidence. Peter wasn't alone; they all slept. They didn't need divine help; they were going to be fine. Peter was going to be great. But when they arrested Jesus later that night, they all ran in fear. They all virtually denied Christ. They all failed – failed disastrously at the most critical hour – Jesus says because they slept instead of praying.

So, Peter boasted too much and prayed too little. And then he acted too fast. We'll call this Peter's impulsive confidence. Look at **Luke 22** again. You know the story. His impulsive confidence. They came to arrest Jesus. **Verse 50, Luke 22**, "*A certain one of them*" – namely Peter other writers tell us – "*Peter struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, 'Stop! No more of this.'* And He touched his ear and healed him."

Peter is a great teacher for us to help us understand how to face temptation and not be overconfident, but also how to face temptation with hope. Let me turn Peter into a teacher for you. Listen to his words, **2 Peter 1:1**, "*Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those*" – listen – "*who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.*" What kind of faith had he received? A faith that does not – what? – fail. This never left him. From the human viewpoint, that was a failing faith. And when he introduces himself for the first time in his first epistle and in his second epistle, at the very beginning of that second epistle, it is about the faith that will not fail. This is what he clings to.

In 2 Peter, you have received a faith of the same kind as ours. Go back to **1 Peter 1, verse 6**, "*In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed*

by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” That’s the kind of faith you have.

You have the kind of faith that can be tested. It can be tested in the fire, and it will not perish. In **verse 9** he says, *“You have the kind of faith the outcome of which is the salvation of your souls.”* Peter never got over this faith that cannot fail, that will not fail.

His final words are in **2 Peter 3:17**. The last thing he wrote, “You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard” – huh, he’s a good one to teach us, isn’t he? – *“be on your guard lest being carried away by the error of unprincipled men you fall from your own steadfastness.”* He knew you have a faith that cannot fail, but he also knew you can fall from being steadfast. He couldn’t write these letters without writing himself and his lessons into them.

Be on guard. Don’t engage in spiritual overconfidence so that you fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity, Amen.

TEXT: Luke22:63-71

TITLE: THE TRIALS BEGIN

BIG IDEA:

STUBBORN REJECTION OF THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST LEAD TO BRUTAL MISTREATMENT AND SHAM TRIALS

INTRODUCTION:

Wicked hearts don't want to objectively evaluate the claims of Jesus Christ. We need to get it out of our heads that mankind has some type of moral neutrality where if they were just presented with sufficient information and proof they would embrace Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the Son of God. Wicked hearts are blind and invested in their own self-interest which does not include bowing the knee to the authority of their Creator. What savage treatment is pictured here! What mocking and ridicule and humiliation of One who could have called 10,000 angels and wiped the earth of these rebels. Yet our hearts are wicked as well and inclined towards independence rather than submission to God.

I. (:63-65) TRAVESTY OF BRUTALITY AND MOCKING INFLICTED BY THE GUARDS

A. (:63) Verbal and Physical Abuse

“And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him, and beating Him,”

Donald Miller: Luke omits the fact that two informal trials of Jesus were held during the night, shortly after his arrest: the first a personal inquisition by Annas, the most influential member of the priestly group (**John 18:13, 19:24**), and the second before the hurriedly assembled Sanhedrin (**Mark 14:53-65**). Since a sentence of death could not be passed at night, they must await the coming of day to take formal action on what they had already determined informally. In the meantime, the guards who had Jesus in charge whiled away the tedious hours by making sort of him. With ridicule, physical torture, and religious mockery, they subjected the most sensitive person who ever lived to the crassest and most vulgar brutality (vss. 63-65).

MacArthur: Now, you must understand that this was a prolonged sequence of trials that took place between 1:00 and 5:00, jammed into this period, perhaps beginning a little bit before one o'clock. There are actually six phases to the trial of Jesus, three before the Jews and three before gentiles. There is this Jewish ecclesiastical/religious trial and there's a gentile political/secular trial. And it had to be this way because the Jews didn't have the right to capital punishment.

Lenski: In their cowardly brutality they cannot act viciously enough against this bound and defenseless victim and hurt him as much as possible just as savages might do.

Bruce Hurt: **Mocking** (imperfect tense = again and again!) (empaizo from **paizo** = to play like a child - pais) means they were verbally deriding, ridiculing, making fun of or making sport of Jesus! **Empaizo** is one of many words denoting disparagement or scorn and in this context is a negative expression of their bravado, arrogance, aversion, or hostility. Incredible! They won't be so brazen at the Great White Throne Judgment! (**Rev 20:11-15+**)

B. (:64) Mocking His Prophetic Ministry

“and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, ‘Prophesy, who is the one who hit You?’”

Making fun of Jesus and His reputation as a prophet

C. (:65) Blaspheming

“And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.”

Geldenhuys: Calm and dignified, without answering a single word to their questions and slanders, He bears all this outrageous humiliation and pain. These things probably took place during the intervals between the trials.

Ralph Wilson: Luke summarizes their insults with the verb *blasphemeo*, from which we get our English word "blasphemy," irreverence towards God or things considered sacred. The Greek word, however, isn't limited to irreverence towards God, but includes any speech that denigrates or defames, reviling, denigration, disrespect, slander.

II. (:66-71) TRIAL BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

(:66) Staging of the Trial

“And when it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying,”

They had been just cooling their heels until daybreak so that they could satisfy some of the nitpicky regulations of Sanhedrin jurisprudence; even though they had no intention of staging a fair trial

A. (:67-70) Inquisition

1. (:67-698) Examining First Identity Claim: Are You the Christ?

a. (:67a) Demand

“If You are the Christ, tell us.”

b. (:67b-68) Response of Christ

“But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer.’”

Donald Miller: Jesus' reply could be neither Yes nor No. A Yes would have meant that he was the sort of political Messiah of which they were thinking. Nothing could have been further from his mind. A No, on the other hand, would have been false, for he was Messiah. If he asked them questions to draw out their own Messianic views in order to correct them, they would not discuss with him, as a former occasion had shown (**20:7**; see also **20:41-44**). On the other hand, if he told them of the true nature of his Messiahship, they were not capable of understanding it, because they would not believe (**vss. 67-68**).

2. (:69) Pivotal Claim to Ultimate Power and Authority

“But from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

Donald Miller: Drawing upon **Daniel 7:13** and **Psalms 110:1**, he made the bold assertion that from now on – as the result of his coming death – he would be seated at God’s right hand, an expression meaning to share God’s power and authority (**vs. 69**). In this the Sanhedrin sensed an even higher claim than that of Messiah.

Steven Cole: So Jesus is turning the tables on them. They thought that they were sitting in judgment on Him. He lets them know that really, He is sitting in judgment on them! As Peter proclaimed on the Day of Pentecost, this Jesus whom they had crucified, God had raised up to His right hand, where He was installed on David’s throne as both Lord and Christ (**Acts 2:30-36**).

MacArthur: Jesus is saying there will be a Calvary, and there will be a resurrection, and there will be an ascension, and there will be a coronation after that at the right hand of God, and someday there will be a return in judgment. Caiaphas and the rest of the Christ-rejecters then and all through human history will meet Him again and He will be their judge. Caiaphas will see Him again, all sinners who perish without salvation will see Him again. Now they judge Him, then He will judge them. Now they judge Him unjustly, then He will judge them justly. He is the Son of God and the Son of man, which is the title used by Daniel of Him in **Daniel 7**.

And so our Lord confirms His Messiahship and His deity in the strongest terms possible. He sits at the right hand of the power - the power - literally, in the Greek, definite article, the power being God. He takes His place at the right hand of God and one day comes all glorious to judge and reign forever. . .

It is amazing to see the recklessness and the relentlessness of these Christ haters. Nothing can deter them from their goal. Nothing can exterminate their hatred. And it is shown in their injustice and in their abuse. Miracles of power, miracles of judgment that should fill their hearts with fear and reverence find no responsive chord anywhere. The terrifying power that threw them all to the ground when they first came into the garden, that very night with a force of a hammer from heaven, couldn’t convince their hard hearts of the reality of His deity and Lordship.

3. (:70) Examining Second Identity Claim: Are You the Son of God?

a. (:70) Demand

“And they all said, ‘Are You the Son of God, then?’”

b. (:70b) Response of Christ

“And He said to them, ‘Yes, I am.’”

B. (:71) Case Closed

“And they said, ‘What further need do we have of testimony?

For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.’”

Deffinbaugh: Jesus’ response was not evasive, nor was it indirect, as some tend to take it. Jesus spoke directly, in the idiom of that day. It was a firm “yes,” precisely what they had been looking for. No matter that their trials were a sham. No matter that this man’s rights had been violated. No matter that no witnesses could agree on the charges against Him. No matter that the accused had been beaten beforehand and that a testimony had been drawn from Him. They had the evidence they needed. Now, all they needed was the cooperation of the state, to kill Him.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Can you even imagine the ignorant bravado of wicked creatures treating their holy Creator in this fashion?
- 2) Why did Jesus respond the way He did to these couple of questions?
- 3) What do you learn from reflecting on the titles used to identify Jesus in this passage?
- 4) What type of mistreatment should the disciples of Jesus be willing to endure in light of all the Master suffered?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Steven Cole: God in the Hands of Angry Sinners

Although sinners presently sit in judgment on Jesus, the day is coming when Jesus will sit in judgment on sinners.

1. Sinners presently sit in judgment on Jesus.

A. SOME SINNERS SIT IN JUDGMENT ON JESUS IN THEIR MAD PURSUIT OF PLEASURE (22:63-65).

B. SOME SINNERS SIT IN JUDGMENT ON JESUS IN THEIR MAD PURSUIT OF POWER (22:66-67, 70-71).

2. The day is coming when Jesus will sit in judgment on sinners.

A. JESUS WILL SIT IN JUDGMENT ON SINNERS BECAUSE HE IS THE CHRIST.

B. JESUS WILL SIT IN JUDGMENT ON SINNERS BECAUSE HE IS THE SON OF GOD.

C. JESUS WILL SIT IN JUDGMENT ON SINNERS BECAUSE THEY HAVE HEARD HIS TESTIMONY BUT REJECTED IT.

No criminal trial could be started at night. The Jewish council could not initiate charges, but could only consider charges brought by an outside party. The initial proceedings took place at the high priest's home and not in the temple as prescribed. Jesus was tried without a defense counsel. The defendant was supposed to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. He could not be convicted on the basis of testimony against himself. Conviction required the testimony of at least two reliable witnesses, whose testimony had to agree. They had to affirm that their testimony was true on the basis of direct experience, not hearsay or presumption. They had to identify the precise time and location of the event about which they testified. False witnesses were subject to

the same penalty that the accused would suffer if convicted (a strong motivation to speak only the truth, especially in capital cases!).

In capital cases, the death sentence could not be carried out until the third day after it was given, and in the intervening time, the members of the council were to fast. This meant that the trial could not be convened during a feast, such as Passover. A pronouncement of guilt by the high priest was contrary to the normal order, which should have started with the least senior members. If a council voted unanimously for conviction in a capital case, the accused was set free, because the necessary element of mercy was presumed to be lacking.

Thus from start to finish, the Jewish council's trial of Jesus was a mockery of justice, in violation of their own laws. The questions that they asked Jesus were not sincere, seeking to get at the truth. They were devised to trap Him by His own words, so that they could accuse Him before Pilate. If He claimed to be Christ, a King, then He stood in opposition to Rome (23:2). Since Rome denied the Jews the right to carry out capital punishment and since the Jewish leaders did not want to draw fire from those in the multitudes that liked Jesus, they wanted grounds to accuse Him before Pilate, and let him do the dirty work of crucifying Jesus. . .

The great Dutch artist, Rembrandt, has a famous painting of the crucifixion in which your attention is first drawn to the dying Savior. Then you notice the crowd gathered around that scene, with their various attitudes and actions. Finally, you notice at the edge of the picture a lone figure almost hidden in the shadows. That man is Rembrandt himself. The great artist realized that his sins had helped nail Jesus to the cross, and so he painted himself into the picture. And so should we!

Jeff Struecker: Here's what blows my mind about the story from **Chapter 22**. At no point in the story does anyone in the room speak up and say, "Wait a second. I have a question. We all saw the miracles. We all watched him cast out demons. We all saw him cure disease. We all watched him bring the dead back to life. What if it's true? What if he really is God? No one can do the kind of stuff that we've seen him do. If he really is God, then we are sentencing an innocent man. If the charge against him is claiming to be God, then we're about to send an innocent man to die. If he really is God, we're about to sentence God to the electric chair." Nobody in the room says, "Wait a second. What if it's true? What if he really is who he claimed to be?"

Ralph Wilson: These days, Jesus isn't present physically for people to beat, but the anger and spiritual blindness that surrounded Jesus' trial still exists today. If he were present, some are so angry with God that would beat him still, spit upon him, mock him, and publicly despise him. You and I have heard abundant cursing of God, slander against his holiness, challenges to his power, and questioning his justice. Occasionally, we disciples bear the brunt of this abuse, as well. Jesus instructed us:

*"Blessed are you when men hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.
Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is
how their fathers treated the prophets." (6:22-23)*

TEXT: Luke 23:1-25

TITLE: PROGRESSION OF THE TRIALS BEFORE ROMAN AUTHORITIES

BIG IDEA:

TRUTH AND JUSTICE ONLY FOUND IN THE FALSELY ACCUSED MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

Where do you look for **Truth** and **Justice**? You might think that religious leaders would be the best gatekeepers of righteousness. You might think that the legal system would be the best administrators of what is right in society and best for mankind. You might think that the will of the collective people could provide the best barometer for making correct choices. You would be wrong as we see here from the trials of Jesus before Pilate and Herod. The venom of the mob and the wicked agenda of the religious leaders are juxtaposed against the political ambitions of these two Roman rulers who are driven strictly by expediency rather than principle.

There is a lot of clamor today for the implementation of Truth and Justice. But people still resist bowing the knee to the only one who is inherently **True** and **Right** and the only one who can bring about a reign of righteousness.

John MacArthur: The entire series of trials was filled with irony. The one whom men judged is the judge of all men; the one whom men condemned will eternally condemn them. The perfectly righteous, sinless, and innocent one was condemned as a blasphemer and criminal. The one who always pleased holy God did not please sinful men. Men sought to kill the very one who gave them life. The Lord Jesus Christ was declared a blasphemer for claiming to be who He truly is, making His accusers blasphemers. All of the wicked participants in Christ's trials who judged and condemned Him did nothing but what God had predetermined must happen. Their decisions did not determine His fate, but rather their own. They wasted the most monumental, unparalleled opportunity that anyone could ever have—a personal encounter with the Son of the living God, the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of sinners.

I. (:1-7) PILATE TRIES JESUS BUT IS PLEASED TO REFER THE CASE TO HEROD

A. (:1-2) Politically-Oriented False Accusations

Staging of the trial

*“Then the whole body of them arose and brought Him before Pilate.
And they began to accuse Him, saying,”*

Geldenhuy: Before the Jewish Council He was found guilty of blasphemy because He called Himself the Son of God. Such an accusation, which related to the religious views of the Jews, would have carried no weight with Pilate. So His accusers now prefer totally different charges against Him. With subtle cunning and abominable deceitfulness they accuse Him before Pilate of being trebly guilty of high treason.

Steven Cole: He did not like the Jews and they did not like him. Early in his rule, he had angered them by sending his soldiers into Jerusalem with military standards bearing emblems that the Jews regarded as idolatrous. When they resisted, he threatened to kill them. But they lay down

and bared their necks for the sword. Pilate finally had to yield or risk open rebellion, which he could not afford. He lost face in the deal. He also outraged the Jews by taking some of their money from the temple treasury to finance an aqueduct. They rioted and many were killed, resulting in Pilate's receiving a scathing rebuke from Rome. Jesus referred to another incident in **Luke 13:1-2**, where Pilate had mingled the Galileans' blood with their sacrifices. So Pilate and the Jews had clashed frequently. He could not afford word of another incident getting back to Rome. Although he hated the Jews and knew that they were accusing Jesus out of envy, he had to placate them to save his own neck, even if it meant the death of an innocent man.

1. Political Unrest – Stirring up the people to rebel against the Roman rule
“*We found this man misleading our nation*”

2. Tax Evasion -- Forbidding the payment of the Roman tax
“*and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar,*”

3. Insurrection – Twisting the claim of Christ to be a political King that would threaten Rome
“*and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.*”

A T Robertson: This charge is true, but not in the sense meant by them. Jesus did claim to be the Christ and the king of the kingdom of God. But the Sanhedrin wanted Pilate to think that he set himself up as a rival to Caesar. Pilate would understand little from the word "Christ," but "King" was a different matter. He was compelled to take notice of this charge else he himself would be accused to Caesar of winking at such a claim by Jesus.

B. (:3-4) Pilate's Findings of Innocence

1. (:3) Inquiry Regarding Religious Issue of Kingship
“*And Pilate asked Him, saying, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’
And He answered him and said, ‘It is as you say.’*”

2. (:4) Innocent of the Political Charges
“*And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes,
‘I find no guilt in this man.’*”

Donald Miller: Pilate is convinced that Jesus is not politically dangerous, and seeks to dismiss the case.

C. (:5-7) Passing the Buck to Herod

1. (:5) Scope of Sedition Fostered by Jesus
“*But they kept on insisting, saying, ‘He stirs up the people,
teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place.’*”

2. (:6) Status as a Galilean
“*But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.*”

Hendriksen: The accusers must have regarded their remark that Jesus was a man from Galilee as being a coup de maître (master stroke). **Was not Galilee always the very hotbed of revolution?** Think of Herod the Great's battle against the guerrillas (N.T.C. on Matthew, p. 159), and of the "Zealots" and the "patriots" who since that time were always making trouble for the

Roman government. Well, that was the region to which Jesus belonged, and He Himself was one of the troublemakers! Little did they realize that exactly when they thought they had scored a point against Jesus and had probably persuaded Pilate to take the necessary action, they, at least for the time being, were being defeated. For Pilate, consistent with his purpose almost to the very end of the trial, saw in this link between Jesus and Galilee the very opportunity he was looking for to get rid of this annoying case.

3. (:7) Switching Jurisdiction to Herod

“And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.”

Donald Miller: The shrewd ears of Pilate heard the word “*Galilee*” gladly. If Jesus was a Galilean, then he came from the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, who had but lately come on a visit to Jerusalem. A twofold motive led Pilate to send Jesus to Herod for judgment. It would take a very unpleasant case off his hands, and by this gesture of respect for Herod, it would heal a personal breach between them which had arisen possibly through Pilate’s brutally putting to death some of Herod’s subject.

Lenski: It was too late to do such a thing, for Pilate had rendered his verdict. By doing it nevertheless, more decisively than by listening to new charges he disregarded not only his verdict but even the fact that he had rendered one. The whole case is thrown wide open, and legal procedure and legal safeguards are thrown to the wind. The trial has ended, what follows is no longer a trial but only a miserable jockeying and haggling; the outcome could not be in doubt after this sort of thing was begun.

Deffinbaugh: I can see Pilate smiling to himself, congratulating himself for getting rid of this thorny problem. In fact, he had succeeded in passing the buck to a man he really didn’t get along with anyway. “It serves him right,” I can hear Pilate thinking to himself. Perhaps Pilate leaned back in his chair and ordered breakfast. What a leisurely and enjoyable meal it must have been. What a great day it would be. No more worries about Jesus, or so it seemed. How fortunate it was that Herod was also in Jerusalem at this season (cf. **Luke 23:7**).

II. (:8-12) HEROD TRIES JESUS BUT COMES AWAY FRUSTRATED AND KICKS IT BACK TO PILATE

A. (:8) Curiosity

“Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.”

Steven Cole: Herod pictures for us a person who likes to dabble in spiritual matters, but has no intention of applying it personally so as to repent. . . . He was like people who find Bible prophecy interesting, but they never seem to make the connection that Bible prophecy is predicting their own doom if they do not repent.

B. (:9) Frustration

“And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.”

Geldenhuys: because he had so completely surrendered himself to spiritual blindness and moral

decay, and wanted to make His acquaintance merely out of curiosity, Jesus remained silent in his presence. Herod had made no use of the opportunity given him of repentance when John rebuked him for his sinful life (iii. 19), and he had by this time sunk so deeply into sin that even the Saviour had no longer a word for him.

Lenski: This silence was a rebuke to Herod. It showed the scorn of Jesus for “*this fox*” and his antics.

C. (:10) Anger – on the part of the religious leaders against Jesus

“And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.”

Anyabwile: The entire place is a circus. No one is interested in the truth or justice. Everyone has an agenda. The only righteous person in the place was the one being mocked and tried.

Steven Cole: Jesus was a threat to the Jewish leaders’ power and prestige. He confronted their sin. He upset their tables in the temple and threatened the profitable religious business they had going. He convicted them of their selfishness and rebellion against God.

D. (:11) Mistreatment

“And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.”

E. (:12) Strange Bedfellows

“Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been at enmity with each other.”

Donald Miller: Through this exchange of mutual courtesies, Pilate and Herod healed their quarrel, each no doubt hoping thereby to advance his own political interests.

Deffinbaugh: Herod was in a very awkward position here. It was obvious that the religious leaders wanted Jesus put to death. All the time he was trying to interrogate Jesus, they kept pressing their charges. But the fact was they had no real evidence to back up these charges. And because Jesus would not testify, they were at a stalemate. It would seem like a no-win situation for Herod. It is at this point that he makes a very shrewd move. He conceals his own frustration, at being unable to persuade Jesus to produce some miraculous sign, and at the same time pleases his own soldiers and at least sides with the religious leaders by mocking Jesus. And yet in all of this he has avoided taking a clear stand on Jesus. Although Pilate will infer that Herod found Jesus innocent, Herod has avoided the wrath of the chief priests and scribes by not pronouncing any verdict. He seems to be “firmly standing” on both sides of the issue at the same time. What a politician! In the final analysis, Herod forced Pilate to make the decision which he did not want to make himself. And he did so in a way that actually won the friendship of a former enemy. Now that is quite a feat.

III. (:13-25) PILATE TRIES JESUS AGAIN AND CAVES TO THE PRESSURE FROM THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND THE FRENZY OF THE MOB

A. (:13-16) Summary Judgment

1. (:13) Reporting to the Religious Leaders

“And Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,”

2. (:14-15) Repeating His Finding of Innocence Substantiated by Herod

a. (:14) Pilate's Findings

“and said to them, ‘You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.’”

b. (:15a) Herod's Findings

“No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us;”

c. (:15b) Death Penalty Not Appropriate

“and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.”

Geldenhuis: And now that Herod had sent Him back, he begins to waver more and more and to prostitute his judicial vocation. Instead of seeing to it that right and justice should be exercised towards the Innocent One at all costs, he descends to such a level that he, the Roman judge, begins to argue with Jesus' bloodthirsty and wily persecutors.

3. (:16) Release Plans after Appeasing Compromise of Token Punishment

“I will therefore punish Him and release Him.”

Donald Miller: Scourging involved severe beating on the bare back with leather thongs, to which bits of bone and metal were tied. It was so severe that at times victims died from it. The word “*chastise*” used by Pilate suggests that this was not punishment for guilt, but a warning to Jesus to be more cautious in the future. He hoped, too, that the suffering involved might satisfy the Jews' hatred of Jesus, and thus settle the case.

Instead, I agree with the view of Morris below:

Morris: The suggestion that Jesus should be chastised before being released strikes us as curious. If He was innocent, He should have been released without further ado. But in Roman law, a light beating was sometimes given together with a magisterial warning, so that an accused might take greater care for the future. Many commentators speak of this as scourging and remind us that men were known to have died under this punishment. But A. N. Sherwin-White shows that what is meant here is a lighter punishment (Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament – Oxford, 1963). Pilate was apparently trying to appease the Jews. If he vented some judicial displeasure on Jesus they might be satisfied and acquiesce in the release of the prisoner.

Steven Cole: In some situations, compromise is wise and necessary. But it is never wise, necessary, or right if it involves violating God's moral law and compromising your conscience. When Pilate declared that Jesus was innocent, he should have stood on principle no matter how loudly the Jews yelled nor what they threatened. Why offer to scourge Jesus if He was innocent? Pilate was compromising his conscience, thinking that it would gain the Jews' favor and Jesus' life. But what he thought was a loophole of escape became a noose around his neck (Stalker, p. 55). Pilate thought that he was gaining his political life by this compromise, but he was losing, not only his political life, but his spiritual life as well.

B. (:17-25) Special Release Option

1. (:17) Redirecting the Judicial Issue

“Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.”

Pilate about to make the Jews an offer he thought they could not refuse

2. (:18-19) Realizing The People Actually Preferred the Release of Guilty Barabbas

a. (:18) Preference of the People

*“But they cried out all together, saying,
‘Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!’”*

Anyabwile: Sometimes the official courts are less powerful than the court of public opinion. The court of public opinion is really the last court in this scene. They had charged Jesus with being a threat to the king and stirring up the people against the government. Those were false charges. Now here they are asking of the release of a man *“who had been thrown into prison for rebelling and murder” (v. 25).*

b. (:19) Punishment Justified

*“(He was one who had been thrown into prison
for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)”*

3. (:20-21) Readdressing the Crowd

*“And Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,
but they kept on calling out, saying, ‘Crucify, crucify Him!’”*

4. (:22-23) Reasoning with the Mob

*“And he said to them the third time, ‘Why, what evil has this man done? I have
found in Him no guilt demanding death; I will therefore punish Him and release
Him.’ But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And
their voices began to prevail.”*

Anyabwile: Mob justice is no justice at all.

5. (:24-25) Releasing Infamous Insurrectionist Barabbas instead of Jesus

*“And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand should be granted.
And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison
for insurrection and murder,
but he delivered Jesus to their will.”*

Donald Miller: Luke, with deep insight, emphasizes the enormity of the transaction by placing Barabbas and Jesus in sharp contrast. Here was stark, literal fulfillment of Isaiah’s words: *“And he was reckoned with transgressors” (Luke 22:37; Isa. 53:12).*

Morris: There may also be a hint at the substitutionary death of Jesus. The one guilty of death is pardoned and the innocent one dies in his stead. (**Ellis**)

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some of the lessons from Scripture regarding false testimony?
- 2) After these 3 very public years of ministry, don't you find it praiseworthy that the enemies of Jesus could not concoct any more believable lies about his teaching and conduct than what they weakly put forth here?
- 3) When have we been pressured to compromise our convictions and our principles for the sake of expediency or to please the crowd?
- 4) Can you see yourself in the position of Barabbas as one for whom the innocent Savior was put to death when you deserved to die?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Anyabwile: The only way to have justice in any situation is to care more about truth than we do about ourselves. If we sacrifice truth, then we will miscarry justice.

The only persons who can make sure our systems of justice actually deliver justice are those inside and outside who will be voices for truth. A judiciary with people ruled by their own political interests will soon give the people what they want rather than what is right. A public ruled by their own selfish desires will soon twist the courts to serve their desires. Justice requires nobility of character and the courage of truth-based conviction.

We cannot be protestors accusing others without regard for the entire truth. We cannot be public servants rendering judgments in the fear of man. And Lord help us if the interests of an untruthful public align with the interests of unfaithful servants. If they handed over the perfectly innocent Christ to death, what do you think will be done to lesser men? Courts can only give us justice if they care about truth.

Morris: The Jewish leaders had condemned Jesus from a variety of motives. The Pharisees saw Him as a blasphemer and they smarted under His biting rebukes of their hypocrisy. The high priests doubtless found their revenues hit when He cleansed the Temple. In addition, Caiaphas pointed out that His existence was politically inexpedient: He might cause the Romans to take away what little liberty remained to them. So they wanted Him executed, but they lacked the power (**Jn. 18:31**). Obviously Rome could not allow a subject people to use their own legal processes to kill off her supporters, so the power to inflict the death penalty remained with the governor. In this case the trouble, from the Jews' point of view, was that Jesus' crime was blasphemy, the claim to be the Son of God. This was not in Roman eyes an offence that merited the death penalty. So the Jews had to draw up their accusation in terms which would seem serious to the Romans. They did this by accusing Jesus of being a king, a political revolutionary.

Steven Cole: The Verdict on Jesus

Whenever a person comes in contact with Jesus Christ, no matter how inadvertent that contact is, whether he realizes it or not at the time, he is faced with the most important decision of his life. If he decides to investigate further and eventually to open his life to Jesus Christ, his life and eternal destiny head in one direction. If he ignores what he has heard, or ridicules or rejects it, his

life and eternal destiny go in another opposite direction. To do nothing or to put off a decision is to decide. Neutrality is impossible. Thus,

Our verdict regarding Jesus Christ is the most important decision we will ever make.

That decision, for good or for ill, turns around and makes us. In Matthew's account of this trial, Pilate asks the Jews, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" (27:22). That crucial question is the most important question in life for each of us: What will you and I do with Jesus Christ? Our text portrays three main characters or sets of characters who made the fatal decision to reject Jesus Christ. Let's learn from their negative example.

1. The men who rejected Christ teach us lessons to avoid.

A. THE JEWISH LEADERS: WILLFUL, KNOWING REJECTION OF CHRIST.

B. PILATE: COMPROMISING INTEGRITY TO SAVE HIMSELF.

C. HEROD: CURIOUS INTEREST WITHOUT REPENTANCE.

2. The Christ whom they rejected shows us why we should repent and trust in Him.

A. JESUS WAS INNOCENT OF ANY WRONGDOING.

B. JESUS LAID ASIDE HIS RIGHTS IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD.

C. JESUS BORE FAITHFUL WITNESS BY HIS WORDS AND BY HIS SILENT DIGNITY.

Deffinbaugh: The Rejection of Israel's Messiah – Conclusion:

The first thing our text establishes is that Jesus died, not because He was guilty of any offense, or of breaking any law, but simply because He was the sinless Son of God, and because He acknowledged that He was the "*King of Israel.*" Pilate, who was no "friend" of the Jews nor of Jesus, repeatedly reiterated the fact that Jesus was not guilty of any crime, and most certainly not of any crime worthy of death, even though this is precisely what the religious leaders demanded.

The second thing I believe the Holy Spirit intended for us to learn from Luke's account of Jesus' trial before Pilate and Herod is this: the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus was not just that of the Jews, nor of the Gentiles, but it was a rejection by both. I believe this is why Luke alone includes the account of Jesus before Herod. . .

While the form which their rejection takes is different, the essence is the same in every case. The chief priests and leaders of the Jews took a very hostile and aggressive stance with respect to Jesus. That is very evident in our text, for they, in a very pushy and offensive way demanded nothing less than His execution.

The third thing this text teaches us is the utter sinfulness of men, as evidenced in the rejection of Jesus as the King of the Jews. As I view the individuals described by Luke at this trial of our Lord, I find that the description of the sinfulness of man in Romans 3 is remarkably appropriate for this occasion. As you read these markedly descriptive words, remember that these are a

collection of statements from the Old Testament, descriptive of man's sinful and lost condition:

“There is none righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes”
(Romans 3:10-18).

This is the one thing which Pilate failed to take into account. He seems to have thought that his audience was a reasonable, rational group, who would objectively hear, consider, and accept his verdict. If he thought thus, he was wrong. He seems to have felt that if Jesus were beaten severely enough, they would take pity on Him and give up their demand that He be crucified. If this was his thinking, again he was wrong. And he seems to have thought that if he found Jesus guilty, and then gave the crowd the choice between pardoning Barabbas, a hardened and violent criminal, and Jesus, they would have to take Jesus. He was again wrong. . .

I do not know what your response is to Jesus Christ, but if it is anything less than receiving Him as the divine Son of God, the King of Israel, and the Savior of the world, it is not enough, and it is rejection. Your rejection may be polite. Indeed, it may appear that you have not rejected Him at all. Perhaps you have ignored Him. But if you have not received Him as God's Messiah, you have rejected Him. If you and I had been there that day when Jesus was on trial, I am convinced that we would have sided with one of these rejecting groups, and not with the Savior. . .

This text should teach us that **human government** is, like men, sinful and fallible. The very government which was given by God to protect the innocent and to punish the evil-doer (cf. **Romans 13:1-5**), is that government, in Jesus' day, which condemned the innocent and freed the wicked. If there was ever a dramatic demonstration of the need for a new government, a new "kingdom" where righteousness reigned in the person of Jesus Christ, it was at the trial and crucifixion of our Lord.

This text also serves to illustrate, at least to my satisfaction, the **limitations and liabilities of the political system** and its approach to getting things done. I hear Christians today talking about taking over the political system, as though they can use it to further God's kingdom. I hear others talking about "beating the humanists at their own game." In our text, I see the inability of the political process to achieve the righteousness of God. The problem lies not only in the system itself, but in the fallen humanity which operates it. Herod was never finer, as a politician, than in his maneuverings in which he rejected Christ, maintained the support of the chief priests and leaders, and won Pilate as a friend. But righteousness and justice were not served here. Pilate, though he knew Jesus to be innocent, also knew that politics require compromise and keeping the constituency happy. God's work is not done in man's way, and nothing is more human than the political process. It may be the best means of getting the business of state done, but it is not the means of doing God's work. Let us beware of using "politics," whether it be office politics or church politics, to do God's work.

One last remark. If men are so utterly angry with God that they will always hate, oppose, and

reject Him, how can they ever be convinced, converted, and changed? It will not be through human might or methods, my friend, but only through the Holy Spirit of God. As we read the Book of Acts we learn that men were convinced and converted—miraculously so, such as Saul—but they were convinced and converted through the work of God’s Spirit, as He empowered men and their testimony for Christ. May we go about His work, dependent upon His Word and dependent upon His Spirit.

8TEXT: Luke 23:26-49

TITLE: THE CRUCIFIXION

BIG IDEA:

THE CRUCIFIXION CONSUMMATES THE REDEMPTIVE MISSION OF THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION:

When the Messiah set His face resolutely to go to Jerusalem, it was precisely to accomplish this work of redemption on the Cross. This moment is the focal point of human history. The contrast is stark between the innocent Creator being crucified between two guilty criminals. The contrast is also stark between the mocking and savagery of the rulers and the soldiers as opposed to the forgiveness still on the lips of the Savior. Despite the heavy weight of taking upon Himself the wrath of God and suffering unknown agonies for being sin for us, Jesus still evidences His heart of compassion towards others as He warns about the coming judgment upon unrepentant Jerusalem.

Anyabwile: Put the scenes together: Judgment is coming. God is forgiving. Paradise is offered. But the only ones who receive it are the humble who admit their sins and confess that Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross to atone for their sins and was raised from the grave three days later.

I. (:26-32) SAD SCENE = VIA DOLOROSA

Chiastic structure: a b b a

A. (:26) Death Walk of Jesus

“And when they led Him away, they laid hold of one Simon of Cyrene, in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.”

Donald Miller: the picture of Simon taking up the cross and following behind Jesus is a fitting description of the Church which later carried the cross in a deeper sense (**9:23-26; 14:27**).

MacArthur: This is the final few steps to the execution of the Son of God. From Pilate’s judgment hall to Skull Hill (or Golgotha in Hebrew or Calvary in Latin) was only a short walk, few hundred yards, few minutes, but those were just the final steps, the final minutes. The earthly journey to the cross actually began thirty-three years earlier. . .

And so in the final few steps, in the final few moments, we meet some characters on the road to Skull Hill who help us understand the whole purpose of God in redemption and how people respond. We meet the mixed murderers. We meet a supporting stranger. We meet again the curious crowd. We meet some weeping women. And then we meet two companion criminals. And they’re not here incidentally, they’re here because they’re instructive to us as to the purposes of God. . .

At some point **Simon** embraced the gospel of the Lord whose cross he had carried. His wife and sons also became believers and were known to the church at Rome. One of them, **Rufus**, was

singled out by Paul as a choice servant of the Lord, and Simon's wife ministered to the apostle (**Ro 16:13**). The church at **Cyrene**, in which Simon undoubtedly played a significant role, developed and grew strong, eventually sending out missionaries to preach the gospel to the Gentiles at Antioch (**Acts 11:20**). One of its members, Lucius, even served as one of the pastors at the Antioch church when Paul and Barnabas were sent out as missionaries (**Acts 13:1**). It may have been the carrying of Jesus' cross that led Simon to faith in Him. What began as a forced and probably resented act of physical servitude became the opportunity for spiritual life. Not only Simon himself but his entire family came to salvation, and his wife became like a mother to the apostle Paul.

B. (:27-28) Mourning for the Suffering of Jesus in the Current Day of the Lord

1. (:27) Recognizing Their Mourning

“And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.”

Morris: We should bear in mind that those who clamoured for Jesus' execution were not necessarily a great number. They could crowd in round the judgment hall. There were still many in Jerusalem who admired Jesus and it is of some of these that we now learn.

2. (:28) Repurposing Their Mourning

“But Jesus turning to them said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.’”

Geldenhuys: instead of thanking them for their friendly sympathy with Him, urges them not to weep for Him, but for themselves and their children. The Lord does not in any way disapprove of their mourning for Him as though this were in itself something wrong. Undoubtedly He appreciated their sympathy. But because He knows what terrible judgments will ere long visit Jerusalem, He expresses in these words His unfathomable pity for the doomed people. It is beautiful and good that they should manifest such tenderness and sympathy with Him on His way to the cross. But they are unable to see things in their right perspective and do not realise what is awaiting them and their people if they should persist in their unbelief. It is far more urgent that they should weep for themselves and their children: even at this late hour such tears may lead to repentance and avert the approaching doom. He impresses on them the appalling peril in which they stand.

C. (:29-31) Mourning for the Suffering of Israel in the Future Day of the Lord

1. (:29) Better Not to Have Been Born

“For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.’”

This looks forward both to the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and then to the suffering in the Great Tribulation period of eschatology

Deffinbaugh: At the time of the writing of this gospel, Luke himself did not know the particulars because this was, in his day, still prophecy. The gospel of Luke was written approximately ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus and his Roman army. In the providence of God, these words were recorded, words which spoke of the coming destruction of Jerusalem several years ahead of the event. These words of Jesus, pertaining to the downfall of Jerusalem, were prophetic, even from Luke's point of view, at the time of his writing. Luke had not yet seen

these words fulfilled. He did not know exactly how God would bring their fulfillment to pass. But they were a prophecy, given to the Gentiles, pertaining to God's use of a Gentile army to punish this wicked generation for rejecting the Messiah. The impact of Luke's gospel may well have been intensified by the fulfillment of Jesus' words here. The Gentile readers should have been humbled by the realization that the sovereign God of the Bible, the God of Israel, could use a disobedient and wicked Gentile world power to accomplish His purpose, as a divine chastening rod, though not for the first time, mind you (cf. **Habakkuk 1**).

Morris: His words direct the women to the importance of looking beyond the present moment to the inevitable consequences of the nation's sins.

Liefeld: Jewish women (v.27) had always considered barrenness a misfortune and children a blessing (v.28). In the day of Jerusalem's destruction, however, women would have the horror of seeing their children suffer and would wish they could have been spared that agony (v.29).

2. (:30) Better to Have Been Killed Quickly in a Natural Disaster

"Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'"

Hos 10:8; Rev. 6:16

3. (:31) The Latter State Will Be Worse Than the Current State

"For if they do these things in the green tree, what will happen in the dry?"

Probably a proverbial saying

Donald Miller: If Jesus is the green wood, the Jews are the dry wood. God's judgments were now falling on him, though it was not fitting that they should, any more than it is fitting to use green wood for fire.

Deffinbaugh: Jerusalem's "greenness" is the presence of her God. Her "dryness" is the absence of God. Jesus is therefore saying, "If, when the Messiah, the very Son of God, is in your fair city, and the Roman army deals with Me as such, what do you think your destiny will be in My absence, when Jerusalem is abandoned by God, and fit only for the fire of destruction?"

D. (:32) Death Walk of the Two Thieves

"And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him."

Is. 53:12 Jesus died along with two guilty transgressors

II. (:33) SUMMARY STATEMENT OF THE CRUCIFIXION

"And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left."

Very simple statement of the most momentous event in human history

Geldenhuys: Like the other evangelists, Luke does not dwell on the manner in which the Saviour was crucified. He merely mentions the terrible fact that Jesus, the Son of God, the Immaculately righteous One, was crucified – crucified between two criminals. And thus He, the Holy One, was “numbered with the transgressors”. Crucifixion was the most agonizing and shameful form of execution ever devised (the Romans confined this form of punishment to slaves and criminals of the lowest type), and yet the physical agony which Jesus had to endure was but the faintest reflection of the spiritual suffering He had to undergo as the Bearer of the sin of lost mankind. For this reason the Gospels give practically no details of His physical suffering, so that the reader’s attention should not be concentrated upon outward things and thus overlook the deepest essence of His suffering.

Guzik: This was the most important act of this most important life, and this is reflected even in ancient secular histories. The existing mentions of Jesus in ancient extra-biblical literature each highlight His death on the cross.

- A letter written by Mara bar Serapion to his son (ca. a.d. 73)
- Josephus, the Jewish historian (ca. a.d. 90)
- Tacitus, the Roman historian (ca. a.d. 110-120)
- The Babylonian Talmud (ca. a.d. 200)

III. (:34-43) SELECTED INTERACTIONS – HIGHLIGHTING JESUS’ DESIRE TO EXTEND FORGIVENESS AGAINST THE BACKDROP OF MOCKING AND INDIGNITIES

Chiastic structure: a b a

A. (:34a) Forgiveness Extended – Interaction of Jesus with His Heavenly Father

“But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’”

Jesus is all about forgiveness and the undeserved, gracious offer of salvation; His antagonists are all about mocking and trying to humiliate Him

Deffinbaugh: What was Jesus praying for here, and why was He doing so? First and foremost, I believe we should understand Jesus’ words to have a **specific reference**. While He had come to die for the sins of the world, so that the sins of men would be forgiven, Jesus is here praying for a specific forgiveness, as I understand it. He is praying that the sin of these people be forgiven. That is, He is praying that **those who were participants in His rejection and death** be forgiven of this specific sin, the sin of crucifying the very Son of God. The reason, Jesus said, was because of their ignorance. Their ignorance was also specific. It was the ignorance of who He was. They knew that He claimed to be the Messiah, the Son of God, but they did not believe Him. Had they known that this One was the only begotten Son of God, they would surely not have put Him to death, nor would they have mocked Him. They would have rejected Him, but not ridiculed Him.

I believe that Jesus’ prayer conveyed several things. Among other things, it conveyed the heart of the Son, and of the Father. It revealed the compassion of our Lord, who came to seek and to save sinners, and the Father, who sent Him. But perhaps most of all, the prayer of our Lord may

have spared the city of Jerusalem from immediate destruction. We tend to focus on our Lord, and on the taunting of the people that He prove His deity by coming down from the cross. But think of the restraint of the Father. How would you feel toward this city, this people, if they were treating your son in this way? The Holy Father, to whom Jesus was praying, is the One who said to Moses on Mt. Sinai, at the sin of Israel in worshipping the golden calf,

“I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation” (Exodus 32:9-10).

If God the Father wished to destroy the nation Israel for their idolatry while Moses was on Mt. Sinai, what do you think God the Father would liked to have done to these stiff-necked Israelites (and Gentiles) who were mocking His Son and who were putting Him to death? I think Jesus’ prayer spared the lives of these people and delayed the wrath of God until after His resurrection, and after the gospel was preached to them so that they would no longer be ignorant of His identity, and so that they might repent and be saved from the destruction of their own generation. The prayer of our Lord was thus answered in the salvation of many (e.g. Pentecost, **Acts 2**) and in the delay of God’s wrath for the rest, so that they had ample opportunity to repent and be saved.

Darrell Bock: Jesus thus intercedes for his enemies, portraying the very standard he sets for his disciples in the Sermon on the Plain (**Luke 6:29, 35; 1 Pet. 2:19–23**; Ernst 1977: 634). He does not curse his opponents (contrast 2 Macc. 7:19, 34–35; 4 Macc. 9:15; Schweizer 1984: 360). The moral tone of Jesus’ response is high, although this lack of vindictiveness is also found in a few other ancient works. Thinking of others, Jesus still desires that they change their thinking (as some do in the Book of Acts) and that God not hold their act against them. Jesus’ love is evident even from the cross.

B (:34b-39) Final Mocking and Indignities – Interaction of Mockers with Jesus

1. (:34b) By Divesting Him of His Only Garments

“And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.”

Deffinbaugh: The soldiers, as can happen in such tasks, became hardened to their task and to the suffering it caused. There Jesus was, the innocent, righteous Son of God, hanging from a cross, His blood being shed for our sins. And there they were, on the ground below, rolling the dice to see who got what. They were only interested in the material gain they would receive from Jesus’ death, but they were not interested in His suffering and sorrow. They were aloof, while He was in agony. They were seeking a little gain, while He was giving up His life. How cruel!

2. (:35a) By the Silence of the Onlookers

“And the people stood by, looking on.”

3. (:35b) By the Religious Rulers

“And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.’”

4. (:36-37) By the Soldiers

“And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!’”

Donald Miller: The Roman soldiers added their mockery to that of the priests (vss. 36-37). It was more in the form of sport, however, perhaps intended to mock the religious leaders themselves as much as Jesus.

5. (:38) By the Plaque on the Cross

*“Now there was also an inscription above Him,
‘THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.’”*

Warren Wiersbe: The fact that this title was written in Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek, and Latin is significant. For one thing, it shows that our Lord was crucified in a place where many peoples and nations met, a cosmopolitan place. Hebrew is the language of religion, Greek of philosophy, and Latin of law; and all three combined to crucify the Son of God. But what He did on the cross, He did for the whole world! In this Gospel, John emphasizes the worldwide dimensions of the work of Christ. Without realizing it, Pilate wrote a "Gospel tract" when he prepared this title; for one of the thieves discovered that Jesus was King, and he asked entrance into His kingdom.

6. (:39) By One of the Criminals

*“And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him,
saying,
‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’”*

C. (:40-43) Forgiveness and Blessing Promised – Interaction of Jesus with the Confessing Criminal

1. (:40-41) Genuine Repentance

a. (:40) Evidencing Fear of God

“But the other answered, and rebuking him said, ‘Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?’”

b. (:41) Evidencing Ownership of Sin and Judgment

“And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”

2. (:42-43) Grace Extended

a. (:42) Request for Grace

“And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’”

b. (:43) Promise of Grace

“And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”

Deffinbaugh: There are those who have noted and capitalized on the fact that this thief was not baptized, but may I suggest that he fulfilled the essence of even this commandment. The purpose of baptism was to make a public profession of faith, to disassociate with that unbelieving generation (from the standpoint of those Jews living in that generation), and to publicly associate with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. What this man said was surely witnessed by more Jews of his day than of those who would later be baptized as a public profession of faith. Even in this matter, the thief is a model (if there can and should be such a thing) of conversion.

Let us not pass by this conversion without noting several essential ingredients. First, there is the recognition of one's personal sin, and of his deserving of death, of divine wrath. Second, there is the recognition that Jesus is precisely who He claimed to be, the sinless Son of God, Israel's Messiah, the only way by which men can enter into the kingdom of God. Third, a belief that Christ's kingdom lies beyond the grave, and that resurrection will enable us to be enter into it. Fourth, a belief in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which prompted Him to die in our place, to provide a salvation for the worst of sinners, which is not merited or earned, but which is achieved in accordance with grace alone. A simple trust in Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life, by virtue of what He has done.

IV. (:44-49) CATAclysmic CLIMAX

A. (:44-45A) Dramatic Darkness

“And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun being obscured;”

B. 45b) Dispensational Transition

“and the veil of the temple was torn in two.”

C. (:46) Death Cry

“And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.’ And having said this, He breathed His last.”

Donald Miller: The fact that Jesus died much sooner than was usual in crucifixion (**Mark 15:44; John 19:32-34**), and that his last word was in *“a loud voice”* (**vs. 46**), suggests that he died not just from physical exhaustion, but from spiritual agony – a paroxysm of grief occasioned by taking upon himself the sin of the world, in which he felt abandoned even by God (**Mark 15:34**) – which no physical frame could endure. It was his battle with sin, more than physical crucifixion, which caused his death.

D. (:47-49) Dramatic Eyewitness Responses

Emphasis is on what each of them observed as eyewitnesses:

1. (:47) Praise of the Centurion – Proclaiming Innocence of Jesus

*“Now when the centurion **saw what had happened**, he began praising God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’”*

2. (:48) Anguish of the Multitudes – Saddened by What They Had Witnessed

*“And all the multitudes who came together for this spectacle, when they **observed what had happened**, began to return, beating their breasts.”*

Morris: Instead of being entertained they were saddened by it all and went home *beating their breasts* in grief. Many have seen in this reaction a preparation for the successful preaching on the day of Pentecost when three thousand believed in this city (**Acts 2:41**).

Geldenhuys: The multitude that had gone to see the spectacle of the crucifixion undoubtedly experienced great terror during the hours of darkness and during the earthquake. And, struck by

the miraculous occurrence, they smote their breasts with a feeling of guilt and secret presentiments of approaching calamity, and went back to the city. Many of them no doubt knew deep down in their hearts that they were guilty before God because they had caused the Nazarene, who was certainly innocent, to be crucified.

3. (:49) Remote Observance of His Close Followers – Perplexed and Uncertain

*“And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, **seeing these things.**”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is ignorance no excuse for sin?
- 2) What was the sense in which Jesus prayed for forgiveness here? For what group of people? What type of forgiveness?
- 3) How do you explain the difference in response from the 2 thieves and the difference in response from the 4 Roman soldiers assigned to the crucifixion?
- 4) What does the veil being rent in two mean to you today?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Geldenhuys: In those moments, after the crucified robber had in His presence come to such a conviction of guilt and to repentance, he stretched out, still in time, the beseeching hand of faith to the Redeemer. . . However defective his faith was still, in all probability, he nevertheless besought Him in sincere trustfulness to take pity on him. Because he still pictured to himself that Jesus was the Messiah who would one day come in Messianic glory, he prayed to the Saviour to remember him when He should come to establish His kingdom. In this primitive form of supplication there was, however, a believing expectation in his attitude towards Jesus, and therefore Jesus assures him that He will not only remember him one day at His second coming, but that he would, on that very day, be with Him in paradise and would partake with Him in the heavenly joy as a redeemed one. . .

The crucifixion of Jesus is the central point of God’s whole plan of salvation. The whole of the revelation in the Old Testament had pointed to this fact. By describing the fall of man and by emphasizing the holy righteousness of God the necessity for a Redeemer was pointed out, and already in **Genesis iii. 15** God had promised that the Redeemer would undo the work of Satan by His suffering. By the institution of the offerings, by the history of Israel, and by numerous other means God had in the Old Testament Dispensation prepared everything for the expiatory death of His Son who had offered Himself from eternity as the Sacrifice for the sins of our fallen humanity. And because His expiatory death forms the basis of the New Dispensation, it is for the whole history of salvation the central point around which everything rotates. For this reason the motto of the Christian church must always be: “We preach Christ crucified” (**1 Cor. i. 23**).

Deffinbaugh: The Rejection of Israel's Messiah

There were many forms which the rejection of Jesus took, as seen there at the cross of Christ, but all of them were cruel. They all had this in common. And they had other elements in common as well. They all rejected Christ as what He Himself claimed to be, the “King of the Jews,” the “Messiah,” the “Son of God.” They rejected Jesus as what He claimed to be. And this rejection was not based on the fact that Jesus was guilty of any sin, or even of any crime, but rather of failing to meet men’s expectations of how Messiah, should—indeed, how Messiah must—perform in order to be accepted. All of those present at the cross who rejected Jesus insisted that if He were the Messiah, He should first of all save Himself. What they failed to grasp was that the only way He could save others was not by saving Himself, but by giving up His life, as the once-for-all sacrifice for the sins of men. He was innocent, but He died in the sinner’s place, so that the sinner might be forgiven. Jesus may not have acted in accordance with men’s expectations or demands, but He did act in the only way possible to save sinners, by His substitutionary death, in the place of the sinner, bearing his, or her, punishment.

Of what then was Christ guilty? He was not guilty of cruelty; the people were guilty of this. Jesus was “guilty” of compassion. He was guilty of being both God and God-like. Cruel men, who regard themselves to be good, must likewise regard kindness to be evil. From the very outset of Jesus’ ministry, one of the first and strongest protests against His practice and preaching was that it was marked by compassion. He came to seek and to save sinners, and the “righteous” did not like it at all. He associated with the unworthy, and the “worthy” did not appreciate it. In the final analysis, men reject Jesus because He is good, because He is kind and compassionate, and because we are evil and cruel. If the cross of Christ revealed anything about man and about God it was this: Men are incredibly cruel; God is unfathomably compassionate.

The Sequence of Events at Calvary

- The victims were nailed to their crosses, which were raised and fixed in position
- Either prior to this or shortly after drugged wine was given to deaden the pain
- The clothing of Jesus was divided among the four soldiers, by lot
- Railing accusations and mocking occurred throughout the ordeal—the crowd somehow seems to file or pass by the cross
- Jesus cried out, “*Father, forgive them ...*”
- The criminals joined in reviling Christ
- The thief on the cross came to faith in Jesus as his Messiah
- Darkness falls over the scene, from 6th hour (noon) till 9th hour (3:00).
- Jesus cried out, “*My God, My God, why has thou forsaken Me?*” (Matthew, Mark)
- Jesus said, “*I thirst*” (John), drank a sip of vinegar
- Jesus said, “*It is finished*” (John)
- Jesus bowed His head and said, “*Father, into your hands, ...*” and died
- Immediately, the curtain of temple torn in two, top to bottom (Luke)
- Earthquake and the raising of dead saints (Matthew)
- Legs of other two were broken, but Jesus’ legs not broken, seeing He was already dead (John)
- Soldier pierced Jesus’ side with a spear—blood and water gushed out (John)
- Centurion (and the other soldiers) who witnessed it said, “*Surely this was son of God*”
- The crowds left, beating their breasts, while the Galilean followers stay on, watching from distance . . .

Evangelism is often heavily method-centered, and one of the compromises we have made with the world is to try to sell faith in Christ like Procter and Gamble sells soap, or like Coca Cola sells “coke,” which “adds life.” That is, we want to emphasize the “life” aspect of the gospel, and to avoid the death dimension. This simply does not square with the gospel. As Christ drank His “cup” of death on the cross of Calvary, we have our own “cups” to drink of, and we have our own crosses to take up in order to follow Christ. It is often by the giving up of our lives, figurative or literally, that is instrumental in bringing men and women to faith in Christ, as the Holy Spirit bears witness through us. That is why, I believe, the prisoners in that Philippian jail did not flee, even though their cell doors were all opened (**Acts 16**). They had witnessed Paul and Silas singing and praising God, just after they had been unjustly and illegally beaten and imprisoned. There is something about watching people die for their faith that carries more weight than prospering as Christians. It is often suffering more than success that God uses as His instrument for bring about His purposes in this world.

As we conclude, let me remind you of some of the texts in which death characterizes Paul’s ministry.

*As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered” (**Romans 8:36**).*

*9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world (**1 Corinthians 4:9-13**).*

*29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (**1 Corinthians 15:29-32**).*

*8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many (**2 Corinthians 1:8-11**).*

*15 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? (**2 Corinthians 2:15-16**).*

7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. 8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; 9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. 10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. 11 For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body. 12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

MacArthur: And then **verse 45**, God punctuated the work that He had done on the cross. Luke tells us – this is so stunning, but such understatement – “*And the veil of the temple was torn in two.*” You read that and it’s kind of a ho-hum line. You’ve got to understand what’s going on here. It’s been dark for three hours, pitch black. Nobody could see the hand in front of their face. They’ve been standing around for three hours trying to communicate and figure out what’s going on. They would associate that with the divine presence and judgment. You’ve got priests down at the temple getting ready to start the slaughter of tens of thousands of lambs and other animals, ready to do their bloody butchering work on Passover. You’ve got all the worshipers, people that are not up where Calvary is, they’re down in the middle of the city milling around by the hundreds of thousands of them – estimates run as high as a couple million – and they have been standing frozen wherever they are for three hours. The light comes on and I suppose if we just focus on the priests at the temple, they try to gather themselves, make up for the lost time in the darkness, and let’s start the process, because between 3:00 and 5:00 is when you kill the Passover lambs.

Just as they begin to kill the Passover lambs, they hear a noise; a loud, tearing sound coming from inside the holy place, in the holy of holies, as God rips the curtain from the top to the bottom. Matthew tells us it was from the top to the bottom. Luke just says it was in two. Right down the middle, God ripped that curtain. There were at least 13 curtains in the temple, but one of them was the most important. That was the one that blocked the holy of holies and it was there because God ordained it to be there, because the way to God had not yet officially been opened. The high priests could go in there once a year and that’s all, and only the high priests and only for a moment to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat and then get back out. Access to God had not been officially activated. “Holy of holies” symbolized the presence of God and was closed to everyone, but at 3:00, right on the nose or around that time, light dawns and God rips open the holy of holies because Jesus Christ has officially activated access. The cross is atonement. The curtain is access. By His death, the New Covenant is ratified. It had been in effect. People had been saved before that, but the official ratification and activation of that New Covenant didn’t happen until Jesus died on the cross, and then God split the curtain and threw open the way to His presence.

When that happened, the temple was obsolete. The high priest was obsolete. All the priests were obsolete. All the sacrifices were obsolete. Everything going on in that place was obsolete. It was over. They were all shadows; they were all symbols of what was to come. So precisely at the moment the priests were beginning to slaughter animals who could not take away sin, God ripped open His presence because of the sacrifice of One who did take away sin. What a moment! What a moment!

Earlier in the week, Jesus had pronounced physical destruction on the temple, “*Not one stone will be left upon another,*” **chapter 21, verses five and six**. And here God renders spiritual

judgments on the whole system. That whole system, that whole entire system of the temple was to provide a means by which a sinner could have access to God, but none of it ever accomplished that until Jesus died on the cross and God said that did it and ripped open the curtain. If you read the ninth chapter of Hebrews you will read in the opening eight verses about how God has designed this place and a holy of holies and a curtain and separation and no one can go there. And then you flow down to **chapter 9** and you come to **verse 11 to 14** and all of a sudden things dramatically change. Listen to **Hebrews 9 and verse 11**, *“But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands. That is to say not of this creation. Not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood. He entered the holy place, once and for all having attained eternal redemption.”* This is the ratification of the New Covenant, and so in **chapter 10 of Hebrews, verse 19** says, *“Since Jesus opened the way to the holy place, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He inaugurated for us through the veil that is His flesh. So let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, our bodies washed with pure water.”* We can now rush, **Hebrews 4:16** says, *“into the throne of grace to receive mercy and help in time of need.”* God ripped the curtain; the work was done.

TEXT: Luke 23:50-56

TITLE: *THE BURIAL OF JESUS*

BIG IDEA:

THE BURIAL OF JESUS PROVIDES THE ESSENTIAL LINK BETWEEN THE REALITY OF HIS DEATH AND THE VALIDITY OF HIS RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTION:

Why spend any time at all on the discussion of the burial of Jesus Christ? For one reason it attests to the reality of his physical death. For another it is part of Messianic prophecy. But probably the main reason is that the details of the burial present the backdrop for the historic occasion of His Resurrection from the dead.

Brian Evans: I have heard liberal unbelievers try to say things like; Jesus was unconscious or had a heat stroke and then once He was placed in the cool tomb was revived.

If you're going to deny the resurrection, come up with something better than that.

All the apostles thought it necessary to report the fact that Jesus was dead and He was buried. His burial is proof that He was actually dead.

Throughout this account we see the sovereign God in charge of all the details and making sure that all of the Messianic prophecies are literally fulfilled.

I. (:50-51) IDENTITY OF JOSEPH – RIGHTEOUS DISCIPLE WHO HAD BEEN CONCEALING HIS LOYALTY TO JESUS

A. His Name

“And behold, a man named Joseph,”

He pops up out of nowhere and now plays a very prominent role in the gospel accounts.

B. His Status = Member of the Sanhedrin

“who was a member of the Council,”

C. His Reputation

“a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action),”

He must have been absent when the unanimous vote was taken

Apostle John calls him a secret disciple (**John 19:38**). Here he is emboldened to come out of the closet and take the personal risks to fully identify with Jesus.

Ralph Wilson: Often, secret believers burrow deeper in a time of crisis, but sometimes they rise to the occasion to do what is required. John's Gospel notes that Joseph was assisted by Nicodemus (**John 19:39-40**), a fellow member of the Sanhedrin who had previously come to Jesus by night (**John 3:1-8**). He, too, is ready to declare his allegiance to Jesus.

Brian Evans: However, up until now no one knew he was a follower. To be a follower meant he would give up his prominent role as a member of the counsel. He would lose his prestigious position. He would not be look upon with reverence and awe. He would not be able to get a job or support his family any longer. It was God's time and His secret follower would now come out of the shadows and affirm his love for Christ.

D. His Ethnicity

"a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews,"

Donald Miller: usually identified with Ramah, the birthplace of Samuel

E. His Devotion

"who was waiting for the kingdom of God;"

Cf. Simeon (2:25), Anna (2:38)

Bruce Hurt: Waiting (prosdechomai from pros = in compound Greek words implies motion or direction toward + dechomai = a deliberate and ready reception) means to accept favorably, to receive one into intercourse/companionship, to give access to oneself or receive to oneself. This great Greek verb describes one who is waiting for something (in most contexts actually Someone) with a sense of expectancy (*"like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast"* = **Lk 12:36**, *"looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,"* = **Titus 2:13+**, *"waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life."* = **Jude 1:21+**). Does this verb typify your life beloved? If not what "earthly cargo" do you need to jettison in order to assure a safe voyage and an "abundant" arrival at port (see **2Pe 1:10, 11, He 6:19, 20**)?

II. (:52-53) INTERNMENT OF JESUS – REALITY OF THE DEATH OF JESUS

A. (:52) Request for the Body

"this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus."

Donald Miller: His influence with Pilate and his possession of a "rock-hewn tomb" suggest that he was a man of wealth.

Geldenhuis: And thus the prophecy was fulfilled which declared that although a grave was allocated to Him along with malefactors (because the death-sentence of a felon was carried out o Him), yet He was with the rich man in His death (**Isa. liii. 9**). Never again will He be the object of human mockery, humiliation and violence.

Lenski: This man, who has thus far been fearful and cowardly, does an astonishing thing. He casts his fears to the winds and boldly takes charge now that the great need has arisen. He must have stood among the spectators for a long while. Then, after his resolve had been made, he most likely first spoke to the centurion about going to Pilate and asked him to wait with the disposal of the body of Jesus.

B. (:53) Recap of the Burial

“And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.”

This was a tomb that Joseph had planned to use for himself (Mat. 27:60) ... so we have here a case of substitutionary burial

Lenski: Joseph bought only the linen and no spices. . . Nicodemus bought only the spices and no linen. We are compelled to conclude that these two men, both of whom were Sanhedrists, met early enough somewhere, somehow to confer with each other, to join in this task and thus to divide their purchases. Nicodemus bought a hundred pounds of spices, a lavish amount; he must have engaged a couple of carriers to bring the load, being too old to manage it himself. . .

A tomb *“where no one ever yet had been laid,”* new and sweet, where no decay or odor of death had as yet entered, was a fitting place for the body of Jesus which no corruption or decomposition dared ever to touch (**Acts 2:27**). Here his holy body would have peaceful rest, all its dreadful, painful work being done. Yet Jesus was not intended for a tomb.

Green: Tomb fashioned by quarrying into the side of a rock face. Such a tomb might have included a forecourt before a cave, the mouth of which could be covered by a large, disk-shaped stone set in a groove cut in the rock beneath. The entrance would lead into the burial chamber with a stone step and central pit of sufficient height to allow persons to stand in order to prepare a corpse for interment on one of the stone benches carved into the rock along the sides of the chamber.... The body was placed on a sand-covered stone bench; after a twelve-month period of decomposition, the bones were collected and placed in an ossuary.

III. (:54-56) PREPARATIONS FOR EMBALMING THE BODY – RESPECT AND LOVE FOR JESUS

A. (:54) Day Defined – Complicating the Logistics

1. Preparation day for the Passover

“And it was the preparation day,”

2. Day Preceding the Sabbath

“and the Sabbath was about to begin.”

B. (:55) Details of the Burial Scoped Out

“Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed after, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.”

Constable: on **Mary Magdalene** and **Mary the mother of Joseph** - The writer mentioned the presence of these two women at the tomb during Jesus' burial to prepare for his statement that they were present to witness the empty tomb (**Mk 16:1, 5**). They had seen Jesus die (**Mk 15:40**), and now they saw Him buried. There was no question that they went to the right tomb on Sunday morning since they had been there Friday afternoon. Again Mark guarded against any wrong conclusion that the disciples were mistaken about Jesus' resurrection. The Servant of the Lord had paid the ultimate price for the sins of humankind, His own life. Mark's narrative stressed Jesus' exemplary service and the reality of His death.

C. (:56a) Development of Spices and Perfumes

“And they returned and prepared spices and perfumes.”

Geldenhuys: It was their intention later on, as a proof of their tender love for Him, to go and embalm His body further with spices and ointment. For this reason they quickly went to the city, and during the short period before the Sabbath dawned commenced to prepare the spices and ointment. They did not, however, have a sufficient supply, and after they had rested on the Sabbath, the last of the Old Dispensation (which passed finally with Jesus’ resurrection), they went to buy and prepare what was still wanting at the commencement of the first day of the week (i.e. the evening of the following day, **Mark xvi. 1**), in order to take it with them to His tomb on the following morning.

D. (:56b) Delay Due to the Sabbath

“And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.”

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is it possible to be a secret disciple of Jesus Christ?
- 2) Why give such loving attention to a dead body?
- 3) What are the implications for the resurrection based on the details recorded in this passage?
- 4) Are we putting all of our resources (of which we are truly only stewards, not owners) under the control of the Lord Jesus for Him to use as He sees fit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Miller: Luke gives special attention to the burial of Jesus, probably to indicate that there was no possibility of his disciples making a mock burial which could later have been turned into the fraud of an empty tomb. . .

The burial on the Friday had to be hurried, but that use was made of the spices that were on hand. Then the faithful women, before and after the Sabbath, did what was necessary to complete the burial.

Brian Evans: Have you ever known the right thing to do and failed to do it? Have you ever not done what you knew God wanted you to do and your conscience completely and utterly tortured you until you just had to do it?

I wonder if Joseph and Nicodemus felt the weight of being a secret disciple until there came a time when they couldn’t stand it any longer and had to come out from behind the shadows? We know from **John 3** Nicodemus came to speak with Jesus under the cover of darkness. We also know from the text we just read that Joseph was a secret disciple because he was afraid. Now, it seems, they have everything to lose and nothing to gain. Perhaps God had worked His

wondrous grace into their hearts and it was time no matter what happened to them to come out into the light and reveal their commitment to Jesus Christ. No longer were they ashamed to be numbered among the followers.

Are you hiding your faith? Are you a secret follower? Praise God that these two men were drawn out of hiding and became faithful followers. If you're hiding, what are you afraid of? If you're a secret disciple, why not step up and become the type of follower Jesus truly desires?

J. Ligon Duncan: And what Luke is showing you here is that Jesus' disciples observed the Sabbath day, even with regards to abstaining from preparing His body for death. In other words, Luke is saying – and you can imagine in the world in which he was writing, in the world in which the gospel of Luke was first heard, there would have been many Jewish people who would have heard that gospel read – and what is Luke saying to them? That the followers of Jesus were pious and obedient to the law.

Why is that so important? Because over and over, Jesus and His disciples had been depicted by the Jewish leaders as being what? Disobedient to God's law. They were lawbreakers. In fact, specifically, Jesus has been accused of being a Sabbath-breaker. And His disciples have been accused of breaking the Sabbath. And what is Luke saying? No, these folks lived according to the Word of God. They really cared about the authority of God; they really cared about God's Word. They were pious people.

Now what's important about that for you and me? It's simply this — this is a testimony that obedience to God's Word is a part of the Christian life and is not in contradiction to or opposition against the saving grace of God in the Gospel. Grace and obedience are not enemies. Yes, there have been some who have wrongly tried to come up with the formulation that God's grace plus our obedience equals salvation or our faith plus our good works equals justification. And the Bible teaches none of that. But the Bible does teach that God's grace always flourishes in us, not only in faith, but in our obedience. Those things are not enemies. So the apostle Paul will say, "*For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, lest anyone should boast.*" We're saved by grace. And then he goes on to say, "*And we're created in Christ Jesus for good works.*" So we're not saved by good works but we're saved for good works. We're not saved by our works but we're saved to good works. We're not saved by obedience but by grace through faith we are saved to obedience.

Steven Cole: Taking a Stand for Christ

The evangelist Billy Sunday used to tell of a professing Christian who got a job in a lumber camp that had the reputation of being very ungodly. A friend, hearing that the man had been hired, said to him, "If those lumberjacks ever find out you're a Christian, you're going to be in for a hard time!" The man responded, "I know, but I need the job!"

The next morning he left for camp. A year later, he came home for a visit. While in town, he met his friend who asked, "Well, how did it go? Did they give you a hard time because you're a Christian?"

"Oh no, not at all," the man replied. "They didn't give me a bit of trouble—they never even found out!" ("Our Daily Bread," 11/83.)

While we may chuckle at that story, many of us may wince. It hits too close to home! Living in a

world that is hostile to Christianity, it's easy just to blend in, to laugh at the dirty jokes, never to confront the gossip, and never to speak a word that would identify yourself as a Christian. Besides, it might cost your reputation or even your job! Sometimes even among Christian friends it's hard to hold to your convictions for fear of what they will think. . .

Joseph seemingly had nothing to gain and everything to lose by identifying himself with Jesus at this point in time. Jesus was dead and no one was expecting His resurrection. It would have been much easier for Joseph to have thought, "Oh, well! Jesus was a good man and a prophet of God. It's too bad that these things happen. But, life must go on. I'll have more influence if I don't rock the boat and keep my seat on the Sanhedrin. I'd better not do anything to upset anyone and jeopardize my position of influence." But in spite of the risks, Joseph came out of hiding and took a strong stand for Jesus by providing Him a proper burial. He gives us an example of what other Scriptures teach by precept:

The Lord wants us all to take a stand for Him in this hostile world. Great! How do we do it? More could be said, but our text reveals at least three factors that will help:

1. To take a stand for the Lord, go often to the foot of the cross.

But I think that the deciding factor that pushed Joseph over the line was standing at the cross and watching Jesus die. Luke hints at this: In **23:47**, he states that when the centurion saw the events at the cross, especially Jesus' final cry, he broke forth in praise. In the next verse, he reports that when the multitudes observed what had happened, they went home beating their breasts. He also reports that Jesus' acquaintances and the women who followed Him, "*were standing at a distance, seeing these things*" (**23:48**). Immediately Luke adds, "*And, behold*" to grab our attention. Not only were His followers observing these things, but of all people, a member of the Council was seeing these things! Seeing the sky darken, watching Jesus on the cross, hearing His final words, hearing the centurion's praise, watching the multitude depart in mourning—all of this mounted up until Joseph said, "That's enough! I can't hide my convictions any longer. I don't care what it costs me, I'm going to Pilate so that I can give this Man the decent burial He deserves!"

A. GOING TO THE CROSS WILL REMIND US THAT JESUS DIED.

B. GOING TO THE CROSS WILL REMIND US THAT JESUS DIED FOR OUR SINS.

C. GOING TO THE CROSS WILL REMIND US THAT JESUS WAS BURIED.

D. GOING TO THE CROSS WILL REMIND US THAT JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD ON THE THIRD DAY.

2. To take a stand for the Lord, be prepared to pay the price.

We are not told what happened to Joseph of Arimathea after the day that he buried Jesus, but it is not being speculative to say that he paid a heavy price. We may face the same costs.

A. WE MAY HAVE TO SACRIFICE OUR REPUTATION FOR CHRIST.

B. WE MAY HAVE TO SACRIFICE OUR RELIGION FOR CHRIST.

C. WE MAY HAVE TO SACRIFICE OUR RICHES FOR CHRIST.

3. To take a stand for Christ, “show up” and do what you can do.

Conclusion:

Martin Luther, who certainly modeled taking a stand for Christ, wrote, “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the word of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that point attacking, I am not confessing Christ however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is tested and to be steady in all the battlefields besides is mere flight and disgrace if the soldier flinches at that one point.”

If there is a point where you know you are compromising your stand for Christ, where you are blending in with the world but you know that you need to take a stand, learn from Joseph. Go to the foot of the cross and think about the Savior’s death on your behalf. Be prepared to count the cost. And, the next opportunity you get, show up and do whatever you can to let others know that you are on Jesus’ side. Even if you formerly were a secret disciple, God will use you as He used Joseph of Arimathea, to be a bold witness and to render valuable service for the Savior.

Deffinbaugh: For Joseph (and Nicodemus) to request the body of Jesus in order to give it a proper burial was a public statement that Jesus was not a criminal, but the Christ. Jesus would have been buried on the proverbial “boot hill” of that day, had Joseph not boldly gone before Pilate to ask for the body. Joseph will, in the severe limitations of time, give Jesus the finest burial possible, placing His body in his own tomb. I have the impression that Joseph would have done better by Jesus if time had allowed. But there was so little time to obtain permission to claim the body (which required time for Pilate to verify that Jesus had actually died, so soon— **Mark 15:44-45**), to take it down from the cross, to prepare it with spices, and then to place it in the tomb. The Council had to know what Joseph had done, for when they asked for a guard to be posted at the grave site, they would have had to have been told that Joseph claimed the body and buried it. They would likely have had to ask Joseph where the body was buried. Remember, the women knew this only because they followed Joseph and Nicodemus, spying out the place where Jesus lay. Showing respect for the body of Jesus was the only thing that Joseph (and Nicodemus) could do, at this point in time, to disassociate themselves from the actions of the Council, and to associate themselves with Jesus, His message, His ministry, and His Messiahship. They did what they could, and they did it well. The gospels commend Joseph especially (did he take the lead?), and Nicodemus by inference.

Joseph is a man, unlike the disciples, who showed courage at the occasion of Jesus’ death, and who showed his love for the Savior by showing respect for His body. He is, it seems to me, recorded for all of history to regard highly, not unlike the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears. How fondly we read of him and of his labor of love over the body of Jesus. Did he become one of those who trusted in Jesus as the Christ? Was he a vocal member of the early church? We are not told. But he is a striking contrast to the absence of the eleven. Where were they? Why did they not ask for Jesus’ body?

MacArthur: The Supernatural Burial of Christ

I suppose the burial of Jesus is not something you’ve considered a lot. We celebrate the death of

Christ, and the resurrection of Christ, but the burial of Christ is as supernatural and as divinely wrought as anything else in the incarnation. In fact, the burial of Jesus is so important that all four Gospel writers talk about it, and they give detail; and the detail they give is related to the supernatural elements of His burial. The reality is this: that from the moment Jesus gave up His Spirit and His body was dead, He, alive, entered into the presence of God in paradise, from which He controlled every detail of His own burial. He not only planned His own funeral, He ran it. The divine pre-planned, prophesied, and powerfully executed features of the burial of the body of Jesus provide for us some very strong evidence for some very important realities, like the divine purpose of history, like the sovereignty of God in all things, like the authenticity of Scripture, and the veracity of the claims of Christ. His burial brings evidence, proof of all these realities. For those of you who may struggle with whether there's a divine purpose in history, whether God is sovereign over everything, whether the Scripture is true, and whether Christ is really who He claimed to be, there is enough in His burial to remove those kinds of questions. . .

His story is brief, but his story is wonderful. It is a story of salvation. It is an unexpected, somewhat shocking testimony of faith in Christ, set against the rejection of the whole nation, and set against the hostility of the rest of the Council. At least one out of the 71 believed in Jesus. He's like the thief on the cross in the fact that he is saved, but he's unlike them. The thief is an outcast, the centurion is a Gentile outcast, but he's on the inside. This is a soul rescued from the elite leaders of Israel. This is one of the few noble, and the few mighty, and the few prominent that are saved. The lone dissenter, "a good and righteous man," Luke says, the good in the right sense of spiritual goodness, and righteous (*dikaios*, same word used, same exact word used in **verse 47** of Christ). "*Certainly this Man was righteous.*" Jesus was righteous and Joseph was righteous. Jesus was righteous by nature, and Joseph was righteous by grace, right? But it was the same righteousness. If you're righteous, you have the same righteousness as God does, as Christ does. That's what Paul says in **Philippians chapter 3**, that he had a righteousness not of his own, but the righteousness of God, imputed to him through faith in Jesus Christ. So, Joseph is as righteous as Jesus is righteous, only in Joseph's case it's a gift of grace. In Jesus' case, it's part of His essential nature. Both righteous: one by nature, one by grace. . .

Why did he ask for the body of Jesus? Why did he want to expose himself? Well, maybe he was tired of hiding himself. Maybe he felt it was the least he could do for his Messiah, to step up. Maybe he believed in the promise of Jesus -- that He would rise again. If he was a disciple of Jesus, and a follower of Jesus, he'd heard Him say it. Maybe he wanted to be sure, like the thief. Remember, the thief said, "*Remember me when You come into Your kingdom.*" So the thief on the cross understood that because Jesus was dying didn't mean it was the end; he was still the King and would have a kingdom. He certainly must have believed at least what the thief believed, and he knew that if he didn't step up and declare his faith in Christ in this hour of crisis, he might not be accepted into that kingdom. And he, unlike the thief, has an opportunity to demonstrate his love. The thief didn't have an opportunity to demonstrate his love to Christ, because he didn't live long enough; this man did. Was he willing to take a public stand for Christ? What could he do? How could he do it? Well, the noblest thing he could think to do would be to remove from Jesus the final indignity, which was this: that Jesus would be thrown in a pit with all the crucified criminals. That's what was done as the final desecration of those who were deemed to be outcasts. . .

What a funeral. No hymns sung. No prayer prayed. No sermon preached. Yet no one was ever

buried more lovingly, more generously. Even Asa, whose body was laid in a bed in 2 Chronicles 16, even Asa didn't have as rich a burial as Jesus did at the hands of two men. And all these actions of these two men were superintended by God. This is so important.

TEXT: Luke 24:1-12

TITLE: *RSURRECTION SURPRISE*

BIG IDEA:

DON'T BE SURPRISED BY THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTION:

The historicity of the Resurrection is crucial to the Christian faith – as the apostle Paul develops in 1 Cor. 15. Yet despite all of the predictions by Jesus of His coming resurrection, the disciples needed some persuading before they could embrace its reality.

Donald Miller: The final Resurrection faith, then, cannot be accounted for on the basis of wishful thinking, or of a predisposition to believe, or of an over-readiness to draw implications without examining the evidence. In spite of all Jesus had told them beforehand, the disciples seemed to have no hope whatever that he would be raised, and were even suspicious of the evidence when it came to them. The Resurrection finally became a reality which they could not deny, rather than a phantom which they wished into being.

Steven Cole: The Christian faith is unique to all of the world's major religions in that it is founded on the living person of Jesus Christ, who was raised bodily from the dead. It is not primarily a system of moral or doctrinal beliefs, although it has definite moral standards and doctrinal truths. Christianity is founded on the living Lord Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins, risen from the dead, ascended into heaven, and returning soon in power and glory.

Darrell Bock: Without resurrection, Christianity is just another human approach to reach God; it is emptied of transforming power and hope; it is a mere shell, not worth the energy one devotes to it.... To believe in Christ is to believe not merely in his example, but in the power of his resurrection to grant new life.

I. (:1-3) THE SURPRISE OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE EMPTY TOMB – WHERE IS THE BODY OF JESUS?

A. (:1) Expectation of Ministering to the Dead Body of Jesus

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared.”

- Mission of Urgency – came at first opportunity
- Mission of Love and Compassion – came to apply spices to the body

Steven Cole: The fact that the early church changed the day of worship from the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) to Sunday can only be explained by the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday morning. The apostles were all steeped in Judaism with its strict observance of Saturday as the day of rest and worship. Why would they change the sacred day from Saturday to Sunday? Clearly, it was not a strategic planning decision that was made to distinguish Christianity from Judaism! Rather, they did it to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Sunday became “*the Lord’s Day*” (**Rev. 1:10**), when the church gathered for worship and instruction (**Acts 20:7**).

B. (:2) Effort to Remove the Stone Not Needed

“And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb,”

C. (:3) Empty Tomb Raises More Questions Than It Answers

“but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.”

II. (:4-7) THE FULFILLMENT OF THE PROPHECY OF THE RESURRECTION – HE IS NOT HERE, BUT HE HAS RISEN

A. (:4) Encounter with Dazzling Angels

“And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel;”

- State of Perplexity
- Spectacular Angelic Interaction

B. (:5) Encouragement to Reverse Their Negative Expectation

“and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living One among the dead?’”

Why did they need encouragement?

- Terrified in the presence of these angelic beings
- Traumatized by the death of Jesus

Liefeld: *“The living” (ton zonta)*, only in Luke, stresses the factual aspect of the Resurrection. Luke also refers to in **Acts 2:24**: *“It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”*

C. (:6a) Exclamation of the Reality of the Resurrection

“He is not here, but He has risen.”

- Empty Tomb Should Be No Surprise
- Resurrection Is Now Historical Reality

Ralph Wilson: The angels ask a startling question: *“Why do you seek the living among the dead?”* They are in a tomb looking for a dead man. But a grave is no place to find the living Christ, the angels declare with some irony. A grave is the last place to you look when you are seeking Life. .

To followers who have been stunned by his crucifixion, hearts heavy with dejection, and eyes puffy with tears, these words are like an explosion. Risen! Raised to life! Their emotions are now wrenched again with the news. It must be true, coming from angels! But how can it be?

MacArthur: So, the evidence concerning the resurrection is the empty tomb, and there is no other explanation for the empty tomb than a resurrection. The Jews didn’t steal His body. The Romans didn’t steal His body. The Apostles didn’t steal His body. The women didn’t steal His body. His enemies had no reason to steal His body and fabricate a resurrection. His friends didn’t even believe in a resurrection, and nor would they steal His body, fabricate a false resurrection and then go out and die as martyrs for a phony. The angels give the only possible explanation: He’s not here because He’s risen.

D. (:6b-7) Enlightenment Regarding Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy

“Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”

- Remember the Teaching of Jesus Regarding Upcoming Events in Jerusalem
- Three Key Historical Realities:
 - o Betrayal
 - o Crucifixion
 - o Resurrection

III. (:8-12) THE RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE RESURRECTION – HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?

A. (:8-10) Veracity of Reporting

No fake news here; accurate and timely reporting of eyewitness accounts

1. (:8) Remembered

“And they remembered His words,”

2. (:9a) Returned

“and returned from the tomb”

3. (:9b-10) Reported

“and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.”

B. (:11-12) Variety of Responses

1. (:11) Skepticism and Unbelief

a. Skepticism

“And these words appeared to them as nonsense,”

b. Unbelief

“and they would not believe them.”

2. (:12) Excitement, Investigation and Amazement

a. Excitement

“But Peter arose and ran to the tomb;”

b. Investigation

“stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only;”

Anyabwile: Peter found the linen cloths by themselves – which would be strange if some grave robbers had taken the body as a hoax or to ridicule the disciples. That’s why Peter went home *“amazed at what had happened.”*

c. Amazement

“and he went away to his home, marveling at that which had happened.”

Liefeld: In Luke people “*wonder*” about things that are hard to understand. The word does not in itself imply either belief or unbelief. We conclude that Peter is still incredulous at this point, not because the verb implies it, but because his visit to the empty tomb fails, in spite of the evidence, to evoke a statement of belief from him (cf. **John 20:8**).

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When are you surprised by God doing what He has promised to do?
- 2) How patient is Jesus with us when we are slow to believe or forgetful about His teachings?
- 3) If the evidence for the resurrection is so strong, why is it a matter of faith rather than just intellectual investigation?
- 4) To what extent should we use evidentiary material and arguments in our evangelism?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Michael Crawford (Freedom Church message): HE IS NOT HERE – EASTER MESSAGE INTRODUCTION:

We are all familiar with the account in the Gospel of Luke of what took place on Easter morning. It was all about the empty tomb.

Look at the importance of the Resurrection of Jesus:

- Key to the integrity of God’s Word
- Key to the integrity of the Person and Work of Christ
- Key to the integrity of our Faith

The consistent message of the preaching of the apostles in Acts and of the entire New Testament

Key Declaration by the Angel: “*He is not here.*”

I. WHAT MADE THIS STATEMENT SO AMAZING?

A. DISCIPLES’ EXPECTATION OF FINDING A DEAD BODY

That is why they were going to the grave to prepare the body. They had seen Jesus physically die on the cross. They had seen where he had been buried. They expected that when the stone was rolled away the body would be lying in the tomb.

B. DISCIPLES’ FAILURE TO REMEMBER WHAT JESUS HAD TAUGHT EARLIER ABOUT HIS UPCOMING RESURRECTION

C. DISCIPLES’ CONTINUED REACTION OF DISBELIEF

II. WHERE ARE PEOPLE TODAY LOOKING FOR JESUS IN ALL THE WRONG

PLACES?

Look at how Adam and Eve tried to hide from God in the Garden of Eden. People are still trying to hide from God.

People end up looking for Jesus in all the wrong places.

A. IN HISTORY

History cannot contain or define Jesus.

B. IN RELIGION

All religions are man-made systems to try to relate and be right with God.

C. IN CULTURE

Jesus transcends culture. He is the King of the Universe.

D. IN CHURCH / LEADERS / PASTORS

We are all still sinful and imperfect representations of Who Jesus is. Don't judge Jesus on the basis of the shortcomings of your spiritual leaders. They are all still a work in progress.

III. WHERE CAN YOU FIND JESUS?

Sitting down at the right hand of God –

Shows that “It is Finished” – has completed work of redemption

Position of Power and Authority

Jesus is making Himself Accessible –

Inviting all to come to Him and experience peace and rest and deliverance and forgiveness

APPLICATION: Invitation today to come to Jesus.

Morris: Regarding discrepancies between the gospel writers --

The fact that sometimes we hear of one [angel] and sometimes of two need not concern us. As many commentators point out, a spokesman is more prominent than his associates and may be referred to without reference to others. Neither should we be greatly concerned that the angels may be sitting (in John) or standing (here), nor that their words are not identical in the various accounts. It is hypercriticism that does not allow angels to change their position, and there is no reason for holding that they spoke once only. Moreover John speaks of them in connection with a different incident. Problems there undoubtedly are, but the chief thing these minor differences tell us is that the accounts are independent. It is also possible that with angels spiritual perceptions in presumably required and that all may not have seen the same thing.

Anyabwile:

- Surprising Scene (:3)
- Surprising Men (:4-5a)
- Surprising Message (:5b-7)
- Surprising Report (:8-12)

Wil Pounds: The Gospel records show that seven times Jesus said He would rise from the dead "on the third day." The method of calculating time among the Romans, Greeks and Jews would make "three days in the tomb" mean one whole day and any part of each of the two other days, similar to the way we calculate time in our culture as well. It does not mean seventy-two hours.

You would think, how in the world could they forget? None of the disciples should have been caught by surprise. In spite of all the teaching of Jesus regarding His death and resurrection, no one was waiting at the tomb expecting Him to rise from the dead. They were all caught by surprise. That fact leads to the authenticity of the historical record of the resurrection. Another fact is women were the first to report the empty tomb, and the first appearance of the resurrected Jesus was to women. In the first century the testimony of women was not held in esteem. If the story was made up the writers would not have put the emphasis on the testimony of women. Culturally the first century church would never have created a resurrection story whose main witnesses were women. The Jewish people would never have accepted their witness.

Steven Cole: You may be thinking, “If the evidence is so convincing, why don’t more people believe it?” The answer is, people refuse to believe in the resurrection because it has moral implications that they do not want to face. If Jesus is risen, then He is the rightful Lord of all. It means that He is the coming judge of all the earth. It means that I must turn from my sin and live under His lordship. Because people do not want to turn from their sin, they refuse to believe in Jesus in spite of the evidence. But Scripture is clear:

We must put our trust in the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

MacArthur: The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is not the epilogue to the story. It is not the epilogue to the life of Christ. It is the goal of His life, it is the objective of His life, it is the purpose of His life. The church has always understood that. In fact, the church understood it right from the day of the resurrection on. For since that time, the church has chosen to meet on Sunday, the first day of the week, the day that Jesus rose from the dead, to commemorate the most important event in His life, and the most important event in human history, His resurrection from the dead. The church did not choose to meet on Friday. The church chose to meet on Sunday, because Sunday is the interpretation of Friday. Easter is the interpretation of Good Friday. Resurrection is the divine interpretation of the death of Christ. Resurrection is the divine vindication of the work that He did on the cross. Without the resurrection, the cross means nothing, for it has no validation, it has no vindication, it has no affirmation. But when God raised Jesus from the dead, He was affirming, and validating, and vindicating the fact that He had indeed borne our sins in His own body on the cross, and had satisfied the justice of God with His sin-bearing. Without the resurrection, the cross is meaningless, just another death.

The resurrection is everything. The resurrection vindicates the great reason for the gospel, and for all redemption. The purpose of the gospel is not just that we might experience the forgiveness of sin. The purpose of the gospel is that we, having been forgiven of our sin, could enter into eternal life, and live in the bliss of heaven forever, in perfect holiness and perfect joy, in glorified, physical, resurrected bodies. Bodily resurrection is peculiar to Christianity, and bodily resurrection is essential to Christianity. The Christian gospel is not designed to deliver you from your troubles here; not at all, not even close. The Christian gospel is not so that your spirit can float on into eternity in some nebulous way. The Christian gospel does not promise that you will live on in influence in some way, nor is the gospel saying that Christ lives on in His influence, or Christ lives on in spiritual form. The Christian message is that Jesus Christ rose from the grave in a glorified, physical body, in some way like the body you have now, only stripped of all that is sinful and fatal; and that we one day will receive a body like unto His glorified body, and we will live in bodily resurrected form through all the eons of eternity. That is the Christian message.

4 lines of evidence:

- 1) emptiness of the tomb
- 2) message of the angels
- 3) witness of the women
- 4) unbelieving disciples

TEXT: Luke 24:13-35

TITLE: OPENING EYES ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

BIG IDEA:

ONLY JESUS CAN OPEN OUR EYES TO BELIEVE THE FULL SCOPE OF HIS MESSIANIC MISSION WHICH DELIVERS US FROM CONFUSION AND DESPAIR

INTRODUCTION:

Here we have the best Bible expositor ever holding a private tutorial session with two discouraged disciples on the road to Emmaus. They were weighed down with the confusion and despair of unfulfilled expectations. Because their understanding of the prophetic promises regarding the redemptive mission of the Messiah was deficient, they could not grasp how the Jewish leaders could condemn to death one whose ministry seemed so promising. It was now the third day and despite some testimony regarding the empty tomb and some supposed angelic revelation, they were still far short of understanding or believing in the resurrection. They were captive to spiritual blindness and needed the intervention of the Savior.

Liefeld: The Emmaus story is a literary and spiritual jewel. It is at once a moving story, a testimony to the Resurrection, an explanation of the empty tomb, and an occasion for Luke to summarize several of his major themes.

I. (:13-16) SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS REQUIRES DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT

A. (:13) Trip to Emmaus –

In the Vicinity of the Key Events of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection

“And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.”

B. (:14) Talk About Recent Events Concerning Jesus in Jerusalem –

Inquiring About the Key Events

“And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place.”

Donald Miller: These two had received the report of the women that the grave of Jesus was empty, and had had it confirmed by others who went to investigate (vss. 22-24), yet they had not believed that Jesus was alive. The empty tomb, however, was a strange phenomenon, and that must have been the subject of their conversation when Jesus overtook them, almost unnoticed (vss. 14-15).

C. (:15) Travel Companion –

In the Presence of the Key Figure – the Risen Messiah Himself

“And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and began traveling with them.”

Chuck Swindoll: Luke describes the disciples’ conversation as bantering ideas back and forth with great emotion in a shared search for answers (24:14-16). The Greek phrase *homileo suzeteo*, “talking and discussing” (24:15), would be more literally translated as “conversing” and

“disputing.” The disillusioned followers desperately wanted to know why their expectations of the Messiah had come to such a tragic end.

**D. (:16) Thwarted From Recognizing Jesus –
In Total Spiritual Darkness**

“But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.”

**II. (:17-24) ONLY JESUS CAN RESOLVE OUR SPIRITUAL CONFUSION AND
DESPAIR**

(:17) Jesus Invites Our Spiritual Questions

“And He said to them, ‘What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?’ And they stood still, looking sad.”

A. (:18-21) Confusion Concerning Jesus’ Messianic Redemptive Mission

1. (:18-20) Clarity Needed Regarding the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ

a. (:18) Ironic Question

“And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, ‘Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?’”

Anyabwile: Cleopas will forever be remembered for what he said next: *“Are you the only visitor in Jerusalem who doesn’t know the things that happened there in these days?”* Imagine being known for asking Jesus whether he knew about the crucifixion. That’s hilarious! Jesus is the only one in the world who truly does know!

b. (:19a) Inquisitive Response

“And He said to them, ‘What things?’”

Geldenhuys: He again uses the effective method of asking questions and of persuading them to unburden their inmost thoughts.

Lenski: As is the case in other instances when he asked about things that he himself knew well, so this question had the simple purpose of making these disciples state their problem to him as directly as possible in order that he might solve it for them in a perfectly objective way. His question looked forward to what he intended to say after he had received the answer.

c. (:19b-20) Irreconcilable Tension – Why Was Jesus Rejected by the Jewish Religious Leaders and Seemingly Came to Such a Bad End?

1) (:19b) Jesus Looked Like the Messiah

“And they said to Him, ‘The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,’”

Geldenhuys: Like many other disciples of Jesus, they not only loved Him affectionately as their Master and Leader, but they saw in Him the promised Messiah and expected that He might assert His Messiahship with power at the great Feast and establish the Messianic kingdom

- 2) (:20) Jesus Was Crucified by the Jewish Religious Leaders
“and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.”

2. (:21) Clarity Needed Regarding the Messianic Redemptive Mission of Jesus Christ

a. Hope of Israel’s Redemption

“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.”

Liefeld: there is a big difference between trusting Jesus as our Deliverer and Savior and hoping that he will prove to be our Deliverer and Savior.

b. Disappointment over His Death

“Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.”

Geldenhuis: In this confession of the men of Emmaus one clearly sees the violent struggle between hope and fear that raged in their hearts. And this gives us a clear picture of what went on that day in the hearts of all the other perplexed followers of the Crucified One.

B. (:22-24) Confusion Concerning the Empty Tomb and the Resurrection

1. (:22-23) Testimony of the Women Raised Questions

“But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive.”

2. (:24) Testimony of our Companions Raised Questions

“And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”

III. (:25-27) WE MUST LISTEN IN FAITH TO THE EXPOSITION OF JESUS IN THE SCRIPTURES

A. (:25) Reprimand Over Failure to Believe the Messianic Message of the OT Prophets

“And He said to them, ‘O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!’”

When Jesus disappoints us, we need to go back to the Scriptures and pray for divine enlightenment to fully understand both the biblical record and the power of God.

Morris: They had no doubt seized on the prediction of the glory of the Messiah, but it was quite another thing to take to heart the prophecies that pointed to the darker side of His mission. But the dark side was there, in the prophecies. And this means that the passion was not simply a possibility that might or might not become actual, depending on the circumstances: it was **necessary**. Written in the prophets as it was, it had to happen. The Christ must suffer. But that is not the end of it. He must also **enter into his glory**. God is not defeated. He triumphs through the sufferings of His Christ.

Constable: A fool in the Old Testament is a person who does not allow the Scriptures to influence his thinking or behavior. These disciples had failed to do that. They were also slow to believe what they did know that the former prophets had revealed. They had overlooked the

prophecies about the Messiah having to suffer preferring rather to focus only on those that predicted His glorification. Their error constitutes a warning for all subsequent disciples. All Scripture is profitable. We should not slight any part of it but should strive for a comprehensive understanding of its teaching. If these disciples had understood and believed what the Old Testament revealed, they would not have felt depressed but would have been full of joy.

B. (:26) Reinforcement of the Essential Link Between Christ's Suffering and Glory

"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"

Chuck Swindoll: Finally, Jesus broke His silence to bring a reproof, ask a question, and offer an explanation. In the reproof, *"O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!"* (24:25), Jesus demonstrated that the two followers knew the contents of Scripture but did not accept its message as truth. As a result, they failed to see God's sovereign plan. His question, *"Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?"* pointed to the reason for their unbelief (24:26). They had confused their own expectations with the hope God was offering, and they had failed to see God's ultimate purpose.

C. (:27) Revelation of Christ in the OT

*"And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets,
He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures."*

Morris: throughout the Old Testament a consistent divine purpose is worked out, a purpose that in the end meant and must mean the cross. The terribleness of sin is found throughout the Old Testament and so is the deep, deep love of God. In the end this combination made Calvary inevitable. The two had wrong ideas of what the Old Testament taught and thus they had wrong ideas about the cross.

Anyabwile: we don't properly read our Bibles until we see how it connects to Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

Deffinbaugh: Among the texts that Jesus must have referred to would be these: **Deut. 18:15-19; Psalm 2; Psalm 16; Psalm 22; Psalm 118:22; Cf. Exodus 20:11; Ps. 146:6; Daniel 9:24ff.**

We are not told until later what impact this teaching had on the disciples, but when we get to **verse 32** we overhear them saying to each other,

"Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

Here was the basis for the change, from "heartbreak" to "heartburn": the Scriptures were taught and were "caught." There was no more need for despair.

IV. (:28-35) DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT -- THE OPENING OF OUR EYES TO SEE JESUS -- CONFIRMS THE RESURRECTION

A. (:28-29) The Blessing of Being with Jesus

1. (:28) Opportunity Almost Lost

*"And they approached the village where they were going,
and He acted as though He would go farther."*

Geldenhuys: If they had not invited Him He would have passed on, and they would have

forfeited the inexpressible privilege of discovering that it was their risen Lord who had been with them and had instructed them.

2. (:29a) Opportunity Pursued

“And they urged Him, saying, ‘Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.’”

MacArthur: So as they arrive at their home, Jesus looks like He’s going to go further. “They plead with Him, urge Him, ‘Come in, please.’” It’s not because they want to be hospitable to Him, although they certainly would want to be; they want more of this teaching, because **verse 32** says, *“Their hearts had been set on fire.”* There’s nothing, there’s nothing that produces the joy, the exhilaration, the thrill that the comprehension of Scripture brings to you, that comprehension which is connected to your eternal salvation.

3. (:29b) Opportunity Realized

“And He went in to stay with them.”

B. (:30-31) The Blessing of Truly Seeing Jesus

1. (:30) Truly Seeing Jesus is a Gift from God Associated with Genuine Fellowship

“And it came about that when He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.”

Donald Miller: As they sat at table, although he was a stranger, he acted as host.

2. (:31) Truly Seeing Jesus Physically Confirmed the Reality of the Resurrection

“And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.”

Donald Miller: Can anyone imagine the joy of that moment? Those who had begun to scatter were together again. Disillusionment and disappointment had yielded to joy and hope. The One whom they had followed had not failed them. He had emerged victorious over death. The decisive event of all history had taken place. Death was swallowed up in victory.

Lenski: They must realize that while Jesus was alive after his soul and his body had been reunited he was not to enter and to continue the old, earthly life in which they had known him so long. He had entered a new state in which he appeared and disappeared at will. As he had left the sealed tomb, so he now left the closed house. The thought was overwhelming – incomprehensible, yet infinitely blessed.

C. (:32) The Blessing of Divine Spiritual Illumination and Exposition of Scripture

“And they said to one another, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?’”

D. (:33-34) Testimony of the Disciples to the Resurrection

“And they arose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, ‘The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon.’”

Geldenhuys: They know now that He is risen and that He lives as the Messiah, the promised Redeemer. And this certainty immediately brings such a light and joy into their hearts, that they have an irresistible urge to give others also a share in their joy. So without delay they went back to Jerusalem the same evening. Sustained by the extraordinary enthusiasm created in their souls, they went thither quickly and probably arrived there about nine o'clock that evening.

MacArthur: The eleven becomes, at this point in the gospel record, a technical term for the apostles who are different than the disciples. You understand that? Disciple is just a word that means “learner,” *mathētēs*, all those who were followers of Jesus. The apostles were the sent ones, commissioned, set apart; originally twelve, Judas is out, that left eleven. So instead of being called the twelve, later in the book of Acts they are referred to as the twelve, because that becomes their new name with the addition of Matthias in the first chapter of Acts.

But for now, they're the eleven, even though there aren't eleven of them there, because Thomas on this occasion happens to be absent; we know that from John's gospel. So they're still the eleven. It refers to the apostles. They're gathered, and the others who were with them.

E. (:35) Confirming Testimony of the Emmaus Road Disciples

*“And they began to relate their experiences on the road
and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.”*

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have your wrong expectations about what you expected God to perform caused you to sink down into confusion and discouragement?
- 2) How does Jesus effectively use the technique of asking questions when our tendency may be to jump in prematurely and try to provide immediate answers?
- 3) Do we allow people the space to fully express their frustrations and confusion and doubts?
- 4) How can we read the OT in a way that helps us to connect to the person of Jesus Christ?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

David Gooding: summarizes the dilemma of these two heartsick, devastated, and utterly confused disciples: Death and resurrection formed no part of their concept of Messiah's office and programme, which is why they had not really taken in what Jesus had said about His coming death. They were hoping for a Messiah who would break the imperialist domination of the Romans by force of arms. A Messiah Who managed to allow Himself to be caught by the Jewish authorities, handed over to the Romans and crucified before He had even begun to organize any guerrilla operations, popular uprising or open warfare—what use was He? If the Old Testament prophesied a liberator who should not die, but be triumphant, Jesus was already disqualified: He had died. After that, it was almost irrelevant to talk of resurrection.

Adrian Rogers: The Discouragement of a Confused Heart

On Easter Sunday, two forlorn disciples left Jerusalem for Emmaus, a small village about seven miles away. Walking wearily from where Jesus had been crucified, buried, and raised, they were discouraged and burdened. They had expected Jesus to be the political Messiah who would deliver Israel, like the angels proclaimed. They'd been looking for a King, but their king's mission had been cut short—they thought. Now He had nails for a scepter, a cross for a throne, and for His kingdom—a narrow tomb. But the story was only half done. They hadn't yet seen that Jesus had turned Calvary into Easter. Pentecost was coming. Their sadness was rooted in misunderstanding. Misunderstanding led to disappointment. Disappointment led to doubt. Doubt led to discouragement. That can happen to us when we're going through our own Gethsemane and Calvary. We can't see that He's going to turn our hurts to hallelujah. So many Christians get discouraged because they don't fully understand the Scriptures or believe all that the prophets have spoken.

Ray Pritchard: He rebukes them for one thing and only one thing—for failing to understand and apply the Scriptures. He doesn't upbraid them for leaving Jerusalem and walking back home. He doesn't criticize their doubt nor condemn their confusion. All of that was perfectly understandable, given the circumstances and the fragmentary information they had received. But he tells them they should have known and believed what God had said. That leads to what we might call the ultimate Bible conference. He tells them plainly that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die on the cross. What seemed like the ultimate miscarriage of justice turns out to be the Father's plan to glorify his Son. Christ was no victim being led against his will to the cross.

Liefeld: For several reasons vv. 25-27 are vitally important. With great clarity they show that the sufferings of Christ, as well as his glory, were predicted in the OT and that all the OT Scriptures are important. They also show that the way the writers of the NT used the OT had its origin, not in their own creativity, but in the post-resurrection teachings of Jesus, of which this passage is a paradigm. The passage also exemplifies the role of the OT in Luke's own theology. Although he does not directly quote the OT Scriptures as many times a Matthew does, nevertheless he alludes frequently to the OT, demonstrating that what God has promised must take place and employing a "proof-from-prophecy" apologetic for the truth of the gospel.

Steven Cole: Disappointment and Hope

A five-year-old boy from Texas was told that the family would visit the Grand Canyon. They described it as much bigger than downtown Dallas. He could hardly wait to see it. When they finally got there, they asked him how it measured up to his expectations. With a little frown, he said, "I thought you said that it was a big *cannon*." He was probably hoping to see them shoot it! When you're hoping for the Grand Cannon, you can be let down even by something as spectacular as the Grand Canyon! (Told by Robert Pyne, *Kindred Spirit*, Winter, 1997).

If your expectations are wrong, you can even be disappointed by God. It's not that God was somehow lacking. He is far more glorious and perfect than we could ever conceive. But often, because of our limited perspective, we feel as if He let us down. We thought that He would do something, but He didn't do it. We thought that we were trusting in the promises of His Word, but they didn't come true. We thought that we were praying in line with His will, but He didn't answer. God didn't come through as we had hoped.

God will turn our disappointment to hope if with His people we will seek the risen

Savior through faith in His Word.

The first thing we must acknowledge, although we may not want to admit it, is that, like these men,

1. We all face times when we are disappointed with God.

(1). WE MAY BE DISAPPOINTED WITH GOD BECAUSE OUR EXPECTATIONS DO NOT MATCH HIS SOVEREIGN PURPOSE.

(2). WE MAY BE DISAPPOINTED WITH GOD BECAUSE HE HAS CLOSED OUR EYES FROM SEEING THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS.

(3). WE MAY BE DISAPPOINTED WITH GOD BECAUSE WE HAVE FOOLISHLY FOCUSED ON PART OF HIS WORD, BUT NOT THE WHOLE.

(4). WE MAY BE DISAPPOINTED WITH GOD BECAUSE WE ARE SLOW OF HEART TO BELIEVE HIS WORD.

2. When we are disappointed with God, we need to join with His people in seeking the risen Savior through faith in His Word.

(1). JOIN WITH THE LORD'S PEOPLE.

(2). SEEK THE RISEN SAVIOR.

(3). SEEK THE RISEN SAVIOR IN HIS WORD.

(4). SEEK THE RISEN SAVIOR IN HIS WORD THROUGH FAITH.

(5). KEEP A TEACHABLE HEART WHEN THE LORD REBUKES YOU.

(6). ENTREAT THE LORD TO STAY WITH YOU.

(7). WHEN THE SPIRITUAL HIGHS END, GO ON IN FAITH, IN THE WORD, AND IN FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS.

MacArthur: Christ: the Living Expositor

They've heard it all: the testimony of the women, the whole thing. Not only had they seen the empty tomb, not only had they heard the angels tell them He was alive, but they had seen Jesus on the road. And these two, along with the rest, didn't believe it. They are faithless. They are unconvinced followers of Jesus. And it is Sunday. It's late in the afternoon. There's nothing to stay for in the city of Jerusalem; Passover ended the day before. They go home heartsick, devastated, and utterly confused. . .

So He is in form and face glorified, and yet He is not alien; He's human. They're not shocked. They're not surprised by His form, by His appearance. This is a wonderful insight, dear friends, as to how it will be when we receive a body like unto the body of His glory when we go to heaven, we will be fully human without our fallenness, without our sinfulness. . .

So they tell the stranger the story in brief; and that's the reason for their sadness. And it is profound, and it is deep. They cannot comprehend how one could possibly be the kind of person He was, and be hated and despised and murdered by the leaders of Israel who were the experts on the Old Testament, who were the representatives of God and the spiritual leaders of that nation, who of all people would recognize the Messiah, they thought. . .

Now they have just in their own minds clearly crystalized and articulated their dilemma, their problem. This is perfect. They have defined their need to know, their need to understand reality. They need to know that Jesus arose. They need to know that He is alive. They need to know that this is part of the plan. This is not a breach of the plan, or a violation of the plan, or the no plan as if God is just reacting to whatever may happen. They need to know the facts, they need to have their misunderstanding corrected, and so Christ is in the position now to give them all the answers they need. Good expositions are set up with questions that raise the issues so that Scripture can give the answer. . .

He rebukes them for not knowing Scripture and its meaning. He rebukes them for not believing, because they are responsible. But the rebuke is gracious, and the rebuke is mild, and He immediately exposts the full range of Old Testament Scripture from Moses through all the prophets. It begins with Moses, the Pentateuch, and ends with all the prophets.

TEXT: Luke 24:36-53

TITLE: VERIFICATION . . . GREAT COMMISSION . . . ASCENSION

BIG IDEA:

TRANSFORMED DISCIPLES, NOW CONFIDENT OF JESUS' RESURRECTION AND WITNESSES TO HIS ASCENSION, REJOICE AS THEY AWAIT THE HOLY SPIRIT TO EMPOWER THEIR TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus presents Himself as “*The Truth*.” We have seen in the Gospel of John the effectiveness of His Witness to Himself. Ultimately, He must provide the verification of His person and of the reality of His resurrection. He can point to His physical wounds suffered on the cross; but more importantly to all of the OT Messianic prophecies that predict the entire scope of His ministry – including His suffering, death, resurrection and future kingdom.

He has the authority to commission His disciples to proclaim the saving gospel message to the world of repentance from sins and faith in Him alone. His final triumph over sin and Satan is made permanent by His ascension back to the right hand of Almighty God. His disciples have now been transformed from the state of being weak and doubting and confused to now being strong and united and joyful as they await the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower them on their mission of testifying to God’s offer of forgiveness of sins – an offer that will first be extended in Jerusalem, but will quickly spread throughout the world.

I. (:36-47) VERIFICATION OF THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

A. (:36-43) Physical Evidence

1. (:36-37) Verification Via Personal Appearance

a. (:36) Sudden Appearance

“And while they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst.”

Donald Miller: In order to ensure that the post-Resurrection appearances were real, and not merely the subjective experience of a few impressionistic people, Jesus made himself known to the whole group, including the Eleven and the others who were with them.

b. (:37) Scared Reaction

“But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.”

Fear is the natural reaction to experiencing and seeing the supernatural (as we see in every angelic appearance); here Christ has appeared without walking through the door

2. (:38-40) Verification Via Viewing His Wounds and Touching His Body of Flesh and Bones

a. (:38) Dealing with Doubts

“And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?’”

Jesus wants to bring peace and clarity where there is fear and confusion

b. (:39) Dispelling Misconceptions

1) See My Wounds

“See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself;”

2). See by Touching

“touch Me and see,”

3) See My Flesh and Bones

“for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

c. (:40) Displaying His Wounds

“And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.”

3. (:41-43) Verification Via Eating a Meal

“And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, He said to them, ‘Have you anything here to eat?’

And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them.”

Donald Miller: the whole person now is not just a spirit traveling around in a body, but is both body and spirit fused into a unity so perfect that each belongs to the other and neither is complete without the other, so in the life to come we shall be both spirit and body, with resurrection bodies like unto that of Jesus, spiritual, glorious, imperishable (**1 Cor. 15:42-50; 1 John 3:2**).

Guzik: There were several times previous to this when joy hindered faith, in the sense of something being too good to be true.

- In **Genesis 45:25-26**, Jacob could not believe that Joseph was alive because the news seemed to be too good.
- In **Job 9:16**, Job said that if God would have answered him he would not have believed it.
- In **Psalms 126:1** it seemed too good to be true that God turned again Israel’s captivity.
- When Peter was set free from prison in Acts 12, the church didn’t believe it (**Acts 12:13-14**).

B. (:44-47) Exegetical Evidence from OT Messianic Prophecy

1. (:44) Significance of Fulfillment of Messianic Prophecy

“Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’”

Donald Miller: Thus, the purpose of God laid down in the Old Testament, its fulfillment in Jesus, and its proclamation by the Church, are all parts of one grand whole, no part of which can be rightly understood apart from the others.

Morris: The solemn division of Scripture into *the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms* (the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible) indicates that there is no part of Scripture that does not bear its witness to Jesus. This incidentally appears to be the only place in the New Testament where this threefold division is explicitly mentioned.

Steven Cole: The word “*must*” is the same Greek word that we found in **Lu 24:7** and **Lu 24:26**, pointing to the necessity of God’s sovereign plan being fulfilled. Luke wants us to know that the death of Jesus was not an accident, nor ultimately the result of sinful men getting the upper hand. It was God’s sovereign purpose, in fulfillment of many Old Testament Scriptures.”

2. (:45) Supernatural Divine Illumination

“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,”

Geldenhuis: It is about time for Luke to bring his Gospel to a conclusion, as it is not exceptionally long for a papyrus writing. In addition, he had already decided to write a sequel to his Gospel (the Book of Acts), in which he would give further particulars of the time between Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. So in the concluding verses of his Gospel he gives only an extremely succinct account of what happened further.

3. (:46) Scope of the OT Prophecies Included Both His Crucifixion and Resurrection

“and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day;’”

4. (:47) Spreading the Gospel Message to All the Nations

“and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

II. (:48-49) GREAT COMMISSION MANDATE

A. (:48) Testify to What You Have Witnessed

“You are witnesses of these things.”

Jonathan Romig: So the fact that Jesus appeared to his eleven disciples and they were willing to leave the safety of locked doors and go out and suffer and die for Jesus tells us what they saw was real. Jesus did rise from the dead.

B. (:49a) Anticipate the Gracious Promise of the Indwelling Holy Spirit

“And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you;”

C. (:49b) Wait for the Empowerment of the Holy Spirit

“but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Morris: The disciples are not to attempt the task of evangelism with their own meagre resources, but are to await the coming of the Spirit. The equipment He would provide is picturesquely described in terms of the disciples being *clothed with power from on high*. The note of power is significant, and on high reminded them (and reminds u) of the source of all real power for evangelism.

Geldenhuys: Only the living Christ Himself was able to conquer the fear, perplexity and doubt of His disciples and to prepare them to enter the world as preachers of the glad tidings.

III. (:50-51) FINAL BLESSING AND ASCENSION

A. (:50) Final Blessing

*“And He led them out as far as Bethany,
and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.”*

B. (:51) Departure via Ascension

*“And it came about that while He was blessing them,
He parted from them.”*

Morris: the ascension differs radically from Jesus’ vanishing from the sight of the disciples at Emmaus (24:31) and similar happenings. There is an air of finality about it. It is the decisive close of one chapter and the beginning of another. It is the consummation of Christ’s earthly work, the indication to His followers that His mission is accomplished, His work among them come to a decisive end. They can expect to see Him in the old way no more.

(:52-53) EPILOGUE –RESPONSE OF THE DISCIPLES

A. (:52) Great Joy While Waiting in Jerusalem

“And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy,”

Geldenhuys: So grand and mighty was the revelation of His divine Sonship in His majestic ascension, that the disciples spontaneously worshipped Him as Lord and King. To His disciples His ascension in divine glory was the final proof that He was truly the Christ, the Son of God, and that He as the Almighty was able to fulfil His promises. . . Ineradicable joy, irresistible longing to glorify God, and deep gratitude – this was the characteristic of the lives of the first Christians (although they also had their human frailties).

B. (:53) Grateful Worship in the Temple in Jerusalem

“and were continually in the temple, praising God.”

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How should we respond to people who have doubts about their faith?
- 2) What type of witness are you to what Jesus has accomplished in your life?
- 3) How is your life devoted to the Great Commission?
- 4) Are you evidencing the type of Holy Spirit power, abundant joy and grateful worship that we see demonstrated by the early disciples, in spite of facing persecution?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Deffinbaugh: From Invisibility to Invincibility

The disciples are almost invisible in the text. They are hiding behind closed doors, or silently grieving in the safety of their own quarters (cf. **Luke 24:12**). At the end of our text, the disciples' fear has turned to boldness; their confusion to conviction; their troubled spirits to joy; their wallowing in self-pity and disappointment to worship.

It was **Frank Tillipugh**, in his excellent book, *The Church Unleashed*, who referred to the “fortress mentality” of the church. I fear that he is right, that the church is more concerned about nurturing itself than it is with reaching a lost world with the gospel. We are more concerned with our own self-image than we are with the salvation of the lost. We seem to be more caught up in safety and security than in faith and obedience. We persist in constructing programs which protect us from the pagan world in which we live, rather than to penetrate it with the good news of the gospel. In the name of edification, the home and the family, we have preoccupied ourselves with ourselves. We are, I suspect, very much like the disciples, at the time of their unbelief. . .

We might gain the impression that these three paragraphs describe incidents all occurring on the same day, if it were not for these words in **Acts 1**, along with the parallel accounts of Matthew, Mark, and John. Luke's purpose is not to tell us all that happened in those 40 days, nor even to indicate a change in location, as much as to sum up the way in which Jesus convinced His disciples that He was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures. We may, therefore, suspect that a change in time and place might be found, for example, in **verses 44 and 50**. We do know at least that the ascension of our Lord took place 40 days after His resurrection, and thus more than a month after His first appearance to the disciples, as described in **verses 36-43**. . .

It is noteworthy to observe that the “insufficient belief” of the disciples at the appearance of our Lord is very similar to the “insufficient belief” of many today, when it comes to the resurrection of our Lord. They would hastily admit that Jesus is, in some sense, alive today. He is alive in spirit, alive in our hearts, not unlike the way in which the memory of those who have died lives within us. But He is not viewed to be physically raised from the dead and present with His people today. Such unbelief is like that of the disciples. And this unbelief Jesus was determined to change to genuine faith. . .

The evidence was compelling. The disciples were convinced. This is most apparent by the change in their disposition. There are three sets of descriptions given to us in verses 36-37. Pause for a moment to note them:

- (1) Startled and Frightened (**verse 37**)
- (2) Troubled and Doubting (**verse 38**)
- (3) Joy and Amazement (**verse 41**)

It was not until after His resurrection that the eyes of the disciples were opened to understand all that the prophets had spoken pertaining to the ministry of the Messiah, and especially of His rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection. That veil was now removed. From this point on the disciples will turn to the Old Testament prophecies to prove the Jesus was the promised Messiah, and that all that happened to Him was a prophetic necessity. . .

Conclusion:

The resurrection of Christ is so much sweeter when we come to realize that Him whom God raised from the dead is not only alive, but present, by means of His Spirit. May we come to grasp His presence in us, individually and corporately. Herein in joy and power. As Paul will later put it,

But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you (Romans 8:11).

The greatest reality of the resurrection that can be seen today is the reality that a body which is incapable of living in a way that pleases God and fulfills His commandments, which is subject to the power of sin, can be given life by the same Spirit that raised the dead body of our Lord to life. The Spirit who raised Christ from the dead can give life to our dead bodies. Here is a reality of the resurrection which the disciples were soon to experience. May we experience it as well.

Jonathan Romig: Matthew's Great Commission centers on "going" and "making disciples" but Luke's has **five key points:**

1. **The importance of Christ's resurrection** – If there's no resurrection there's no point, but if it's true it changes everything we know and makes any hardship worth it.
2. **The call to repentance and offer of forgiveness** – The heart of the gospel is an invitation to receive forgiveness for your sins and mistakes.
3. **The gospel is for "all nations" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)** – Christ sends us to all ethnicities and peoples. So every tribe and tongue that hasn't even heard about Jesus needs to hear.
4. **Christ sends his followers out** – Christ is sending us out to share the gospel with the people he's placed us in and around – **our frontlines**. We each have a place God has placed us so that we can share.
5. **We need the Holy Spirit to empower us** – Luke's commission is entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit. We can't spread the message of Christ without the Holy Spirit working through us.

MacArthur: Here are some parallel passages related to opening their minds....

Psalms 119:130 *The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.*

2 Corinthians 4:6 *For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

Acts 16:14 *A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.*

Acts 26:18 *to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.*

2 Corinthians 3:14-16 (3:14) *But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.*

Revelation 3:18 *I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and [that] the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.*

Exodus 4:11 *The LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes [him] mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?”*

Job 33:16; 17 *Then He opens the ears of men, And seals their instruction, That He may turn man aside [from his] conduct, And keep man from pride;*

Isaiah 29:10-14 *For the LORD has poured over you a spirit of deep sleep, He has shut your eyes, the prophets; And He has covered your heads, the seers. 11 The entire vision will be to you like the words of a sealed book, which when they give it to the one who is literate, saying, “Please read this,” he will say, “I cannot, for it is sealed.” 12 Then the book will be given to the one who is illiterate, saying, “Please read this.” And he will say, “I cannot read.” 13 Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned [by rote,] 14 Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men will perish, And the discernment of their discerning men will be concealed.”*

Steven Cole:

I. Too Good to be True, But True!

Though we are prone to unbelief and though Christ’s death and resurrection on our behalf seems too good to be true, it is true and we must believe it.

One of the strongest proofs of the resurrection is the fact that the disciples were so prone not to believe it at first. If they had immediately jumped to the conclusion that Jesus was risen, we could think that their testimony to the resurrection was just wish fulfillment. They wanted it so badly that they convinced themselves that it was true, apart from solid evidence. But the gospel narratives show clearly how slow all of the disciples were to believe that Jesus really was risen. They were not gullible men, prone to superstitious ideas, who were easily persuaded to believe. Even though, just before Jesus appeared, they were saying, “The Lord has really risen” (24:34), when they see Him in their midst they immediately conclude, not that He is risen, but that they are seeing a ghost. And when the Lord confronts them regarding their doubts, “*they still could not believe it for joy*” (24:41). They were not prone to believe. . .

The disciples could not believe that Jesus was really risen because it seemed too good to be true. Not just the resurrection, but the entire gospel may hit us the same way. Christ died for all my sins and I can't do anything to merit it? All I can do is receive it by faith? What's the catch? It just sounds too good to be true. But it *is* true! We must believe it! . . .

II. Our Mission and How to Fulfil It

We must proclaim repentance for forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to all the nations, in the power of the Spirit.

We need to understand how important the written Word of God was to the Lord Jesus Christ. His life fulfilled what God had written through His servants in that book. He was not a maverick, doing His own thing. He lived in obedience to God's Word. Everything He did was in relation to the phrase, "It is written." With regard to our mission, this implies two things:

(1). WE ARE NOT FREE TO MAKE UP OUR OWN MESSAGE.

(2). WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND GOD'S WORD WITHOUT GOD'S ENABLING. .

Repentance means to turn to God from our sin. It is not separate from saving faith, but it is the flip side of saving faith, so that it is often used interchangeably for it (here; **Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 11:18; 20:21; 26:18, 20**). **Spurgeon** draws out four aspects of true repentance:

- *illumination*, where God opens our eyes to the horrible enormity of our sin;
- *humiliation*, where we lay aside our pride in our own merit and plead with God for mercy;
- *detestation*, where we begin to hate our sin; and,
- *transformation*, where we leave the sin we formerly loved, not just outwardly, but in our hearts.

While God imparts repentance and saving faith at the point of salvation, we do not leave it there. It is a lifelong process for the believer. As **J. C. Ryle** puts it,

Repentance and remission are not mere elementary truths, and milk for babes. The highest standard of sanctity is nothing more than a continual growth in practical knowledge of these two points. The brightest saint is the man who has the most heart-searching sense of his own sinfulness, and the liveliest sense of his own complete acceptance in Christ (*Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, Luke 11-24, pp. 518-519).

The scope of our mission is the whole world. . .

To fulfill our mission we must have the power of the Holy Spirit. . .

III. Why the Disciples Rejoiced at Jesus' Ascension

Seeing Jesus ascended on high should cause us to worship Him and rejoice.

1. Jesus' ascension should cause us to worship Him and rejoice because it signifies the completion of His earthly ministry.

2. Jesus' ascension should cause us to worship Him and rejoice because it signifies the commencement of His heavenly ministry.

- A. JESUS' ASCENSION RESUMED HIS GLORIFICATION WITH HIS FATHER.
- B. JESUS' ASCENSION BEGAN HIS INTERCESSORY MINISTRY FOR HIS PEOPLE.
- C. JESUS' ASCENSION BEGAN HIS PREPARATION OF A PLACE FOR HIS PEOPLE.
- D. JESUS' ASCENSION BEGAN HIS PRESENT AND FUTURE DOMINION OVER HEAVEN AND EARTH.
- E. JESUS' ASCENSION RESULTED IN THE POURING OUT OF HIS HOLY SPIRIT ON HIS PEOPLE.

3. Jesus' ascension should cause us to worship Him and rejoice because it signifies the commencement of our ministry as His earthly representatives.

MacArthur: The Significance of the Ascension

- 1) It marked the completion of his salvation work.
- 2) It is the end of his limitation.
- 3) It marked his exaltation and his coronation.
- 4) It signaled his sending of the Holy Spirit.
- 5) It marked the start of his preparation for our heavenly home.
- 6) It marked the passing of the work of evangelism to his followers.
- 7) It signaled our Lord's headship over the church.
- 8) It marked his triumph over Satan.
- 9) It signaled our Lord's giving the work of ministry to gifted men.
- 10) It marked the start of his high priestly work.
- 11) It guarantees and secures his Second Coming.

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