

The Gospel According to Luke

A PROMISED CHILD

PART 1

John the Baptist

READ LUKE 1:5-25

INTRODUCTION

This story of the announcement of John the Baptist is fascinating because we see in it that God has a plan in store and that plan will come to fruition regardless of our opinions or desires on the matter. Zacharias was not particularly a fan of his wife giving birth at such an old age. He wanted a child and she did too but, they were resigned to the thought that it wasn't in the cards for them. This can be a discouraging place for us to fall into. We have dreams and desires and think that they are good, and oftentimes they are, but they may not be in God's plan for our lives...at least not yet.

People want to feel like God hears them. They want to know that He is on their side. The problem lies in treating God like He is our genie in a bottle that must perform every miracle or desire that we demand of Him when we demand it. God's answer to our requests can often be "no" but that doesn't mean it is an inherently bad desire. It means that God said no and that means no. Sometimes, His answer is not yet and we are just trying to get what God has planned for us before the appropriate time. (see Abraham and Sarah) There are other times that God's answer is yes and those are particular times of rejoicing even though they shouldn't be any different than when He says no or maybe.

When cancer comes and God's answer is "no" when we ask Him to heal, He is still worthy of our praise and adoration. When we need money and beg God to give us money and He doesn't, He is no less God in that moment and He is still to be glorified. Our circumstances do not change God's nature. His blessing on our lives is far greater than we give Him credit for and we need to understand that even if we were bound for an eternity in Hell, God would still be worthy of our worship.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When has there been a time that you wanted something that God said “no”? What about “Wait”? How about “Yes”?
2. How do you think Elizabeth and Zacharias felt when the angel announced that they would be having a baby at such an old age? How would you feel if an angel came and told you that now? Would you worship or would you doubt?
3. When the answer from God is “no”, do you feel like it is easy to doubt that He hears you at all? Why or why not?
4. Why should we not treat God like a genie? Isn't it His job to bless us? How have we gotten into a place where we think that so easily?
5. What is something that you have gone through that has tested your faith? Why was it difficult and how did you find the strength to come out on the other side with Jesus?

WRAP UP

Elizabeth and Zacharias were most definitely surprised by the answered prayer of a child. So much so that there were questions. Even in the blessing, they had questions. One thing that we must remember is that God is sovereign over all and that He is the One who is in control and we must glorify Him in and out of season. This means that we decrease and He increases.

The Gospel According to Luke

JOHN IS BORN

PART 2

John the Baptist

READ LUKE 1:57-80

INTRODUCTION

With John's birth we see the fulfilment of the one that would come to proclaim the coming of the Messiah. His parents were blessed, he was blessed but it was not because they were special but because God chose them for a specific purpose.

We often think that we are blessed by God for our own purposes. That He has chosen us to be the recipients of His blessings because we deserve it or have earned it. We could not be more wrong. God has chosen us because He is good. Because He is mighty. Because He is great. Not because of what we have done.

This would be John's fate. Preparing the way of the Lord so that all glory could be given to Christ. Above all, his purpose was to glorify Christ. That is what we are to do as well.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would Zacharias and Elizebeth have felt once this new baby boy was brought into their lives? Why was it significant given what Scripture says? What is different between their blessing and Mary's?
2. Why is it so easy for us to take credit for things that God has done in our lives? How can we keep ourselves in check and not allow pride to take over in our hearts?
3. What is your calling? Why do you believe that God has given you that calling? What are some steps you can practically take that will help you fulfill the calling of God in your life?

WRAP UP

John was certainly a blessing for his parents and for the world. We take for granted all of the things that he had to endure himself that would have been culturally difficult. He stayed the course and sought the Lord and we are to do the same thing. We are to be faithful to what GOD has called us to do just like Elizabeth and Zacharias and John...and Jesus.

The Gospel According to Luke

LUKE 2:22-40

PART 3

The Child who is destined...

READ LUKE 2:34-35

INTRODUCTION

These short two verses where Simeon is blessing Jesus and speaking to Mary of His purpose are very interesting. When we study Scripture it is so important to remember that words matter. The language that Simeon was using was “big-boy” language. He wasn’t just saying that Jesus was going to be a great man or that He was going to affect people in a positive way. He was saying that Jesus was going to rock Israel to its core. Jesus wasn’t on earth to make people happy and live a moral life. He had come to speak against the people who had hardened their hearts towards God and to comfort those who were in need of a Savior. (Luke 5:31)

When we continue with Simeon’s words, we see that Jesus was the embodiment of the Word of God. (John 1:1) He was and is God’s mouthpiece and we know that God’s Word pierces through flesh and bone, even to the marrow. (Hebrews 4:12-13) Jesus had come to pierce people’s hearts with the Word of God and to shine a light on the sinfulness of our hearts. We are quick to forget that He came to save the world from sin and not just to make us feel better about our current situations. Jesus is more than a man with good morals. He came to reveal the heart of man in a way that demands our humility at the foot of the cross.

If we claim to be Christian, then there are some requirements of serving Christ. There is a necessity to follow Him. We follow Him by obeying His commands. We follow Him through confession of sin and repentance of that sin. (1 John 1:9) He had His marching orders from the Father and came to earth to fulfil God’s commands. He is our example on how to live a life that is offered up in humility and sacrifice. He is the example of how we are to shed light on the sin of our hearts and not hide it away to rot our very core. Simeon’s words came out almost as a warning to people who would treat Jesus as exclusively a “good teacher” or a “moral man”. Jesus is God and He came to reveal our hearts.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you find that, reading through passages, it can be easy to overlook some very important words? Why? What can we do to treat every word of Scripture with expectation of our hearts being changed and our lives being affected?
2. Why do you think Jesus wanted people to know that the sick needed a healer? What encouragement can we take from Luke 5:31? How should we respond to Christ knowing that we are sick?
3. Read John 1:1. Why do you think that it is important to know that Jesus was the “Logos” (Word) of God? What does it imply about Him? Do you think that it is important to memorize Scripture? Why or why not?
4. Why is it important for the Word of God to be able to pierce through to our very core? Have you let the Word pierce through to your heart? How can you better live a life of obeying Christ's commands? Do you even want to?
5. What are the dangers of treating Jesus only as a “good man” or a “teacher of good morals”? Why do we have a tendency as humans to desire a God to be morally good but not ultimately God over us? Do you treat God like He is God? Or, do you treat Him like He is an add-on to an already busy life?

WRAP UP

Jesus is God. Jesus is the Word of God. We know these things from Scripture. We also see in these two verses that God's Word was not sent to just treat people good and follow the “Golden Rule” but to pierce through hearts and shed light on the depravity of man. He demands a response and that response must be to obey His commands or else we are in trouble of treating the very Words of God as something that we could live without. We must remember that it is not Jesus plus...it is Christ and Christ alone. We serve Him.

The Gospel According to Luke

ABOUT HIS BUSINESS

PART 4

The purpose of the Father

READ LUKE 2:49-50

INTRODUCTION

This passage of Scripture is one of the more famous passages due to its narrative of Jesus' childhood. There is not a lot written about Him when He was a young boy and so anything that is written is treated as very important. That is no different here as we see a 12 year old Jesus, separating from His parents and going to the Temple to learn and discuss the things of God. Many times throughout His life, Jesus talked about being "about His Father's business" and it is important that we understand what that means for us because Jesus is our perfect example of how we are to live our lives glorifying the Father.

To know what the "business" of the Father is, we must know what the Father says. (John 10:27-28) In these verses we see that the people who consider themselves to be children of God will know His voice and the implication is that they will follow His commands. Again, obeying Jesus and ultimately God is something that is mentioned numerous times throughout all of Scripture and it is something that is easy to put on the backburner of our faith in modern times because times are a little different than they were when the Bible was written. The times may be different but the commands are not.

We have Scripture so that we can know what the commands of the Father are. We have Jesus to see how we can obey those commands on a daily, practical level. We have these gifts so that we can glorify the Father through every action that we take and every word that we say. The thoughts in our heads are His, the words that we say are His and the things that we do are meant to glorify and honor Him above all else. To honor the Father was Jesus' ultimate goal even at a young age and He encouraged His parents to see how important that was. We can look at it and change our priorities based on glorifying and honoring Him.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think God left out a lot of Jesus' childhood in Scripture? Do you think it is beneficial or difficult that we do not know more about His childhood? Why or why not?
2. What does it mean to be about our Father's business? Where do we get our marching orders from? Why is it so important to know Scripture when talking about obeying God's commands?
3. Read John 10:27-28. Discuss what these verses have to do with being about God's business.
4. Why is it so easy to fall into the trap of assuming we don't need the Bible? How can we change our hearts and minds to seek through Scripture more every day? Who can help keep you accountable to that?
5. Why is Jesus our example? Why did God send His Son, not just to die on a cross for our sins, but also to show us how to live our lives? What does that say about our priorities and how we should restructure them?

WRAP UP

It is important to remember that Jesus was not being disobedient to His parents here. He was being obedient to His Father in Heaven which supersedes anything and anyone else. Notice that He was not doing it out of disrespect to His earthly parents though. He was honoring them and the Father by respecting them both. He also was not twisting Scripture to say or do something wrong. He was seeking knowledge about God and discussing that with other people to grow in knowledge and understanding.

The Gospel According to Luke

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

PART 5

John's Boldness

READ LUKE 3:10-20

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning of chapter three, we see John the Baptist starting up his ministry of making the way straight for the Lord. (Isaiah 40:3) John always spoke boldly to the groups he talked to and this interaction was no different. He starts off in verse 7 by calling the religious zealots a brood of vipers. This was not soft language but rather, an effort to call out those who would ride on the coat-tails of something that God was doing and trying to turn it into something that they could profit off of. John was not interested in this kind of "faith" or following. He was wanting to be bold about what God had called him to do.

It is encouraging in the next verses to see different people come to John to ask him what they should do to bear good fruit. (vs 9) The people that John interacts with are people just like us, seeking answers to important questions. What we must realize in life is that we are not the center of the universe. We are created for purpose and, just like those speaking to John, we desire to find that purpose and are willing to pursue it. There are misgivings about what our purpose is in life and John gives answers specifically relating to the people who are asking them.

The guidance that John gives here is bold in its bluntness. There is a simplistic tone to what he has to say, but it would be easy to feel like what he was saying was flippant. This is not the case but, rather, it is simplistic in its nature because we must do well in our treatment of those around us. He also speaks to the personal discipline of not being selfish. Also, he speaks to humans' tendency to complain about the work that we are called to do. It is fair to say that while not all of us are tax collectors or soldiers, we all can learn that not complaining about the call in our lives and not taking more than we ought are good rules of thumb. This goes for treating others well also

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Isaiah 40:1-5. What encouragement would this section of Scripture given to the Jewish people? Do you think it had an impact on how they viewed John? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think John used such harsh, blunt language with the people? How do you react to more blunt language? Do you think it is necessary? Why or why not?
3. What does it mean to bear good fruit? What is good fruit? How do we go about bearing good fruit? What are some things you have done to bear good fruit?
4. What is our main purpose in life? How does our calling, and being faithful to that calling relate to the ultimate purpose of the Christian?
5. What are the practical steps we are to take communally, personally and corporately to ensure that we are serving the Lord and others? How does that fit in with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

WRAP UP

John was very bold in his speech to the people because what he was saying was very important. Jesus was bold in His speech as well. There is a direct correlation between the boldness and the importance of the message. John's calling was to prepare the way of the Lord and that was an extremely important task. Soon, the Messiah was going to be on the scene and the people would know what redemption truly means.

The Gospel According to Luke

JESUS' BAPTISM

PART 6

Why was He baptized?

READ LUKE 3:13-17

INTRODUCTION

Jesus being baptized is an interesting occurrence. There are many wrong interpretations within this passage of Scripture that say, because Jesus was getting baptized, He was in need of God's forgiveness. This is heresy and should be rejected outright. The reasons for Jesus' baptism are much more simple than sometimes perceived. The main reason we see Jesus being baptized was because of His obedience to the Father. He was always desiring to do the will of the Father and we see that in His symbolic gesture of being baptized.

It is understandable that John would initially reject the idea that he should baptize Jesus because he knew who Jesus was and His importance and position in the world. It is safe to say that most of us, with the same knowledge, would object as well but Jesus is gentle in His response to John and encourages him that what is happening is to be a symbol for all Christians in the future to practice in obedience towards righteousness.

Baptism is a public declaration of, not only our faith in God, but a commitment to obeying His will for our lives. It is the symbol of us dying to ourselves, being buried with Christ and raised up again as a new creation, serving the Lord and glorifying Him in all that we do. There is no magic forgiveness that happens through baptism. It is simply us saying that we are going to be obedient to the will of God in our entire life. That is why Jesus got baptized. To show us and to be our example.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Did Jesus need to be forgiven? Why or why not? Discuss why it is important to understand this teaching correctly.
2. Why was being baptized important for Jesus? Why was He so adamant about John baptizing Him? (hint: righteousness)
3. Do you think that Jesus should've been baptizing people? Why or why not?
4. Why is "righteousness" mentioned here in baptism? What is the significance of us being baptized?
5. What holds us back from being baptized? Should we be baptized? Why or why not?

WRAP UP

Jesus was baptized. Since He was baptized, we should be baptized. It is a declaration of our faith and it is a pronouncement to believers that we are to be held accountable to that faith and also to non-believers that our life will look different from now on. We have been made new. Therefore, we do not live according to the flesh any longer.

The Gospel According to Luke

JESUS' GENEALOGY

PART 7

The line of Judah

READ MATTHEW 1:2-17

INTRODUCTION

Matthew and Luke are the only two Gospels that we see a genealogy for Jesus. Matthew was pointing to Jesus' authority to the throne, Mark was emphasizing His servant's heart and who cares where a servant came from, Luke was emphasizing His humanity and link to Adam, and John pointed out His Deity and, there is no way to give a genealogy for the Creator of the universe. Matthew goes back to Abraham and there are a few reasons why he did this.

As a line of people that is there to verify the legal right that Jesus had to the throne of Israel, it is good that Matthew points out David and Solomon in the line of Christ. The fact that David was, and even still is to this day, considered the greatest king over Israel was a factor in the genealogy but, there is more to it than that. Christ was predicted to come through the line of David. (Jeremiah 23:5) That means that, not only did Jesus have the correct legal right, but also the prophesied bloodline as well, to the throne of Israel.

Also, note that the genealogy goes all the way to Abraham. There is a reason for that as well. Abraham was the beginning of the Jewish people. He is where God started with His chosen people and God promised that the Messiah would come through the line of these chosen people. (Gen. 12:3 cf. Acts 3:24-26) The fact that all nations have been offered blessing through salvation is something that we truly can worship the Lord over. Abraham was where it started, David was a man after God's own heart, Jesus was the One who would offer Himself up as the Holiest of sacrifices and forgive all sin.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it easy to ignore genealogies? How can we avoid falling asleep while reading them? Is there anything you are curious about knowing more about in this passage?
2. Why are Matthew and Luke's Gospel records of the genealogies of Christ different? How can we see more fulfillment of God's plan with these lists?
3. Why was it important that Jesus have a legal right to the throne of David? Has He, or when will He, take the throne? Explain.
4. There were many predictions about the Messiah. Which one's give you the most encouragement and why?

WRAP UP

Jesus' line was filled with sinners. He came from men and God. He is 100% man and 100% God. He is the only One that can have that claim. He rules, whether we realize it or not, with love and grace but also, purity and judgement. It is encouraging to read how God planned this all out before the foundations of the Earth.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

REJECTED IN NAZARETH

PART 1

Prophecy fulfilled

READ LUKE 4:14-30, ISAIAH 61:1-2

INTRODUCTION

Jesus, after a year passes between verse 13 and verse 14, heads to Galilee for more public ministry. He sits down in the Synagogue in Nazareth, where He grew up. Rabbi's who were visiting different areas during this time were invited to speak to the people and read the daily Scripture. This particular day, the synagogue in Nazareth was going through Isaiah chapter 61. This is a beautiful passage that deals with the Messiah and His ministry to the people. It was no coincidence that Jesus was there that day to read this particular passage and to give a sermon on Himself.

We see in Isaiah a prophecy concerning the Messiah and what He would be anointed to do. He is to minister to the people. Specifically, He would minister to the lowest of the low. The sick, the widows, the poor. These are people that had very little value in traditional Jewish culture. He was going to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord and these are the things that Jesus did while He was on earth. He spent His time ministering to the brokenhearted, giving freedom to the captives, freeing those who were in chains. These are the things that He was anointed to do.

That leaves us asking the question of what it means for us to be anointed. If Jesus is our perfect example on how we are to live our lives as His children, we have been given clear instruction on what we are to spend our time doing. We are not to be focused on our own comforts. We should not be consumed with our own passions. We have specific tasks that we have been given to perform and those tasks are the same as the ones that Jesus was here to perform. He was not here for His own glory (though, we do glorify Him) but, for the glorification of the Father. That is our purpose and our calling as well.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Take some time and discuss why you think it was important that Rabbi's would stand while reading the Scriptures and sit while teaching them.
2. Jesus only reads the first half of verse 2 in Isaiah, why? What does the second part of that verse reference? Why did He leave it out?
3. Why do you think God chose to send His Son to minister to the broken and needy? Who did Jesus come for? (see Luke 3)
4. What does it mean for us to be anointed? What are we anointed to do? Does that anointing change from Christian to Christian? Why or why not?
5. How often do you spend time serving the downtrodden and the broken? How can you adjust your schedule to minister to those who need it more?

WRAP UP

Jesus had specific purpose in His time on earth. It was not a long time to be here, ministering to those who needed Him and it wouldn't be long before He would no longer be here anymore in the flesh. It was imperative that His disciples understood what their purpose was to be. They would be the ones to carry the message through the power of the Spirit. We are to be the ambassadors of Christ during our lifetime. We are to minister to His children. We are to be the mouthpiece of God. It has been given to us to perform this task. Let us perform it well.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

CALLING DISCIPLES

PART 2

Into Deeper Waters

READ MARK 1:16-20, LUKE 5:11

INTRODUCTION

When we are called by Jesus to follow Him, there is little choice and yet, we have varying degrees of how much baggage we carry with us on the journey. In these two passages we see that when Jesus called Peter, James and John (and Andrew), there was a complete abandonment of their earthly possessions. There was no hesitation to “forsake all” and follow Him by these men. They had successful businesses, they had family, they had lives and they chose to eliminate everything that wasn’t Jesus in this moment. It was not an irresponsible abandoning of responsibilities but an abandonment of anything that was not Christ.

Often, there are times that we choose to carry with us many of life’s cares and worries. There are even times that we choose to focus on those cares and worries more than our relationship with Christ. It is easy to get overwhelmed with the idea of laying everything down, “forsaking all”, and choosing to follow Christ. There are responsibilities that we must focus on when it comes to families, financial obligations and even social standings. These cannot be avoided in our modern day but, we must not let them overtake our relationship to Christ and what He calls us to. Which is the most important aspect in our entire being.

The noise of our modern lives can often drown out the calling of the Lord. We get focused on what it means to be successful or what it looks like to not “need” anything and so, we pursue financial security or finding a spouse or doing good deeds to help those less fortunate. These are not inherently bad things but, again, when they overpower the calling God has on us, to glorify Him and to serve Him, then it is impossible to gain peace that surpasses understanding. It is impossible to please God without faith. Having faith means that we will trust that He will guide our steps. That He will take care of us as we serve Him. That He is God of all and that He loves us.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think these men were so willing to drop everything and follow Christ? Do you think that they had a choice or were they obligated to by some other, outside force?
2. What is the difference, if any, between our modern day of living and theirs? Would it have been easier for us to drop everything back then? Or, was it just as hard?
3. Why do you think it was important that they didn't try to continue making a living at fishing AND follow Jesus? What was the purpose and what can we learn from that in our own lives?
4. What are the responsibilities that you should be laying at the feet of Jesus? What is He calling you to give up so that you can have a closer, more impactful relationship with Him?
5. Are there things that need to be "turned off" in your life? What are they? How are you going to take steps to make sure the noise of this world does not overpower the voice of the Lord calling you to Him?

WRAP UP

Following Jesus demands sacrifice. That is not meant to be easy. It is not meant to be fun. It costs us. Sometimes, it can cost us everything to follow Him. What we have to do is to determine whether or not that cost is worth it and if we will answer the call that He gives. The way that we can do this is to fellowship with other believers and to seek Him out so that we can better serve Him as well as those around us. "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

A PARALYZED MAN WALKS

PART 1

The Power of the Lord

READ: MARK 2:1-17

INTRODUCTION

This passage, which is mirrored in Luke 5:17-26, deals with a man who desires to be healed of his physical maladies and gets much more than that. Jesus had His normal response to throngs of people surrounding Him which was to begin to minister to them. Instead of complaining or running away, He allows them into the house where He was staying and starts to teach them the Word and heal them of their sickness. It is interesting that this is Jesus' "go-to" response when dealing with people. He doesn't turn them away and He doesn't try to hide from them. He ministers to them and allows them to come to Him.

This man who is lowered down from the ceiling must've been very excited to be seeing someone who was capable of healing him. Then, Jesus says that his sins would be forgiven and that was strange because that was not why he was there. He was there for a miracle, not for something that no one could see or experience. He wanted to walk again. The truth is, we sometimes seek out answers or miracles from God and are surprised by the answer that is given. We want one thing and think that we know what that thing is and, when God gives us what we really need, we are shocked.

God is concerned with our spiritual standing. Jesus was more concerned with this man's sin than He was about his ability to walk. This is where Jesus always goes, to our spiritual standing. That is because, without a correct spiritual standing before the Father, we are doomed to judgement and punishment. (Mark 8:36-37) We must understand that, while our physical health is important, it is not more important than our spiritual health. Jesus, in this moment, wanted to bless this man far more than just the regaining of his ability to walk. He wanted to save him from eternal punishment. This is a huge example that is set for us and one that we must remember as we pursue God. He wants us to be clean and healthy in the spiritual sense. That is what matters the most.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 5:17-26. What differences do you see in these two passages? What similarities? Is there encouragement we can take from the similar ways this story is recounted? What is that encouragement?
2. Why did Jesus not try to rest? What was His motivation for serving the people? How can we translate that desire into our own lives?
3. What do you think were the thoughts of the man who was lowered down? Would he have been encouraged or discouraged by the words that Jesus spoke to him? Why?
4. When is a time that you have expected one thing from the Lord and gotten something completely different? Do you know why He gave you something you didn't even think about? What was your response to Him in the moment versus after some time had passed?
5. Read Mark 8:34-38. How does this passage help us remain focused on God's purpose for us and not our own? What do you think this passage means for us when we are desiring a specific thing from God? How can He use this passage to help us in our daily lives?

WRAP UP

Jesus will always be concerned with our spiritual health above anything else in our lives. This can be difficult for us in the moment but, when we are able to understand the purpose of that attitude, it allows us to be joyful in the care that He takes for us to be able to spend an eternity with Him. It also helps us understand that there are times when "thorns in the flesh" are important for our growth and maturity. We desire to serve Him and we know that He desires to take care of us. It is good to note that He still healed the paralyzed man. Jesus does care about our physical health as well.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

FOLLOW ME

PART 1

Two Words that require action

READ MATTHEW 9:9-13

INTRODUCTION

It is no secret that Jesus spent time with people who the religious leaders considered to be less than pure. The fact that He spent time with sinners does not mean that He was a sinner Himself. He did not lower Himself to their level but, raised them up to His. This is important because, while Jesus absolutely loves sinners, that love does not condone the actions of the sinners. He loves us too much to leave us in our sins. Those sins will separate us from Him as well as the Father so, He desires us to follow Him and be made holy as we do so. The religious leaders were concerned about Jesus fellowshiping with the sinners and tax collectors because of the deep meaning behind eating together with others in the Jewish culture. It leads Jesus to mention that those who are sick are the ones who need a physician and not those who are healthy. It is important for us to remember this as well because, we often can be similar to the religious leaders ourselves if we are not careful. We tend to think that our sins are not that bad and that others' have more of an issue than us. We can fall into the trap of sounding like the Pharisee in Luke 18 who, in his pride, belittles someone else and forgets that humility is a key part of our relationship with God.

Finally, Jesus mentions His desire for mercy and not sacrifice. This is something that we would do well to study and find His meaning because, we live in a culture even today that values hard work, sacrifice, and struggle when we are trying to achieve new heights in our lives. (Professionally or personally) This can lead to an achievement based "score-card" that we try and earn our way into God's good graces. This goes against what God has given us in the free gift of salvation that Christ offers. It tries to earn our way when God only wants us to "follow Him".

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it was important (or meaningful) for Jesus to spend so much time with sinners and tax collectors? How could the religious leaders have better responded and learned about their own relationship with God? What can we do to better represent Christ in those circles?
2. What do you think it means to love sinners? How can we interact with them as Jesus did without lowering ourselves to be sinners ourselves? How does the phrase, "Bad company corrupts good character" fit into that? (1 Corinthians 15:33)
3. Read Luke 18:9-14. How do these verses relate to the passage in Matthew? What is the main problem coming from the Pharisee? Do you struggle with feeling prideful in your relationship with Christ? How can you change that?
4. What is Jesus talking about when He says that He desires mercy and not sacrifice? How can we show mercy to others?
5. Do you struggle with trying to "achieve" things for God? Is that bad? Why or why not? How can we better serve God and not focus on the score-card but still be focused on pleasing Him?

WRAP UP

Jesus was not afraid of hanging out with sinners but, it is important to remember that He was mature in His walk with the Father and He was not falling into areas of temptation. There are boundaries that we must set when interacting with people outside of the faith because, we cannot be helping if we are falling into sin ourselves. We want to draw people closer to Christ and that means not looking like the world.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

FASTING AND PIETY

PART 2

Why do we fast?

READ MATTHEW 6:16-18

INTRODUCTION

The topic of fasting is foreign to many of us in today's western society. Unless it is part of a diet regimen, many of us do not fast regularly, if ever. Here, in Matthew chapter 6, Jesus is talking to the people and He is explaining to them the way that they were to fast. Fasting was done at least twice a week by the Jews (Mondays and Thursdays) and was something that indicated true dedication to the Lord. There was a trend by the more religious men to smear ash on their faces to make it look like they were gaunt and unhealthy on the days that they would fast so that people would look at them and either pity them or look on them with admiration for their dedication to God.

Jesus, as He regularly did, was explaining to the people that this is not what God wants when we fast but that we make ourselves look healthy so that no one might know that we are in a time of fasting. There is always a personal heart position that Jesus seems to be concerned about over anything else. There is no need for others to see our sacrifice because God sees it and that is far better. In fact, Jesus explains that when men see the sacrifice, we have gained our reward and it is here on this earth. This means that we receive the far lesser gift of men's acknowledgement and miss out on the gift of God's pleasure.

In the book of Luke we see that fasting can be something that we, as Christians, practice. Why we fast is important in this discussion. We fast because we desire to realign our hearts, minds, and bodies with Jesus and His will. It is something that we do so that we can focus on what He wants for us and it enables us to get our minds off of our stomach and onto the Lord and His Word. Jesus explains to Satan in chapter four of Matthew that man does not live by bread alone and we are to look to the Word of God for our very sustenance in this life. It is sweeter than honey and it refreshes like water. It has everything we need.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How often have you fasted? Have you ever fasted? Do you think that fasting is still something that Christians should do regularly? Why or why not?
2. Why did the Jews fast twice a week? What were they doing that was wrong according to Jesus?
3. Is it more important for people to see our faith or for it to be private? Why?
4. Why is it so easy to desire man's acknowledgement over God's? How can we be accountable to each other to only pursue the approval of the Lord?
5. What does it mean to "eat" the Word of God? How can we be better at relying on it to be our sustenance? Why is that important in today's world?

WRAP UP

So many different things pull us around today. We are busy with work, family, faith, and a myriad of other activities that can distract us from what God wants us to focus on. We must turn to Him for all of our questions and answers. We should be looking to His Word to know Him better and learn how to follow Him better. When we avoid His Word and turn to the world, only folly awaits us, especially as people who claim to be His children.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

SABBATH CONTROVERSY

PART 6

All in a day's work

READ MATTHEW 12:1-8

INTRODUCTION

It is key to remember that, during Jesus' day specifically, the Jewish leaders were very concerned with keeping all facets of the law. When we think of "the law", often we think of the ten commandments and that is correct. For the Jews however, the law consisted of not only the ten commandments but also another additional 600+ commands that were created to try and follow the ten commandments more closely as well as practical and judicial laws. This resulted in extreme legalism from the spiritual leaders of the day because there were high expectations of what a person "obeying the law" looked like.

This led to even more man made "rules" being created on how a person was to follow. There were laws that dealt with how far one could walk away from their houses on the Sabbath and that led to men creating more and more loopholes to try and get around the law. (Remember, these were man's laws and not God's) They would tie ropes around entire villages because, if you had a rope attached to the front post of your house, everything that the rope encircled was considered your house. So, not only did they make a law that wasn't really from God but, they also found a way to bend the intention of that rule so they could still travel.

Here in Matthew, we see Jesus call them out on the hypocrisy of their actions, including the work that the priests did on the Sabbath in sacrificing for the people. (Starting a fire to do a burnt offering counted as work, which was not allowed on the Sabbath) There may have been good intentions but it led to legalism. Jesus explains in verses 7 and 8 that He desires mercy more than sacrifice. It would be better to serve the needs of the people and show mercy to people than to condemn them for small infractions on man made laws. Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath. That means that we are no longer bound to the tradition and law of the day but that we recognize He gives us our peace and that peace and rest lasts all day, every day.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think people wanted to create more laws on top of the already impossible to keep ten commandments? What purpose were those extra laws intended to fulfil?
2. Do Christians still make extra rules for people today? Does this lead to life or death? Is it mercy or is it legalism? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference between a law and a personal conviction? How should we present a personal conviction to someone else versus a law?
4. Are there laws that God has given to us that we still try to “bend”? Why do we do it? Is there a good way to break ourselves of the habit?
5. What does the phrase in verse 7 mean? What are the differences between mercy and sacrifice? What does it mean that Jesus was Lord of the Sabbath? What is the encouragement about that truth?

WRAP UP

It is amazing to see a person go from law to grace. The change is spectacular and it is like watching someone come to life. We need to be cautious that we do not fall into a place where we are legalistic in our interpretation of God's Word and that we show mercy and grace to others. This makes us uncomfortable sometimes but, when we follow the Lord, sometimes His very intention is that we get a little uncomfortable so that He can grow us closer to Him.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

CHOOSING THE 12

PART 7

READ LUKE 6:12-16

INTRODUCTION

Luke has a habit of showing us the importance of prayer in Jesus' private life. We continually see Him going to a mountain or into the wilderness to pray. And not only that, He prays for a considerable amount of time. This is particularly important to note because, if Jesus saw that it was important to spend time in communion with the Father, how much more should we spend time in prayer and times of worship with Him? Getting past that, it is encouraging to note that Jesus still sought God's guidance and direction for His life through times of prayer and what He was praying about, the disciples, was an important decision that Jesus didn't make lightly.

The apostles that Jesus chose would be separated out from just disciples and into an even closer, intimate relationship with Jesus and that was important. Jesus spent all night praying about who would be His apostles and included in that number would be the one who would ultimately betray Jesus. (John 6:70) That is difficult to understand when we don't realize that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was the plan the whole time. It had been prophesied in the Old Testament and Judas was chosen to be that betrayer. (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, etc.) The other 11 men within the group would be the ones who led the Church in the days after Jesus' ascension into Heaven.

These men would be key to Jesus' ministry while He was still on Earth as well. They would have a steep learning curve and they would be the people that Jesus spent most of His time with and expected the most out of. This was a big deal for Jesus and it was a big deal for the 12 as well. The expectation on them was huge. It is not very different from what is expected of us as followers of Jesus. While we are not apostles, we are called to follow Christ and give our lives to Him. There is a call that we have to make disciples of Jesus. (Matthew 28:19-20) We commit to following Him and to dedicating our lives to Him.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Luke spent a lot of time showing us Jesus' prayer life? What is the significance of Jesus praying often?
2. Is the time you spend in prayer with God adequate? Why should we spend more or less time in prayer?
3. Does prayer change anything? Does God change? Why do we pray?
4. Read John 6:70. Why did Jesus choose Judas? Do you think it was easy or hard for Him to select the one who would betray Him? Why?
5. How do our prayers interact with giving the Gospel, making disciples and baptizing them? When should our prayers be made? Before or after decisions? Why?

WRAP UP

Prayer was an important part of Jesus' life. If it was important for Him, it should be important for us. He has provided the way for us to experience close, intimate relationship with Him through things like His Word, worship and prayer. Often we do not utilize that gift in the way it was intended for different reasons including; we think we know best, we have the answer already figured out in our head, we don't think that God cares. He desires to lead us in all things and Jesus showed us that we have an amazing opportunity to approach the Father with all our needs and requests. We just have to take the opportunity.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 2

BLESSED

PART 8

The difference between woe

READ LUKE 6:17-26

INTRODUCTION

When we look at this passage, we see Jesus preaching to the people about things that will bless and things that will cause woe. Once again, there is a counter-cultural stance that Jesus takes when pronouncing these blessings and woes because He is often counter-cultural in His teachings. Most poor people would not consider themselves to be blessed and yet, Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Not many people feel blessed when others hate them but Jesus expresses that, when that hate comes at them because of the Son of God, they will be rewarded in Heaven.

The word “blessed” here means, “Oh how happy”. And so, when we read this passage, it is good to think about how that sounds in difference to what we think of as blessed. There are times when we think of being blessed as being given a gift. This is not totally wrong but when we read it as, “Oh how happy”, we see that it is a heart position more than a gift that we are given. We can consider ourselves to be blessed or, happy, that we experience the trials that we go through because we will be rewarded in Heaven due to our faithfulness here on earth.

In Matthew chapter 5 we see Jesus give this same message and in verse 12 there is the same ending that we see here in Luke. We are to rejoice and be exceedingly glad that we have the honor of experiencing rejection in the name of Christ because it means that we are part of Him and we have been given the opportunity to be blessed (or happy) through persecution. This is not only counter-cultural but also counter to our very nature as humans. We desire to flee from persecution and trials. We can certainly run from it but, if it catches us, we need to remember the blessing of opportunity we have to glorify God in all things and experience His reward in eternity.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the major difference between “blessed” and “woe” are based on what Jesus says in this passage? How can we sometimes reverse the two?
2. Why does God work with counter-cultural thinking so much? What does that mean for us living in the modern world?
3. What are some ways that we can live a more blessed or “happy” life? What part does our faith and walk with Jesus play in that blessed life?
4. Is God more concerned with holiness or happiness? Why?
5. What do you think being exceedingly glad through persecution means? How do we interact with that today, given that we don’t experience the same kinds of persecution they did?

WRAP UP

We can be blessed even when we feel we are being broken. In fact, Jesus’ mercy extends out to us in our most desperate times. It shows us that He cares for things that the world treats as weaknesses and desires to see us take refuge and comfort in Him. This is so important as we continue to walk forward knowing that the path is narrow and there are few who find it.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 3

JUDGING

PART 1

Humility first, help second

READ LUKE 6:39-42

INTRODUCTION

It is a common thing to hear Christians and non-Christians alike quote this passage when they feel someone is judging them. "Judge not lest you be judged" is commonly on the tongue of those who want to be left alone in regards to how they are living their lives. While they may make a point that we will be judged in the same way that we judge (vs. 37-38), it is an incomplete thought as we read the rest of these verses. There is certainly an instruction to not judge others. That instruction comes with details on how we are supposed to judge each other.

One thing that is important is that we do not judge one another's salvation. If a person claims to be a child of God, that is how Christians are to treat them. As Jesus explains, we are first to humbly deal with the log that is in our own eye that is causing us and others to stumble. That is something that requires humility and truth. We have to be willing to be honest in our examination of our hearts to be open to what we are doing wrong and how we can change that in our own lives. It does us no good to expect others to change and be more Christlike if we are not willing to change ourselves to be more like Him first.

After we remove the log in our own eye, that is when we are able to go to our brother or sister and try to assist them in being more like Christ. In essence, we judge the fruit of our brothers and sisters and not their salvation. But again, we only judge that fruit once we have humbly removed the plank from our own eye. Otherwise, it is hypocrisy and can be very damaging to personal relationships as well as damaging for the brother or sister. Prayer and humility are the only way that we get to a place where we can be comfortable knowing that God is working in us to purify our hearts.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the world is so eager to quote this particular Scripture passage to us? Do you think they have valid reasons? Why or why not?
2. Read verses 37-38. What is Jesus expressing here? What do you think He is trying to push us towards as a family?
3. What does it mean to be humble? How do we practice humility when dealing with others? Can you call out sin in a humble way? How?
4. What does it mean to remove the log from your own eye? What are some of the things that we ignore in ourselves and yet call out in others?
5. What is your first reaction to someone who is calling out sin in your life? Do you think the way you react is the right way? Why or why not?

WRAP UP

Judgment is ultimately something that God will take care of. We are not really to worry about judging others because the Holy Spirit is the One that convicts of sin. We are to encourage one another to live lives that are glorifying to Christ and that we can confidently say honor Him. That is our purpose and we are to enjoy living side by side with each other and spurring each other on to more holy living

The Gospel According to Luke

PROOF OF FAITH

PART 2

Do you have faith?

READ 1 JOHN 1:9

INTRODUCTION

As we look at a Centurion who shows great faith and humility, it makes us take a closer look at what we believe and how we interact with that faith. Many times our faith is based on what we can see around us as proof or on what God does for us through prayer. This faith is not all-together bad but it can be a faith that is dependent on outside proof as opposed to a pure faith that trusts God implicitly. In 1 John, we see that God is faithful to us and we, in response, are to have faith that He is just and able to forgive us of those sins.

This is a difficult concept because we often think that we need to earn forgiveness. This is something that we learn from a very young age in our modern times. Do good things and you will be rewarded. Do bad things and you will be punished. While there is merit to this line of thinking (and most would say it is the correct thing to teach) with God, things are different. God shows us that while we were still enemies with Him, He sent His Son to die on a cross for the forgiveness of our sins. (Romans 5:6-11) This is not something that we can comprehend because we are trained to be a certain way and we will get certain things. This is where faith and works collide.

If we are not careful, our faith in Christ will turn into what we can do that will earn His favor as opposed to the free gift of salvation that He has given us regardless of our works. (Ephesians 2:8-9) Salvation comes through confession of sin, repentance of sin, and believing in Christ and following Him. That is what it takes to be saved and we get ourselves into a world of hurt when we try and add certain actions or “works” to that list because we feel better about doing something to earn the gift. It is a gift that, for some reason, Christ was willing to give and we, in response, give Him all the glory and serve Him for our lifetimes in hopes of Him being more honored through our lives.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 7:1-10. How does this account of the Centurion relate to what is being said in 1 John? What encouragement can we take from these verses?
2. What is your faith based on? Do you find it easy to take it as a free gift or do you try to earn it? Why?
3. What kind of faith were you taught? Was it one of belief and trust or was it one of works? What is your faith based on now?
4. Read Romans 5:6-11. Why are these verses so important? What makes them significant in the conversation of works based faith?
5. What are some of the ways we can avoid a “works based faith”? How can we hold each other accountable to living a life completely in faith?

WRAP UP

There are certainly consequences to following Jesus. Some of these include a change of lifestyle or even a new living situation. We are made into something new when we follow Christ and that is a good thing. (Romans 12:1-2) That new creation is one that should desire to serve the Lord with all of our heart. That doesn't mean we are saved by those actions, just that we are proving that we have a life-changing faith.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 3

RAISING THE DEAD

PART 3

The Widow's son

READ LUKE 7:11-17

INTRODUCTION

It is a rarity to see Jesus raise someone to life who was dead. Rare and yet, it happened more than a couple times which is impressive still. There is an interesting statement being made by Jesus as He raised anyone from the dead: He was God. There were many people who were able to “perform miracles” or magic tricks. There were others who claimed to be sent by God and they said and did things that would cause a crowd to form. Jesus was different though. He worked in a different way and for different purposes.

Miracles are something that the people who followed Jesus around were used to seeing. That was one reason why they continued to follow Him. They wanted to see what He would do next. This is why He got frustrated with them because He was not a circus performer. He tried, often, to tell them and to show them that He was God. Raising this young man up from the dead was proof that He was God and that He had the power of God to give life. He regularly showed the people that He was working on a different level than a mere prophet.

There was also always a specific purpose to Jesus raising someone from the dead. That purpose was not so that Jesus could receive accolades or make money. His purpose was to glorify God and cause others to glorify God. The people understood that He was showing God's power and they glorified Him as “God's very presence”. This is a big deal because it is another instance where Jesus shows the people that He is not just a man, He is God. There was compassion that Jesus showed to the mother. There was empathy and care. He knew the consequences and showed her and the people that God not only can raise the dead but that He is also compassionate.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How many times can you think of where Jesus raised the dead to life? What is the significance of this event? Why should it cause us to be encouraged today?
2. How would the mother have been affected by all of this? Did she look to Jesus for this miracle or was it solely on Him? Do we look to Jesus for this kind of miracle today? Should we?
3. What was different about the way Jesus performed His miracles from anyone else? What was His intention? What can we take away from His miracles being 2,000+ years removed from them?
4. What is important about a miracle glorifying God? Why not glorify self? Why not just do miracles for the good of the miracle?
5. Do you think that miracles are still happening today? Why or why not? Should we look for miracles? Why or why not?

WRAP UP

Jesus was always able to glorify God in everything that He did. He was so much more than just a good teacher. He is God and He proved that in His actions as well as His words. We are to follow Him and become more like Him because He gives us the perfect standard to follow. He cares deeply and is stirred to affection and we are to be the same way. Let us pray that God uses us and that we are ready for His presence to show up anywhere at any time.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 3

SEEKING CONFIRMATION

PART 4

Is Jesus THE One?

READ LUKE 7:18-23

INTRODUCTION

The question that John the Baptist asks in these verses is not only a fair question, it is one that people continue to ask to this very day. Was Jesus the Messiah? Was He just another prophet? John wanted to know if this was the end of the waiting for the nation, the world. Also, it is important to remember that John was in prison at this time. He was literally waiting for his death sentence to be passed down. Here was the Man he thought was the Messiah, who was supposed to free every captive and yet, John was not freed.

It is possible that John was going through a time of doubt in his life. Maybe this Jesus was not the Christ that the people were looking for. Maybe there would be someone else. To be sure, he sent two disciples to go inquire of Jesus confirmation of who He was. It is hard, sometimes, to trust that Jesus is who He says He is and to know that He has all the power to heal and to set free and yet, there are times, He doesn't. Admittedly, that is complicated and difficult. This is where we look to Isaiah 55:8-9 and trust that God knows what He is doing.

Jesus' response to John's disciples is interesting as well. He performs miracles and reminds John that the prophecies concerning the Messiah were being performed. (Is. 35:5-6, 61:1) This would have been a great encouragement to John because these were the miracles that were prophesied and he could be assured that Jesus was the One who was able to perform them. Jesus was not asking John to just trust Him blindly. He was providing factual evidence that Jesus was who He said He was and who John thought He was. This would've given John a boost to continue on in faith.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Was Jesus the Messiah? How do we know? Is it something that you can articulate to an unbeliever?
2. Why was there doubt that Jesus was who He said He was? Was His purpose fulfilled or did He fall short of expectations?
3. Do you struggle with doubting Jesus? Is that a bad thing? Why? How do we combat doubt?
4. Do you take comfort in Isaiah 55:8-9? Why or why not? How can those verses help us trust God practically?
5. What about the miracles of Christ would've been encouraging to John? How can we take encouragement from them? Would it have been easy for John in your opinion to hear that Jesus had the power to free him but didn't?

WRAP UP

Trusting Christ is something that many have had a very difficult time doing for a very long time. There are a lot of tangibles that we do not have regarding who Christ is and this makes faith so important. We must have faith that Jesus is who He says He is and is capable of doing anything but also, we must have the patience to understand that He doesn't answer to us and the trials and temptations that we struggle with are for His purpose and His glory. We continue looking to Him.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 3

WASHING JESUS' FEET

PART 5

Sinner or Saint

READ LUKE 7:37-39

INTRODUCTION

The woman who got down to wash Jesus' feet with her hair and tears is an account that many are familiar with. There is a humility that she has that we often seek to see in our own lives. This is a good thing to strive towards and it is one that Simon would've done well to be sensitive to as well. The comparison between these two people couldn't have been more different. On one hand, you had Simon, a Pharisee who would've been very familiar with the law of God and how the Jewish people were to serve the Lord and on the other, you had a prostitute. Someone who wouldn't have been allowed within the temple because of her profession.

As usual, we see the sinner who shows humility exposing the pride of the religiously pious pharisee. She washes Jesus' feet and in that action, she showed a respect and honor that was due to Christ that even some of the closest people to Jesus didn't understand. It was common to wash feet in these days and it wouldn't have been out of the ordinary to see it happening. Anointing someone's head was reserved for special people who had high honor. This woman anointed Jesus' feet with oil and showed her humility in that action.

Humility is not something that is honored as much as it should be. We shy away from it out of a desire to save face or some other sense of nobility. The truth is that we are to humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord (James 4:10) so that He can honor us in His way. We are to serve Him in everything and be contrite in our hearts. (Psalm 34:18) If He is Savior, if He is who we say we believe Him to be, there is nothing that we should be prideful about but, continually bowing down to serve Him and those around us knowing that He alone can save us from our sins.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the significance was of a woman washing Jesus' feet? Would that be something you would do? Why or why not?
2. What was her reasoning for weeping and washing His feet? Reading the rest of the passage, what was the outcome?
3. Have you ever had the heart of the Pharisee? How does it feel? What is wrong with the attitude?
4. What does James 4:10 mean? How can we practically humble ourselves before the Lord? Why should we?
5. How does Psalm 34:18 encourage us in regard to this passage? How can we be better at having a humble heart? What practical steps can we take to show each other humility?

WRAP UP

Washing each other's feet may not be culturally acceptable anymore but that does not mean that we have a free pass to justify our sin in our hearts. We are to humbly approach the throne. Understanding that GOD is all powerful and all knowing and that He can do anything He likes in His sovereignty. That should change how we interact with one another and how we share Jesus with those who we may think are "untouchables".

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 3

SOWING SEED

PART 6

Success isn't guaranteed

READ LUKE 8:5-8

INTRODUCTION

This parable that Jesus gives is a powerful picture of what we see even today from various people who hear the Gospel. There is one "seed" that is spread out; the Word of God (vs. 11). That seed is propagated on different types of soil; hearts of men (vs. 12-15). Just as seed that is spread on good ground produces good fruit, the Word of God, when spread out to those who would hear it, produces a changed life. Seed that is spread to rocky ground and ground that is covered in weeds will be choked out. This is what happens to those who fight against the transformation that takes place when we are made new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

For that transformation to happen, Christ must work in us. There is some responsibility on our part too. James 1:22 exhorts us to be doers of the Word and not hearers only. This means action. Seed can take root in shallow ground and the plant will grow for a time. Eventually, the elements will beat up the plant for long enough that it gives up and dies. This happens to people who do nothing to increase their faith and just expect an easy life with no trials because they love Christ. It is not a bad thing to "let go and let God" but, we still have action that we are to take and that includes denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Him. (Matthew 6:24)

Jesus explains to His disciples that sometimes seed grows into healthy, mature, fruit bearing plants and sometimes it dies on the wayside. There is responsibility on our part to allow Him to transform us by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1-2) and also, we have the responsibility of spreading the Word of God for people to hear. It is not up to us to cause growth or to try and create a healthy plant. We are to spread the seed and God can cause that plant (person) to grow in the way that He sees fit. (1 Corinthians 3:6) This passage helps us to understand our purpose. We are to give God the glory by serving Him, being more like Christ, and spreading His Gospel to the lost.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Jesus uses the image of seed in this passage? Does verse 4 have anything to do with that?
2. Read verses 12-15. What type of “soil” were you? Have you ever seen someone be a different type? What was that like?
3. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What is Paul saying here? Why is it important that we are made into something completely new? Why couldn't we just be the same but with Jesus?
4. What do you think it means to be a doer of the Word? What are some ways that you have succeeded in that? What are some areas that need to improve? Why?
5. Is being transformed as Romans chapter 12 says optional? Why or why not? What does it look like, practically, to be transformed by the renewing of your mind?

WRAP UP

We have a tendency to control things in our life. We want to be able to live certain ways and that can cause us to start veering from the path. Sin can enter into the field and start to choke us out. We have to come to the understanding that we are to rely on the Word of God to guide us into being more like Christ so that we can spread His Word to others. It is a lifelong task of pulling weeds and replanting but, at the end of the day it is worth it because it gives God all the glory in our lives.

The Gospel According to Luke

IN THE STORM

PART 7

Whom do we trust?

READ MATTHEW 8:23-27

INTRODUCTION

In this short section of Scripture we see Jesus finishing up another long day of ministry. It was not uncommon for the crowds to interact with Him all day every day and this day was no different. It is understandable that He would be tired and deserving of a bit of a rest. (Even knowing that when they got to the other shore, the crowd would be waiting for them - see vs 18) Jesus went to rest and that is when the excitement started. The boat that the disciples and Jesus were on was probably not large. Even if it was, the sea of Galilee can have some of the most intense storms for large boats. This was not an ideal situation.

The disciples were immediately thrown into this storm and they did what most people do, they panicked. There was life at stake here and they were fearful of perishing. That is not to their detriment, we often face scenarios in which we panic and fear that the Lord is “asleep”. We stop trusting that He will take care of us and we start to try and save ourselves. These were experienced fishermen on the boat after all. They should know how to handle a boat in a storm. This should be an indicator of how rough this storm was. There is nothing wrong with being scared. Where we go to, or better, Who we go to is the difference maker.

Jesus knows about all of our problems. He deals with each person individually and on an intimate, personal level. There is nothing that can surprise Him. The difference is that Jesus plans on dealing with our problems in His way and sometimes that is not the way we want it done. Everything obeys Jesus’ voice. If He is “onboard”, we cannot sink. The disciples showed little faith in that they panicked when the Son of God, the Messiah, was onboard their boat. They should’ve had faith that nothing can sink Jesus. We can show little faith when we forget that He is in control. We don’t have to orchestrate our lives in a way that everything works out for our comfort. His Word says that He will work out our lives for the good if we love Him. (Romans 8:28) That is encouraging and should prompt us to take steps to trust Him in every storm and trial.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read vs 14-22. What was going on in Jesus' day that would make Him especially tired? Do you think that it is ok for Him to be tired? Why?
2. Read vs 23. Has there ever been a time in your life when you thought the storm was too much? Did it feel like Jesus was "asleep"? How did that make you feel and did Jesus come to your aid?
3. What causes us to panic? Why do you think it is so easy to take our eyes off of Jesus and try to fix it ourselves? How do we avoid doing that in the future?
4. Why do you think God allows storms in our lives? What is their purpose? Do we learn anything from it? How do we learn?
5. Read Romans 8:28. What does this verse mean? Why does Paul encourage us in this manner? What can we take away from this verse to help us when we are going through a storm?

WRAP UP

We are creatures that recognize dangers. We can see and sense when something is off. It is important that when we experience storms that we do not try to fix things ourselves. Instead of being our last resort, let us make Jesus our first. Let us cling to Him in the boat knowing that He is able to command the waves to cease and they will listen. Our boat will not sink as long as Jesus is onboard. So, let us keep Him at the forefront of our lives and serve Him knowing that He will love us and take care of us through anything and everything.

The Gospel According to Luke

DEMONIAC HEALED

PART 8

Calming the Soul

READ LUKE 8: 34-39

INTRODUCTION

In the previous passage of chapter 8 we saw Jesus commanding the waves to be calm. In this section, we see that He is capable of calming the spirit of a man as well. This man was possessed by a demon named "Legion". The demon recognizes Jesus and there is an entire interaction where Jesus commands the demon to get out of the man and sends them into a herd of pigs nearby that then take a dive off of a cliff and perish. The story is amazing and is worth reading through to get the full context. (Read vs. 26-33)

The interaction after the demons were exercised is an interesting one to say the least. The people who were in the fields and knew this man and his issues were amazed to see him be healed and immediately they ran to town to tell people what had happened. There was a surprising outcome that they found when returning. The man was not only calm and orderly but, he was sitting at Jesus' feet and taking in teaching. Jesus has a unique way of taking us from the brink of destruction and commanding calm in our souls. This man was going out of his mind. He was hurting himself and others and was making a name for himself as a nuisance in the community. Now, because of Jesus, he was in his right mind. He was healed and calm.

The reaction of the people in the community cannot be lost. They ask Jesus to leave. This seems shocking because He was performing miracles and helping this man get back to a right mind. The world will commonly reject Jesus. Whether it is miracles or not, they do not want His holiness around them. It is uncomfortable and can be very intimidating. The one who experienced Christ on the other hand, desired more of Jesus. He wanted to be with Him and that is not a bad thing. We should desire to be with the One who has saved us. It should be a natural response.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this interaction with a possessed man is important? What can we take away from the interaction of Jesus with this man?
2. How does Jesus provide calm in every storm? How do we experience His calming presence? In what ways can we be better about experiencing the calming rest of Jesus?
3. Read vs. 26-33. What stands out in this story as significant? Have you ever experienced anything like this? Do people in today's modern world interact with demons?
4. Have you ever been in a place where Jesus had to heal you? How did it feel when He relieved you? What did you learn through that experience?
5. Why is it so important for us to cling to Christ? Why didn't Jesus allow this man to come along with Him? What can we learn about the heart of Christ through this whole interaction?

WRAP UP

Demoniacs don't roll up commonly in our world today. At least not in the Western world. It is important that we recognize that the spiritual realm still exists and that there is a war going on for our allegiance. We are to cling to Christ and His Word so that we can know Him, stay close to Him, and be guided by Him. This way, we will be prepared for any eventuality and we will not be overwhelmed by anything.

The Gospel According to Luke

RAISED TO LIFE

PART 9

Healing while healing

READ LUKE 8:40-56

INTRODUCTION

It is always interesting to read these passages of Scripture and to realize that Jesus was always working. He was always on the move and He was always ministering to people. It is rare to see Him rest and we never see Him take a holiday. He was consistently ministering to and serving the people. This was no different here as He was asked to heal Jairus' daughter. The desperation for Jairus was palpable. He knew that Jesus was the only hope that his daughter had and was willing to fight through crowds to get to Jesus. This is something that we do not experience today.

It is a strange thought for us to think of a man having to struggle through a crowd of people to get to Jesus physically and yet, it is not so uncommon for us to struggle to get to Him in other ways. Our world rips us in so many different directions with valid and invalid distractions. We are busy with work and family, we have multimedia at every turn and it is very rare for most people to have significant amounts of time to spend in silence, pursuing Jesus. Even when we can make that time, it is often spent listing things that we need from Him and not spent glorifying Him for all that He has done.

This is not a rebuke. It is just a reality of our world. Jairus had to make a decision that he was going to get to Jesus and beg Him to help. Jesus, as usual, immediately went to help. This still ended in Jairus' daughter needing more than was originally asked. She died. Jesus was no longer needed. There would have been a temptation to just move on and let Him go about His business and yet, Jesus was not finished with the little girl. We must not allow our circumstance to define whether or not we worship Him. We cannot know what He knows and we do not know what He desires for us sometimes. His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. This is an encouragement and should spur us on to passionately pursue Him.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Jesus was constantly ministering? Does He encourage us to rest? Should we rest? Why or why not?
2. What do you think Jairus' thought process was as he went to Jesus? Have you ever been desperate for help like he was? When and why?
3. How do we struggle to "get to" Jesus? Is it worth the struggle? Why? Is there value in our perseverance?
4. How much time do you spend with Christ? Have you made excuses to spend less time with Him? How can you increase your time and the value of that time with Him?
5. Have you ever thought that Jesus was done when He wasn't? What purpose does He have with allowing us to be patient? How can we be patient and yet seek Him out actively?

WRAP UP

Jairus could have been frustrated with the woman who was bleeding. He could have been impatient with Jesus and demanded that He help. What we see is a man who was just desperate for Christ to show up. There was no pretense and just a pure desire to see his daughter healed. This is something we should remember when seeking the Lord's help in every aspect of our lives.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 3

SENDING THE 12

PART 10

Wise as Serpents, Harmless as Doves

READ MATTHEW 10:16-26

INTRODUCTION

It is telling that Christ knew what He was sending His disciples into when He sent them out. He knew that they would encounter people who would persecute them and that would kill them. This first sending did not see any of the disciples die but, all of them (except for John) were, at some point, martyred for their association with and their preaching of Christ. While this is not something that we see often in the western world, it is certainly still happening today and it is something that we should be prepared for either way.

Jesus is concerned for our spiritual wellbeing and that means that we are to be wise as serpents. This means that we should be aware of other worldviews and false teachings. We are to study the Word of God so that we may identify those who would try and destroy us or misguide us. There is more to this than a passive faith that waits for maturity to happen across our paths. We are to actively pursue the things of God and that takes work. We must read, study, learn and follow the commands of the Father found in Scripture so that we may have a better relationship with Christ. The goal is to know Him more.

Being spiritually sound also means to be harmless as doves. (Some translations say, "innocent as doves") This is a reference to how we are to act towards the world around us. We are not to be as a serpent that bites to kill. Doves were used as sacrifices in Scripture. (Leviticus 14:22) Jesus showed that He was as harmless as a dove in every circumstance. He lived a pure and holy life (Hebrews 4:15), He acted in compassion (Matthew 9:36), and He challenged anyone to find fault in Him (John 8:46; 18:23). Three times, Pilate judged Jesus to be an innocent man (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). As we take the gospel to a hostile world, we must be wise (avoiding the snares set for us), and we must be innocent (serving the Lord blamelessly).

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What emotions come up when we think about Jesus knowing that His disciples would be persecuted? Was it fair of Him to expect such devotion? Why or why not?
2. Does the persecution referenced for the disciples have any carryover for us as Christians (disciples) today? Should we run from persecution or should we fight it?
3. What does it take to be aware of other worldviews? What is the best way, in your opinion, to look at and examine other worldviews? How can we use that knowledge to our advantage as believers?
4. Why do you think Jesus wants us to be innocent as doves? How can you be wise and innocent at the same time? Read some of the referenced verses above. How did Jesus show that He was innocent like a dove?
5. What does it mean to serve the Lord blamelessly? How can we help each other do that? Why must we be that in this world?

WRAP UP

It is a sad thing to see a Christian who does not know what it means to be wise and innocent. Too many people in our world choose one characteristic or the other. People get angry and attack others or they are naive to the wolves that are around us. We must strive to exemplify what it looks like to study and be wise and yet, live innocently and in servitude to God our Father. When we do this, we start to look more like Jesus.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 4

A BOY IS HEALED

PART 1

Help my unbelief

READ MARK 9:14-27 (CF. LUKE 9:37-42)

INTRODUCTION

Jesus, after coming to the foot of the mountain with Peter, James and John, now sees a commotion happening among His disciples and the scribes. They immediately rush Him and the father of this boy comes to Him to explain what the commotion is all about. The disciples had been given the authority to exorcise demons by Jesus and now they had run into one that they could not get rid of. This father was desperate to see his son delivered from the pain and suffering of what the demon was causing. Satan's purpose is to steal, kill and destroy and this family knew first hand how much destruction this could cause.

Jesus calmly talks to this father who was desperate for help and asks him some questions but, before all that, He shows His compassion again and asks for the child to be brought to Him. Christ was not too important to deal with children which was very uncommon in His day. Most spiritual leaders appreciated the honor that they received and would not reach out to the children or, for that matter, sinners in general. This child was Jesus' focus at this moment and He knew He had the power and the authority to help. Belief in His authority and power are imperative to our walk with the Lord.

The father says an encouraging thing when Jesus asks him if he believes that He can help his son. Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief. This prayer that was said by this man is a true understanding of the paradox that all Christians are faced with to some degree or another. We believe in Jesus and His power but we still need teaching and help in the areas where we doubt or lack trust. This father's belief was not overshadowed or overpowered by his doubts or unbelief and so he was able to recognize Jesus as the One who could heal his son and above all hope, place his faith in Him. This is something that we all strive for more understanding on and we must come to the place where we are self-aware enough to recognize that we believe, we may just need Jesus to help our unbelief.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reading the rest of the passage, what did Jesus point out as the reason the disciples couldn't cast out this demon? Is it important for us today to practice this discipline? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think it was important that Jesus was calm in this scenario? What might panic do to the boy or the crowd?
3. Read James 2:14-19. What are the differences between belief and faith? How does that make our faith in Christ different than the demons belief? Why is this distinction important?
4. In what areas do you need help with unbelief? What is holding you back from placing your faith in Christ's ability to take care of you? How can we help each other?
5. What is so difficult about acknowledging doubts in our faith? Why do we hide from doubts? What about that attitude does Jesus want to change in us? Why?

WRAP UP

The father wasn't the only one who was learning at this moment. All of Jesus' disciples were aware that He was teaching them a lesson as well. He was teaching them that there are disciplines that they were to follow to be able to exercise authority that had been given to them by Him. There is training that we all must go through so that we can follow Christ closely. We must train ourselves up in the things of God so that we may experience His glory here on earth.

The Gospel According to Luke – Part 4

FOLLOWING JESUS

PART 2

What's the real cost?

READ LUKE 9:57-62

INTRODUCTION

Something that doesn't take place nearly as much as it should in our modern age is the assessment of cost in any given situation. When a business decides to partner with another company or organization there are various costs involved. Some are going to be costs that the companies are willing to take in order to have relationship and influence from the other but, there will certainly be costs that the companies are not happy or even not willing to take on that may cause them to turn the deal down. As different as it seems we are to count the cost of following Christ before doing so. Just like a contract, there are costs involved in following Him and we cannot just blindly follow Him and not expect certain guidelines and "clauses" to the agreement.

In John 10:27 Jesus proclaims that His sheep will hear His voice. This intention is that the people who are followers of Christ (His sheep) will obey His commands (hear Him). This is no surprise because we have been given His Scripture to be a guide to us as we try to live lives that are more in accordance with His purpose and plan for us. The two men in this passage in Luke have their own desires and plans and while they aren't terrible desires, Jesus has a plan and His plan must be our number one priority. This means that everything else must pass away and we must look to what Jesus wants from us before we worry about anything else.

There is no denying that we have many different pulls on our time and energy. God understands this and is certainly gracious towards us but, we must start to count the cost of following Him and we must encourage others to do so as well. When sharing the good news it does no one any favors to act like there are no costs in following Him. There may be loss of many different types of earthly things (relationships, opportunities, physical items, etc.) but, counting the cost is looking at those losses as gains because we have the benefit of knowing Christ and following Him. (Philippians 3:7-11) If Jesus is not worth losing everything for, then we ought not claim to be His followers.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever sat down to count the cost of following Christ? What are some of the costs associated with following Him? Why can this be difficult for people?
2. Is there benefit in weighing the pros and cons of being a follower of Jesus? If you have been following Him for some time, have you evaluated some of the costs that you may be avoiding due to comfort?
3. Read John 10:27. What do you think it means to “hear Him”? What is so important about His Word in this context? How do we know what we are hearing is God’s direction and voice?
4. Why was it hard for the men in Luke’s passage to follow Christ? How are we similar in our modern days to these men?
5. Read Philippians 3:7-11. How can we be confident that Paul has counted the cost of following Christ? Can you say that all things are loss in comparison to Him? How can we hold each other accountable to counting the cost?

WRAP UP

It is not easy to deny ourselves and take up our crosses and follow Christ. In fact, it is because it is difficult that so many people try and redefine how Christianity should work. We live in a time where everyone does what feels good and what they think is right in their own eyes. This means that to follow Christ, even in some “Christian” circles, we will be counter cultural to what is normal. That being said, it is far greater to have Christ and to follow Him than to have any worldly acceptance or prize.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 4

NEIGHBORS

PART 3

Who should we treat as a neighbor

READ LUKE 10:30-35

INTRODUCTION

Looking at this passage we can see that being a good neighbor was not Jesus' key point. Eternal life was His concern but He chose to use the story of the good Samaritan to drive His point home and there is no reason why we cannot use what He said as a guide to living our lives in accordance to His will. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves and that is something found throughout Scripture. (Deuteronomy 6, Numbers, Proverbs, etc.) So what Jesus says here goes hand in hand with the rest of Scripture and we can certainly see that and be encouraged by it.

The road to Jerusalem from Jericho was called "the way of blood". This road was well known to be one that was dangerous to travel and very few people travelled it alone. There is a symbolism here that we don't want to miss. This man started down the road on his own. He was doing something not wise and we can be the same when we choose to go down a path of sin and try to make it on our own. He goes down this road and gets robbed and beaten. Just like the man, our sin leads us to pain and loss of the things that God desires for us. The way we travel the road of life can be defined by the actions that we take to either protect ourselves from sin or the ones that we take to indulge in it.

Jesus goes on to speak of the three people who passed by the man; a priest, a Levite and a Samaritan. The priest was not willing to stop and help, likely for the fear that the man was actually dead and he would be unclean for seven days. There was no compassion for the man because he had better things to worry about. The Levite was a brother. Someone who would be expected to treat this man as family. He passed by not wanting to get involved. It is possible he thought it was a trap and that he would be next so he kept walking in order to not get dirty. The Samaritan stopping is symbolic because this was a man that he was supposed to hate and yet, he cared for him and showed him compassion. This is the point; all people, everywhere, are our neighbors. We are to love our enemies and bless them. We are to care for them above our own needs and we are to show compassion to them. For the glory of Jesus Christ.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the story of the Good Samaritan link together with the conversation about eternal life that Christ was having in the verses previous? Why is context so important within Scripture?
2. In what ways can we relate the story of the good Samaritan to our own lives when we go astray?
3. Are there times that you have come up with reasons to not get involved in someone's life? What held you back? Would you do it differently now?
4. Why do you think Jesus used this particular story to help the lawyer see he could not succeed at loving his neighbor without God? Does God still use this story to help us?
5. What is so difficult about acknowledging doubts in our faith? Why do we hide from doubts? What about that attitude does Jesus want to change in us? Why?

WRAP UP

The father wasn't the only one who was learning at this moment. All of Jesus' disciples were aware that He was teaching them a lesson as well. He was teaching them that there are disciplines that they were to follow to be able to exercise authority that had been given to them by Him. There is training that we all must go through so that we can follow Christ closely. We must train ourselves up in the things of God so that we may experience His glory here on earth.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 4

TEACH US TO PRAY

PART 4

The Model for Petition

READ LUKE 11:1-4

INTRODUCTION

When we pray, we often sit down with a list of things that we need from God and start sharing that list with Him so that He can get to work on our problems. We don't do it because we are rude or because we think that God is our "genie in a bottle" (though, many have certainly accused Christians of that in the past and there is some credence to it in various theological beliefs). We do it because God is relational and we have been taught, correctly, that God desires a close relationship with us and that He desires to take care of us. This is not wrong but, when we come to the Father with our prayers and supplications we need to remember that He desires more relationship with us than just "doing stuff" for us. He desires to be glorified.

When the disciples ask Jesus to teach them how to pray, He gives them a model to follow that brings us closer to the Father as well as trains us to glorify Him above all others. This prayer example is not one that is overtly spiritual. Neither is it one that we are to say word for word in a trance in hopes to unlock some sort of holy gift box. Jesus shows us that we are to place proper priorities in our dealings with God in order for prayer to do what it has always been intended to do: realign my heart with God's will. His will is not changed by my prayers. My heart is rerouted into correct positioning so that I can place every need in God's hands and be free to glorify Him in any and all situations.

Galatians 2:20 discusses the idea that we are to die to ourselves and live towards Christ. This is certainly not an easy concept but it is one that allows for us to give God the glory and not worry so much about our own desires. It is not to say that our desires are not important to God and that we should not make them known to Him but that we should not place the most emphasis on getting something out of our relationship with God and focus more on what we are to be doing which is living a sacrificial life for His glory. (Romans 12:1) Jesus is able to show us that God is our Father, He provides for our daily needs, we are to submit to His will and that He forgives us for the sins that we have committed against Him all in one short prayer. This shows us that we can have relationship with Him and not be so worried about what we want but what His desire for us is.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read through verses 2-4 again. What do you see that is easy to pass over when we don't slow down and think about this prayer example? How can we better model our prayers after this one that Jesus gives? Should we just repeat this prayer in our own lives instead of praying different prayers? Why or why not?
2. Do you find that in your own prayer life you tend to list needs instead of realign your heart to God's will? Why do you think it is easy to be more concerned with our needs than with God's glory?
3. Do you think there is a reason Jesus kept this example short? What purpose may He have had in doing so? What is the danger in using this prayer as a "key" to unlocking gifts from God?
4. Read Galatians 2:20. What does it mean to be crucified with Christ? Why is that important to remember in our prayer lives? What benefit does it have in the way we live our daily life?
5. Read Romans 12:1-2. How do these verses relate to Galatians 2:20 and Luke 11:2-4? What do they show us needs to be the primary concern in our life? Why is this sacrificial lifestyle so important to God?

WRAP UP

Prayer is something that many get intimidated by. We shy away because of speaking in public or, we don't feel connected to God or, whatever excuse we can think of. God is always waiting to spend more time with us. We can look to this example of prayer and grow in our understanding of what it means to have a deep relationship with the God of the universe by simply using it as a model to shape how we interact with Him. We express His glory and desire for Him to change us and in doing so we see that He is faithful to bless us with so many gifts that we then can praise Him more for. This is the design for us to grow closer to Him.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 4

REJECTING THE LORD

PART 5

Greater than Solomon

READ LUKE 11:29-32

INTRODUCTION

In this passage we can see the heart of Christ desiring to see people see His reasoning for coming to earth. It is sometimes easy to forget that Jesus is the Son of God and it is pretty clear here that He was sensing the people were looking for Him to perform for their interests more than they were interested in His message. His purpose for coming was similar to that of Jonah's going into the belly of the whale. It was through that event that Jonah was able to bring the message of hope to the people of Nineveh and through Jesus' death and resurrection, there would be ultimate hope brought to all nations. This was the sign that Jesus was going to give to the people. He was going to conquer death.

The people did not see that as being necessary, let alone possible. There was great pride among the people and they had little interest in being told how to live. They wanted their Messiah to come and take over the government and to rule the nations with an iron fist. They wanted to be avenged for all of the pain and suffering that their people had gone through. It is not very different from today. We feel oppressed at every turn and we want God to intervene in our lives as long as that intervention comes in the form of protecting us and "dealing with" them. This is faulty thinking. We will be persecuted in this world and our reward may not be seen here but in Heaven alone.

The signs that the people were seeking were the performance of healing that Jesus had become known for. His wisdom was certainly great but many wanted Him to put on a show for their own desires. Again, it is not dissimilar today. We want God to jump through miracle hoops for us and we say things like, "if only He would do this, then I would believe". This is errant because Jesus' wisdom and love are so important and His miracles would not save us. Someone who is wiser than Solomon was at the Israelites doorstep and they were wanting Him to perform tricks. Jesus wants more for us than a few moments of awe. He wants a complete lifetime of loyal servitude and dedication. As God, He deserves it.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the various similarities between the story of Jonah and Jesus? What are some major differences?
2. Have you ever thought that if only God would perform a miracle, you would believe more? Why is this a dangerous line of thinking? How does Jesus show us to live in faith regardless of the miracles?
3. Do you ever struggle with pride? Do you ever want God to do what you say and forget that it is His will that matters? How can we avoid falling into the trap of thinking that God owes us something?
4. How has God shown you that His will is better? Was it easy? What did you learn?
5. What does it mean to dedicate our lives to Christ? Why should we do it?

WRAP UP

One of the big issues that we face is the constant desire to find out, “What’s in it for me?” We have this reward system built into us from the time we are very little and we start only caring about things that bring us joy or happiness. We have to get away from asking that question when it comes to Christ. Yes, there are certainly benefits of following Him but, He is worthy of all praise and honor and glory even without those benefits. He is God and we are not.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 5

TITLE: THE YEAST OF HYPOCRISY

PART 1

Seeking to live holy

READ LUKE 12:1-2

INTRODUCTION

When we talk about changing our hearts and living towards Jesus, there is often the understanding that we are trying to deal with sin as we continue to move forward. This provides plenty of opportunity to make a mess of things within our lives due to changing bad habits into good ones or completely being transformed into a new creation. (2 Corinthians 5:17) By nature, there will be times when we are succeeding at this and there will be times when we stumble and fall. God has the grace to cover those times when we fall and desires to help us get back up again because in His nature, He has mercy and love for us that surpasses all human understanding.

What will cause a rift between us in this journey is if we try and hide our sins from the others around us and we try to look holy when, in reality, we are sinning without repentance. Honesty is very important in any healthy relationship and that is no different with our relationship to God or His Church. Hypocrisy that Jesus speaks of in this passage is trying to look one way to people around us (holy) when we are doing something completely different behind the scenes in private (or outside of the Church). Having an expectation on others to live holy lives and then refusing to live that way ourselves is detrimental to the purpose in which we were created.

We may be able to fool others around us into thinking that we are holy and righteous but God knows the heart of a man and knows when we are being hypocritical in our lives. When we are hypocritical, our sin grows just as yeast causes bread to rise. We must be careful that our desire is to live an "unleavened" life (1 Corinthians 5) in order to be pure when we stand before God. It is only when we confess our sin to God and to others that we will be forgiven and then, we are able to stay away from the yeast that grows in us the more we do it: hypocrisy.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it easy to say we follow Jesus but hard to walk after Him? What are some ways that you have been able to follow Him more closely?
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. What does being made new have to do with hypocrisy? What can the process of being made new look like? Why might this process create more mess? How can we help deal with that in people's lives?
3. Why do we try and hide sins from others? What is the purpose? What is the outcome? What is the best practice to stop trying to hide our sin and start confessing?
4. What is our ultimate purpose? Why does hypocrisy damage that purpose? Why is confession such an important part of our relationship with God and others?
5. What do you think that Paul means in 1 Corinthians 5 when he says to live an unleavened life? How do we do that? How can we better support one another in our journey towards that life?

WRAP UP

A little bit of yeast will affect the entire loaf of bread. Our unrepentant sin will cause damage to ourselves, others, our relationship to God and even can affect the Church body as a whole. This is sobering to be sure but, it is also encouraging to know that 1 John 1:9 deals with this very struggle. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 5

TITLE: DON'T WORRY

PART 2

Be Anxious About Nothing

READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-7

INTRODUCTION

The theme of the book of Philippians is joy. This is not news to most people and we can certainly see how Paul was encouraging us to be joyful in all situations throughout the book. What might be news to some is that Paul was writing this letter to the Philippians while sitting in a prison cell. These cells during that time were not as nice as we have today. Most of the time they were made out of earth and rock, often makeshift caves. There was little concern about a prisoner's health or wellbeing and the guards were not worried about infection or comfort. When we read this passage with that understanding, it is truly amazing that Paul had such a joy that he could share with others.

If anyone could say that he didn't feel like rejoicing at this time, it was Paul. But instead, he encouraged the church to be joyful and to rejoice in the Lord always. We do not only rejoice in the Lord when things are going our way or when He is doing exactly what we want Him to do. We rejoice in the Lord when our lives are falling apart and when it seems like there is no hope. We do that because He is still good no matter our situation or circumstance. We are to not be anxious about anything. In Luke 12:22-23, Jesus tells us to not worry about anything. God takes care of all the creatures on this earth and He takes care of us as well.

Our hope is only found in Christ and when we take our eyes off of Him we begin to worry and strive for peace in our lives. It is interesting that when we take matters into our own hands we tend to see our lives go sideways fairly quickly and yet, when we allow God to be our joy and strength, somehow we have a "peace that surpasses all understanding". Paul encourages us to rely on Christ to be the source of our joy regardless of our situation and we have to learn how to rely on His strength to carry us to that peace. Otherwise, we will spend our whole life searching for joy where it cannot be found in a lifetime of frustration and lack of joy.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think it would've been like to be in a prison back then? How could Paul write such encouragement while in such a terrible place?
2. What does it mean to have joy? Is joy something that we can create or, does it have to be sourced from somewhere else? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that it was hard for Paul to tell people to be joyful in all situations? Have there been times when you had reason to be anything but?
4. What does it look like to rejoice in the Lord always? Is it fake? How do we know what is fake and what is real? How can we encourage one another in experiencing the joy of the Lord?
5. What do you think it means to have peace that surpasses all understanding? Do you have that peace? How can we get that peace?

WRAP UP

Peace is something that is so sought after and yet, so illusive. Most of the time we miss out on peace because we look for it in the wrong place. We rely on others to be our peace or locations to create peace in our hearts. This is not the right path. Those things can provide moments of calm or relaxation but true peace is only found in the joy of the Lord that only He can provide.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 5

TITLE: WATCHFUL WAITING

PART 3

The Master is Coming

READ MATTHEW 24:45-51

INTRODUCTION

There is a large amount of popular Christianity that believes we are living in the final days of this earth and that Jesus is going to be coming soon. Whether or not this is true, the Bible is clear that we should be waiting and watching for our Lord to come and, if we are not, there will be consequences. This passage, which goes along with chapter 25 in Matthew and Luke 12, puts it clearly that we are to be focused on the work God has given us to do as well as looking forward to His coming. We have been given a job to do while He is away and it is our responsibility to make sure that job gets done well so that He is well pleased when He returns.

In Matthew 28:18-20, we see Jesus give the disciples the command to go into the world and preach the Gospel and make disciples. This was their calling then and it is our calling today. This is the work that we are to be doing while we await the arrival of our Master. We are to be giving the Gospel and living lives in a way that honors God through the study of His Word and obedience to His commands. The importance of this job is shown throughout Scripture and the reward is great for obedience and the punishment is severe for disobedience.

1 Peter 1:13-16 deals with being prepared to live a holy life and that is something that this idea of being watchful illustrates well. We are to be on our feet. Ready to move. Waiting for the Lord to come but not in a passive way. We are to be actively waiting for His return. Giving the Gospel, making disciples, baptizing them, sending them out into the world to make more disciples. These are the tasks that we have been entrusted with while our Lord has gone to prepare a place for us. When He returns, it is important that we are busy doing the things that He has tasked us with so that we do not incur His wrath but rather, enjoy His reward.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe that we are living in the last days? Why or why not? What is the consequence to that answer when we think about the task we have been given as followers of Christ?
2. Why do you think Jesus was talking about His return? What was His purpose?
3. Read Matthew 28:18-20. What is our job while Jesus is gone? How do we accomplish this in our everyday lives?
4. What are some of the rewards we will experience for following Christ? What are some of the consequences to not following His commands? Why do you think they are so extreme?
5. Read 1 Peter 1:13-16. What does this passage say about readiness? How can this passage help us to accomplish God's will in our time here on earth?

WRAP UP

Jesus is not going to tarry forever. We know this as we read through Scripture. The people of the New Testament thought that He would come back in days and it has been over 2,000 years since. Time is certainly shorter now than it has ever been. He might come back tomorrow and He may tarry for another 2,000 years. Either way, we are to be faithful in performing the tasks that He set before us of preaching the Gospel and discipling people into living holy lives in anticipation for eternity.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: SIGNS OF THE TIMES

PART 1

Watching and Waiting

READ MATTHEW 24:36-44

INTRODUCTION

The end times are something that many people are obsessed with in our day. This is not a problem when we understand that we cannot know when Jesus is actually going to come back. It is when we try to predict the day or the hour that we get into trouble. Jesus lets the people know that not even the angels know when He will return. If they, being heavenly creatures that spend eternity with God, don't know the hour, it is impossible for us to be able to predict it no matter how hard we try. This does not mean that we are not able to discern the days that we are living in based on what this passage says will come to pass in the last days.

Jesus tells the people that the days will be as the times of Noah (see Genesis chapter 6) and that people will be debauched in everything they do. Over the course of history humanity has gone downhill in terms of its morality and righteousness. We are not increasing in our understanding of humanity and care for each other in fact, we are actually digressing into the depths of our own understanding and heart positions. This means that we only have our feelings and emotions to guide us and to tell us what is morally right or wrong. The more we follow our own passions, the more we will become depraved in everything that we do. As Christians, this does not cause us to lose heart however.

What the deprivation of humanity points to is the second coming of Christ. The worse the morality of the world gets, the closer He is to coming back and in a strange way this should encourage us. There is a way that we should then live and that is in holiness and righteousness. We strive to honor the Word of God and glorify the Son in our lives daily and we continue to strive to be completely different than what the world desires us to be. It is a good thing for Christians to look different from the world because we are not supposed to love the things of this world. (1 John 2:15) We are called to be living holy lives and in that regard we will be ready for the coming of our Master.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Based on what this passage says about the last days, do you think we are in them? What does that then mean for us as Christians?
2. Why do you think so many people try to predict the coming of Jesus? Would it be better in your mind for us to know the day and the hour or to be ignorant of it? Why or why not?
3. What similarities can we draw between our day and Noah's? What are some differences?
4. Is it bad to have feelings guide how we live our lives? Why or why not? How can we encourage others to stand on the Word of God and not on feelings alone?
5. Read 1 John 2:15. What does this verse mean? How do we put this verse into practice without being legalistic?

WRAP UP

Living a life that is separated from the world is something that God has given us to show other people not only that we are different from the world but that God's way is actually far better than what this world has to offer. The depravity that many press into in life can be so empty and unfulfilling and it is only when we fully surrender our lives and words and actions to Christ that we start to experience the joy that comes from realizing that He is so much better than anything else this world has to offer.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: REPENT

PART 2

Changing our minds

READ 2 CORINTHIANS 7:9-11

INTRODUCTION

Godly sorrow is an interesting term that Paul uses in this passage a few times to express the idea of what repentance should look like. We tend to have a wrong idea of what repentance is because we have been taught that it is just turning away from sin. This is half-true and is certainly an aspect of repentance. We do not continue to pursue a sinful life but we are transformed by the renewal of our minds. (Rom. 12:2) This means that true repentance will have a turning away and a following of holy living that ends up sanctifying us. This is the initial intention of repentance but there is something more that comes with it that solidifies our desire to pursue Christlikeness and flee from all forms of evil.

This second aspect to repentance that gets left out of the traditional definition of turning away is the changing of one's mind about the sin that they are repenting of. It isn't enough to turn away from sin because sin will always be chasing us down and we will have to come up with various strategies to evade it. What must be done is a changing of one's mind and heart towards that sin. It must become detestable in our minds to even imagine allowing it to enter into our lives once again. We not only turn from the sin and run towards Jesus but, when there is repentance from a sin, we will have treated that sin in our minds and our hearts as vile and not worthy of our thoughts or our time.

The difficulty in this is that we tend to look back on our sin as a fun time that we are now obligated to miss out on. Much like Lot's wife as they fled from Sodom, we look back with a desire to return to the sin that made us feel good and brought us a hit of dopamine. Also, similarly to Lot's wife, when we look back at our sin with this heart it shows that we have not truly repented of it because we have not allowed God to show us how detrimental our sin is. We must allow God to convict us of sin and we must come to the understanding that sin is what separates us from the Lord and to do away with it means far more than just turning away but also a mind shift that allows us to view sin the way God does; as detestable.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think is a good way to define “Godly sorrow”? How does Paul seem to define it in 2 Corinthians?
2. What does Godly sorrow lead to according to Paul? Why is this significant for us? What is the “sorrow of the world”? How does that sorrow lead to death?
3. Read Romans 12:2. What does it mean to be transformed by the renewing of your mind? How does that line up with repentance?
4. What does it take to change our minds about our sin? How can we support one another as we try to become more Christlike in our response to sin? How can we help one another repent?
5. Why is it so easy to look at sin with longing instead of disdain? How can Jesus change our hearts and minds towards sin? Why is it important that we seek His help in this?

WRAP UP

Sin was never meant to be the path that we took as humans. We have to deal with it because of what happened in the garden of Eden and there is only one way in which we can deal with sin in our hearts; Jesus Christ. He teaches us how to repent and He shows us what it means to follow Him above our desires. When we follow Him we are able to pursue righteousness as opposed of our own fleshly desires. This means that we won't look back with a longing desire but we will look up towards the God who saves us.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: BEARING FRUIT

PART 3

The last chance

READ LUKE 13:6-9

INTRODUCTION

Jesus gives a parable here where a tree that is not producing (and hasn't produced) fruit is in danger of being cut down and thrown into the fire. The servant steps in and asks the master to give it one more year of opportunity to grow something. He commits to tending to the tree personally and to try and save it from the destruction that is coming its way. This parable is fascinating in its simplicity and sober in its warning. As with many parables we see two different meanings on the surface that we can interact with.

First, we see the nation of Israel. Fig trees in Scripture are often used as a symbolic reference to the nation of Israel. Jesus, interacting with the people and nation at the time, was giving them a warning that they needed to be cautious because the tree (the nation) was in danger of being cut down. They had not produced fruit for years and they had been given chance after chance of trying to come back to God and to see His plan and now they were presently rejecting the help that the Father had sent to them (the Son). The Old Testament is filled with chance after chance for the nation of Israel and God's patience is on full display but Jesus was there to warn them that they had to come back to God in order to avoid destruction.

In this warning we find the second meaning to this parable: God is a God of many second chances but, eventually the day will come when we all run out of those chances. God is patient and He tends to us as a faithful gardener but, on the day we breathe our last breath and enter into judgement, there will be no more chances for us to bear fruit. (Hebrews 9:27-28) This is why it is important to bear fruit now while we know that we have the chance. The day will come when we no longer will be provided with the opportunity to bear that fruit and we will be in the presence of our Master.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to “bear fruit”? How do we bear fruit in our lives? What is the difference between good fruit and bad fruit?
2. What was the purpose God had for the people of Israel? How was He going to use them for His purpose?
3. Why was Jesus concerned with the fruit of the nation? Why does God give us multiple chances?
4. How many chances do you think God will give us? Do we ever run out of chances before our death? Why or why not?
5. Read Hebrews 9:27-28. What does this verse have to say about second chances? How can we be encouraged by this verse? What warning do we need to heed in this verse?

WRAP UP

How many times do we fail to bear fruit and yet Jesus gives us another chance? We need to be aware that our last chance will come. We can't afford to assume that we will keep getting more chances. His mercy and grace are everlasting but He also is a righteous Judge and we must remember that when we look at our opportunity to serve Him and bear fruit today.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: HEALING ON THE SABBATH

PART 4

| What's more important?

READ LUKE 13:10-17

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was no stranger to the Law of God. He actually taught it in the Temple at the age of 12. (see Luke 2:40-52) He was well aware that there were certain rules to follow concerning the Sabbath day and He also knew that, according to the religious leaders, He was breaking those rules. (On various occasions) This instance was no different in that the religious leader was offended that Jesus would dare to heal someone on the day that was reserved for doing no work at all. (Ex 20:8-11) The misconception here can be that Jesus did break the law. He did not break the law. He never broke God's law. Men had created parameters to God's law that Jesus did not adhere to but He did not break God's law.

Over time, the Jews had added different interpretations to what the ten commandments intended. There were many rules and regulations added to the Law that God had given with an intention of forcing people into following God's command. This may have started with a good heart but, what it ended up being was an impossible mark that no one could attain without becoming controlled by the rules and regulations and, at the end of the day, still failing due to pride. God's intention for the Law was to show mankind that we need a Savior because we cannot achieve holiness under our own power. Jesus understood the heart of God's Law and was not concerned with what men wanted from Him but with what the Father wanted.

In this moment, Christ saw a woman who needed healing and healed her so that she would be relieved and so that she would glorify Him in her healing. Jesus is always concerned with our Spiritual health and He desired to see her glorify God. In that moment, it was more important that she be healed of her malady than for Jesus to rest on a certain day of the week. It is important to remember that Jesus did not come to break the law or to do away with the law but to fulfill it. (Matt. 5:17-20) Jesus followed God's law but was not concerned with the extra rules that men had put onto it.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Luke 2:40-52. What does it say about Jesus' knowledge of the Law to see Him teaching in the Temple at the age of 12? Why is that important for the rest of His life? How do you think it affected His later years in ministry?
2. Read Exodus 20:8-11. Why was the religious leader offended by Jesus healing on the Sabbath? Did he have a right to be offended? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think men add to God's Law? Do we still do this today? In what ways do you see it happening and how can we avoid letting it happen?
4. What encouragement can we take from Jesus being more concerned with the Law of God and not as much with the law of men? How can this become a danger to us as well?
5. Read Matthew 5:17-20. What does it mean that Jesus did not come to do away with the law but to fulfill it? What does this passage mention about our ability to earn eternal life? Why was Jesus concerned with making sure we knew we could not attain righteousness without God?

WRAP UP

Jesus was very good at getting under the skin of the religious leaders but He did not do it in a way that carried arrogance or pride. He showed them the hypocrisy of their man made rules that they had added to the Law that the Father had given them. The Law of God was already hard enough. It did not need more difficulty added. We need the sacrifice of Jesus to be washed clean and made whole so that we can enjoy communion and fellowship with the Father.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

PART 5

Spreading Out

READ LUKE 13:18-21

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of God is something that has captivated people since before Jesus was even talking about it. What the Kingdom of God is and what it looks like are the two things that Jesus describes here in verses 18-21. There are a couple of interpretations but the most prominent is that He is referencing the Kingdom as being something that would grow to a large scale throughout all of the world. We have certainly seen throughout history that His Kingdom is capable of growing even in the most hostile environments.

What the Kingdom would grow into was something that Jesus was hinting at here as He talked with the people. A tree so big that the birds would make their nests in it. This is actually a reference to Gentiles. Gentiles are the birds that would come and take refuge in the Kingdom of God when once they were not welcomed and it was reserved only for the Jews. This is only possible through the propagation of the Gospel. (See 1 Corinthians 15) Without the Gospel of Christ there would be no room for the Gentiles, the birds of the air, to come and nest within the safety of the tree.

The Gospel permeates every corner of the world just like yeast in bread. There is no spot that is left unaffected when you mix it into the dough. We are to be spreading the Gospel in the same way a baker spreads yeast through their bread dough. It is to cover every location and cause all of the bread to rise. This doesn't mean that everyone will become a Christian but that we are to spread the message of Christ throughout the world in an effort to see as many people as possible come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. This will cause great relief to the people who are suffering.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the ways you have heard the Kingdom of God described? Were they accurate? How or how not?
2. Why do you think people have a fascination with the Kingdom of God? Read Matthew 28:17-19. What do these verses have to do with the Kingdom?
3. Share with each other what the Gospel is. Now, read through the first few verses of 1 Corinthians 15. What were some similarities and differences of what you each shared to what Scripture says?
4. How do you think the Gospel is best spread to grow the Kingdom of God? Why? Are there other ways that we are missing as believers to share Jesus?
5. What is problematic about saying that everyone will be a Christian? What are the requirements for Christianity? How can we help others follow Christ?

WRAP UP

Jesus was and is mostly concerned with our Spiritual health. That means that He was always concerned with the Kingdom of God because that is our ultimate goal. The Kingdom is strange because we strive for it here and now but we see that it will only fully come when Christ comes back to earth and eradicates evil and defeats it once and for all. Hosanna, Lord come quickly.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: THE WATCHFUL SERVANT

PART 6

Be ever vigilant

READ MATTHEW 24:42-51

INTRODUCTION

Jesus spends the latter half of chapter 24 and the beginning parts of chapter 25 of Matthew discussing His second coming. Specifically, He talks about the fact that there will be many who are unprepared for His coming back and they will be “shut out” of the Kingdom (see Matt. 25:10-13). This links together with Luke 13:22-30 quite well in that Jesus is trying to express the fact that His followers need to be diligent in continually seeking Him and His Kingdom in their lives. He expresses that we have a limited amount of time before God will shut the door and there will be those who are outside wanting to be let in but they will not be granted entry.

Jesus uses phrases like “stay awake” and “faithful and prudent slave” in Matthew to show us the importance of our daily walk with Him. It is far too common to fall into the habit of trying to wander into a good relationship with Christ. What we need to do is spend time with Him daily to be trained into what it looks like to be a true disciple of His. This language of slavery is uncomfortable in our modern time but we need to realize that Jesus has bought us with a price (His blood) and we are now slaves to Him. We are to do His will and we are to follow His command. This is not a burden that we bear but a release from the torment of the chains of sin. He has freed us from all sin and unrighteousness into a life of joyfully serving Him as our King.

We are not to grow weary in doing good (Gal. 6:9) but to continue on in steadfastness knowing that our Master will return and when He does He will reward those who have been faithful in following Him and He will punish those who have gone astray. No one is able to predict the hour of His coming and that means that we are to constantly be in a state of service to our Master so that we can know that we are doing His will whenever He does choose to return. We are to stay awake and continue on faithfully waiting for the return of our Lord and Savior. (Matthew 25:1-13)

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Quickly review some of the events of Matthew 24 and 25. What is Jesus' main point in these chapters for His followers? What was He most concerned with in the passage that we read? How does this impact our daily life now?
2. What does it mean to be "shut out" from the wedding feast? In the passage of Matthew 25:1-13, who are the ones who are shut out? Is it the world or is it people who claimed to follow Christ? Why is this significant?
3. What does it mean to be a slave to Christ? How can we be faithful servants of Him? What does it practically look like to serve Christ?
4. Do you live a life of servitude to Christ? Is it something that you regularly meditate on? Why or why not? How can we better encourage one another to press into lives centered on Christ?
5. Why do you think no one knows when Christ will return? What does Matthew 25 say about the reason? How can we better prepare ourselves for the day He returns? How can we help others prepare for that day?

WRAP UP

The day is coming quickly when we will be in the presence of Jesus. He will come again to judge and to rule. That day will see many who believe that they are followers but, due to their lack of relationship with Christ they will hear "depart from Me for I never knew you" and that will be the saddest moment. We need to be dedicated to following Christ, knowing His commands and obeying them. Through this we will learn what it means to love Him and how to love Him more. This is how we become disciples.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: CHRIST'S CARE

PART 7

He desires to protect and love

READ LUKE 13:31-35

INTRODUCTION

There are a couple prophecies that Jesus mentions in this short passage that are interesting to take note of. He mentions Herod and that he will eventually take part in Jesus' death. (rf. 32) Herod would be the one who ultimately sends Jesus to be crucified by the people and Jesus knew this at this point but was unwilling to be controlled by the fear of His demise. He knew that His purpose on earth was about to be fulfilled in His death and He was not afraid of what any man might do to Him. He would not be dissuaded from His Father's purpose. That is an encouragement to us as well. We should be honored to follow the Father's will even when His will leads to our earthly demise. His will is better in every situation and we can know that He will care for those who He loves and are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

A second prophecy that Jesus mentions here is a little more obscure. In verse 34 He references the fact that Jerusalem had killed many of the prophets that He had sent to her and it is an ironic thing that He would also be killed. The greatest prophet who ever walked on earth (being God Himself) would be sent to a sinners cross because the people would be offended by what He had to say. He was seeing that His time was coming to an end soon and He wanted to reach more people before the end and He mentions here how His heart ached over the people and their tendency to be so lost. He yearns for the opportunity to protect and care for His children. That is the character of Christ.

Finally, there is one more mention of a future event that would happen in Christ's life; His triumphal entry. At the end of verse 35 He mentions that the people would welcome Him by praising Him and blessing His name. This was literally a few days before the same crowds would cry out to Herod to crucify Him and to see Him hang on a cross. He was saying in verse 35 that He would not see Jerusalem until that day and that it would be towards the end of His life on earth that He would enter into Jerusalem once again. They would not see Him. We must be careful that we look for Jesus and that we do not become blind to His coming. He yearns to take care of us and to have relationship with us.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why were the Pharisees trying to seemingly protect Jesus by warning Him about Herod? What was the benefit to them if He left their area?
2. What does it mean to “be about the Father’s business”? How can we be about God’s business in our own lives and model what it looks like to follow Him?
3. Why do you think Jesus was mentioning His entrance into Jerusalem? What was so significant about that event?
4. Why were the Jews known for killing prophets sent by God? How can we sometimes react to things in Scripture that tell us to live differently? What stops us from following His commands more closely?
5. What does it mean to lament over something? What does Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem indicate about His heart? How can we take that as an encouragement?

WRAP UP

Jesus desires close relationship with all of His children. We need to look to Him but also we need to follow His commands. He laments over Jerusalem because He was right there in their midst and they were ready to crucify Him. He wants to be everything in our lives not just to be an add on that takes part in them. We need to lay everything at His feet and allow Him to protect us and gather us close to Him so that we may have relationship and growth with Him.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: ANOTHER HEALING

PART 8

Sabbath Law versus Human Compassion

READ MATTHEW 12:9-14

INTRODUCTION

Jesus made a regular habit of getting under the skin of the religious leaders during His time. The leaders were such that they would follow the Law of God that had been expanded to include the laws of man. The issue that Jesus had was that these laws of man were not to be placed on the same level as God's law and, what was more, they tried upholding man's law even more rigorously than God's. This is a gross misuse of the authority that God had given them as leaders of His people. Jesus knew that this was problematic and set out to point out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees often. This led up to His death on a cross.

In this account of Jesus healing a man with a withered hand, the text specifically points out that the Pharisees were watching to see if Jesus would "break their law" concerning the Sabbath and heal someone. Obviously, He did and that didn't sit well with the leaders because Jesus was supposed to be a teacher, a Rabbi Himself. Exodus 35 says that anyone who broke the Sabbath rest was to be put to death and so what Jesus was doing was not a small thing. What He wanted them to notice was that God cares more for us than their expectations on what the law was supposed to be.

Jesus specifically pointed out that the leaders would have been quick to save a sheep that was in need on a Sabbath day and that God's children are far more valuable to Him than a sheep. Jesus was pointing to their hearts in order to help them see that they were to be more concerned with the people than with the laws that they had imposed on the people. The response of the leaders to this healing was one of disdain. They immediately sought to destroy Jesus and that was the point. Jesus needed them to see the error in their thinking but, He also needed them to get angry enough to desire to kill Him. This all leads to the cross.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it was important for Jesus to continually show the Pharisees a better way of doing things? In what ways did He show them how to love people better? What do you think the biggest difference was between Jesus and the Pharisees?
2. Why do you think it was so easy for the Pharisees to add to the Law of God? What is similar in that to how we treat God's Law today? In what ways is it different?
3. What is the major difference between the people watching Jesus and the Pharisees watching Jesus? How do you watch Him? How can we better have a childlike faith with Christ?
4. Read Exodus 35:1-2. Why is the Law of God to be taken so seriously? How do we respect or disrespect this particular command? How do we observe a Sabbath today?
5. Is it easy to fall into the trap of thinking that Jesus is all about following rules and regulations and to forget about the fact that He cares for people? Why is that? How can we combat the temptation to view our relationship with Him as exclusively based on Law?

WRAP UP

Jesus knew that His road was leading to the cross. He also knew that one day the people who were watching in amazement and agreement would turn their backs on Him. His life was purposeful to lead to the forgiveness of sins and to conquer death. He did all of that and on the way to that death and resurrection He made sure that we knew His love for us was greater than any law of man.

The Gospel According to Luke- Part 6

TITLE: THE PLACE OF HONOR

PART 9

Careful where you sit

READ LUKE 14:7-14

INTRODUCTION

Jesus had an uncanny ability to see what was happening around Him and always turn it into a lesson about God. This parable is no different. People were starting to scramble to get into positions of honor around the table and Jesus took the opportunity to point out that it is not pride or striving that will earn honor from God but humility. This again would have rubbed them the wrong way because in their culture, places of honor were something that were to be fought for and not given up easily.

Jesus looks at the physical, outward problem and relates it to what happens in our hearts. When we try to exalt ourselves and vie for position under our own power, there is potential for embarrassment and, in the case of trying to impress God, we will always be humbled in the end anyway. What Jesus points out here is that in our hearts we need to be humble and not puffed up or proud. This goes against our culture as well and so we are not that different from the Jewish people He was talking to here. Then Jesus talks to the host of the dinner and points out a similar thought.

He encourages the host to not invite friends or influential people but the poor and needy. The sick and wounded and it is for a very specific purpose; those people cannot pay him back even if they wanted to. The point Jesus was trying to make in both of these stories is that the rewards that we earn from being humble and not expectant of honor come from God the Father and not man and those rewards are far more valuable. When we seek to honor ourselves, we will earn our reward here on earth through the praises of men. Not that we don't like being praised but, their praises will fade away and God's rewards will go on for eternity.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How often do you see something happen and think of how it relates to our relationship with God? How can we better train our minds to be focused on what God wants us to see in the small events of life?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where someone was fighting for the position of honor? (at a dinner, or in a company, or even just trying to get the best seat in the living room?) How would that situation have glorified God if it was handled differently? How can we humble ourselves and pursue Him more?
3. What do you think the world has to say about Christians who humble themselves? Why? What can we teach them through our humility?
4. Why do you think it is so important to bless people that cannot bless you back? How does that grow our relationship to God? What purpose(s) does He have in those kinds of blessings?
5. Have you tried to honor God, others or yourself? How do we place it in that order so that we do not try to gain honor in areas that we need humility? Why is our humility so important in this?

WRAP UP

Jesus was always about His Father's business. Moments like this should encourage us to be on the lookout for opportunities to minister to and teach others about the love of God. Our Savior humbled Himself to the cross and died a criminal's death for sins He didn't commit so that we might have relationship with the Father. That is a humble way of living. We should be looking to ways in which we can humble ourselves and honor Him as well.

The Gospel According to Luke – Part 8

GOD'S LAW

PART 2

An Eternal Gift

READ LUKE 16:14-17

INTRODUCTION

It was common for the Pharisees to be more focused on the Law than on the people and God's love for them. Something that many still struggle with today is the thought that obedience to the Law of God fulfills the love of God and while they may be correct in that, God's Law guides us practically towards love, obedience to the Law is only part of the equation. We must also practice the forgiveness, mercy and grace of God to love as He does. This is where the Pharisees fell short. In speaking to them about money, Jesus pointed out that they were more focused on outward behavior than inward change.

Following laws and rules can be like grocery shopping. We have a list, we go to the store and we find what is written on the list, buy it, and go home. Obedience to God's Law can be similar when we treat it as an obtainable list. God's Law says "Don't murder" so, I don't murder. His Law commands that I rest once a week on the Sabbath so I take Saturday off. While obedience to God's Law is important, we do ourselves a huge disservice when we try and achieve it without understanding that God's Law was given to us for the purpose of glorifying Him and helping others come into closer relationship with Him as well.

Jesus tells the Pharisees that God's Law cannot be changed, done away with, or even gotten rid of. It is an eternal statute. (Psalm 19:9-11) The Pharisees tried to hold people under their sets of rules and regulations instead of helping others to follow God through worship and glorification. This is a danger to us today. We must not expect others to follow our rules on how to follow Christ but allow Him to dictate those rules. We must be more focused on the glorification of Jesus Christ than anything else and that does include following His Law. It also includes showing grace, mercy, and love to those who do not match up to what we believe they should be.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it is easy for people to try and create a harder way for others to follow God? How do we avoid doing that in our own lives?
2. What is the difference between obedience through obligation and obedience in joy? Which do you experience in your own walk with Christ?
3. Do you ever treat God's Law as though it is a shopping list? Have you ever tried to fulfill His Laws under your own power? How did that go?
4. Read Psalm 19:9-11. What does this passage tell us about the importance of God's Law? How can we reflect on and change the way we treat the Law of God?
5. What does Jesus do for us concerning God's Law? What does that mean for our obedience to Him? How can we glorify Him in the Law?

WRAP UP

God's Law should be studied. According to Scripture we should meditate on it day and night. We have been told that doing this will lead to all sorts of bad things because it can lead to legalism and pharisaical tendencies. This is not entirely untrue but, it is so important that we dwell on God's Word so that we can come closer to Him and enjoy fellowship with Him as well as knowing that He will conform us into His image the more that we follow Him.

The Gospel According to Luke

CONCERNING DIVORCE

PART 8

The Heart of God

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-16

INTRODUCTION

The subject of divorce and remarriage is a sensitive topic for many. The whole situation can be uncomfortable and can be something that we avoid in order to not have to speak of difficult topics. This is not what we see from Jesus or Paul when they talk about divorce. In this passage of 1 Corinthians, Paul looks at the marriage relationship and gives some very practical advice. The first direction he gives is that neither the wife, nor the husband, should get divorced. This is then gone into in further detail in the following verses. God does not like divorce. In fact, God hates it. (Mal. 2:16)

This should clue us into something concerning how important marriage is to God and also, we should be aware of the heart of God when considering such things as divorce. God's desire is not for us to run away from our circumstances as easily as some people do. In an ideal world, divorce would not exist at all. We would all live perfect lives and not have to deal with sin in any capacity. As we all are aware, we do not live in that idyllic world. Sin is real and, in the context of marriage, two sinners coming together to try and do something holy, can get very messy and difficult. It is also important to note that God understands that we do not live in perfection while on this earth. He is caring and gracious but there is a response that we are to have in the face of a world that demands we live for ourselves more than anything or anyone: God's ultimate desire is restoration and reconciliation in every circumstance.

There are many situations that require more counsel than can be given here but, we can be confident that Scripture consistently points us to restored relationship with Jesus as well as each other. This means that whatever the situation is, God's desire is not that people would get divorced but that they would remain married in hopes of restoring the marriage to a position of glorification of Christ. Paul even goes so far as to say that staying in the marriage has the hope of leading the other spouse into a relationship with Christ. That is an eternal swing towards the glory of God. These are the things we are to pursue as followers of Christ. The hard truth is, sometimes relationships cannot be restored and the sin runs deep enough that, in God's grace, He allows for a divorce to take place. This is not the requirement though. There may be allowances for a divorce to happen (few though they may be) but, there is never a mandate to divorce a spouse.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What makes divorce such a hard topic for many people? How can we come alongside one another and weep with those who are weeping in this?
2. How do you view divorce? What influence does Scripture take on your opinion of it? (Use Malachi 2:16, Luke 16:18 and 1 Corinthians 7 to help)
3. How does aligning my heart with God change how I should view divorce? What cultural opinions have you experienced surrounding divorce? Are those Biblical or strictly opinion?
4. What does it mean to glorify God through marriage? How can we better practice this with our spouses and, how can we encourage others to do the same?
5. How can a restored marriage honor the Lord? Do reconciliation in our marriages line up with our personal reconciliation to Jesus Christ? Why or why not?

WRAP UP

Jesus Christ has shown us much forgiveness in our lives. His grace and mercy really know no bounds. His example on how to live should be our roadmap to what it looks like to honor and glorify Him in everything that we do. This does not exclude our marriages. They should be glorifying to God in the same way as our worship life at church. It is not easy sometimes because sin is very real. Christ's love for us is very real as well and when we desire to follow after Him, He gives us the wisdom in how to be restored in our relationship to one another and how we can honor Him in everything that we do.

The Gospel According to Luke

ONLY ONE TIME AROUND

PART 8

Repent and Believe

READ LUKE 16:19-31

INTRODUCTION

In the story of the rich man and Lazarus we see an interesting contrast between life choices. Choice is such a big word in our current culture and it seems as though it has always had a gravity that pulls people to debate what choice looks like and to what extent we choose in life. While we do not have time to dig into all of that argument in this context, we will take a look at what the most important message is in what Jesus was saying: when it comes to salvation, the choice is only made available to us in our lifetime and then God will judge us according to that choice. (Hebrews 9:27)

Once a person dies, according to Scripture, he or she will stand in judgement of Christ. This means that their discipleship to Jesus will be looked at and what they did with the forgiveness and salvation of Jesus Christ will either condemn them to hell or save them from the flames into eternal rest. (Matt. 25:21, 23) This passage in Luke shows us a clear division between the two options. We see the rich man who had spent his life on his own terms and for his own purposes enter into hell and Lazarus enter into rest. The rich man begs for another chance, some reprieve from the torment but Abraham explains that there is no reprieve to the punishment.

Another important note to make is that we cannot warn people of the judgement after we have entered into eternity. Abraham makes it clear that people here on earth have the Scriptures, warnings and people to preach His Word to help them come to salvation through faith. We will either take that opportunity or miss out on it, but the decision is one that will be made one way or another and once it is made and we have died, we will be locked into that. This can be a daunting thought to us and it certainly gives a little more weight and clarity to Philippians 2:12 but, it is supposed to be a serious thing to follow Christ. (Luke 14:25-33) We should be taking our relationship with Christ seriously and we should be telling others of the salvation He offers so that they can also be saved from the judgement.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What can we do to remind ourselves that God is our judge? How will that make us live differently?
2. Read Hebrews 9:27. What significance does it have that we only live one life? Why should this change us as well as, how can we help others see how important Christ is?
3. Why do you think there are only two options in death? (Heaven or Hell) What characteristic of God do we see in this dichotomy?
4. How many opportunities has God given you to follow Him? How long did it take you to turn to Him? How can that information help in giving the Gospel of Christ to others?
5. Read Philippians 2:12. What does it look like to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? Why should we be concerned with our eternal future? Should it be more important to us than our current life or less? Why?

WRAP UP

We are to be giving the Gospel to any and all who would listen. This life is short in light of eternity and we need to be thinking ahead to where we will spend that eternity. The choice is pretty black and white at the end of the day. We can either spend eternity in judgement and punishment or in rest and Jesus' presence. When we look at it in these terms, it can seem like a simple choice but for many they are very attached to their sin nature. It is something that all of us struggle with and we must shed the old life and cling to the life that Christ gives us.

The Gospel According to Luke

REPENTANCE AND FORGIVENESS

PART 9

The Structure to Relationship

READ MATTHEW 18:15-17

INTRODUCTION

Our culture has been very successful at instructing people to take care of themselves through cutting off anyone that has done anything wrong against them. There is little time given to people who have harmed us because we have been taught that they are not worth our time to try and work on the relationship. The Bible takes a different approach in that God gives us instruction on how to heal relationships in multiple locations including this passage in Matthew. Jesus does not ask us to cut off all relationship with someone who has wronged us. Instead, He tells us to go to one another when there was a wrongdoing and confront it in love (Ephesians 4:15) with hopes of restoration of that relationship with our brother or sister.

Jesus gives a practical, step by step process that includes going to the person who has offended me and show him where he has sinned. Hopefully, in an ideal world, that brother will see their error and desire to correct it so that fellowship can be restored. In the case that they do not want to repent and ask for forgiveness Jesus continues on to another step. We are to go to that person with a couple others. Notice that the person who was sinned against is going to the one who has done the offending. We do not sit back and wait for them to come to us but rather, we approach them with a desire to restore the relationship. This is counter cultural.

The goal in all broken relationships in Scripture is restoration. This is God's desire in our relationship with Him as well as our relationships with others around us. If we truly believe that Jesus has forgiven us of all of our sins, we can be sure that He wants us to forgive one another for the things that offend us as well. This is a difficult process and it doesn't always end well. Sometimes, even after following the structure Jesus gives us in Matthew, people don't desire to be corrected and in those cases, Christ tells us to treat that person as an unbeliever. This is a hard thing to confront but necessary when trying to honor God with the intentions of restoring a relationship.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do you think the secular world would react to a person trying to fix their relationship in the way found in Matthew 18? What about Christians?
2. What is the most difficult thing about forgiving someone who has sinned against you? How do we change our approach to make it something we can find joy in?
3. Do you think that the majority of Christians follow the steps laid out in Matthew 18? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever had to approach a brother or sister and correct them? What worked in that situation and what went poorly?
5. How can we encourage one another in handling disagreements and offenses in a Godly way? What are the steps that we can take to heal relationships?

WRAP UP

God desires restored relationship. He desires it with us as individuals and He desires to see us practicing forgiveness and repentance with one another as well. We have to be on guard that we do not write off those who have offended us to condemnation. We also must be sure that if someone offends, we go to them. Don't sit back and wait for them to see their fault. Go to them in love and work out the relationship so that both of you can glorify God through a relationship that honors Him. .

The Gospel According to Luke

HEALING AND PRAISE

PART 9

Returning to Christ and Giving Thanks

READ LUKE 17:11-21

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was (and is) well known for healing many people in Scripture as well as throughout history. This passage in Luke 17 is no different in that fact. What is different is the way in which Jesus chose to heal these ten lepers that were asking for it. They were shouting at Him from afar because they were not allowed, by the law, to come close to anyone. Lepers had to stand far away and shout, "Unclean" whenever someone else would come by. Their relationship to Jesus was one that was held at a distance because of their sickness. This didn't shake Jesus though and He still sent them to the priests to be cleansed.

It is interesting that He sent them before really cleansing them. They had to take a step of faith first and then they were cleansed. This is very similar in our own lives when we are asking something of Jesus. He often will ask us to take a step in faith before giving us more clarity on what His answer will be or what direction we should take. This is different from other times Jesus had healed people in that aspect. He didn't immediately cure them or rub dirt on their skin or even make them bathe. He wanted them to go to the priests trusting that they would be cleansed one way or another.

After they were cleansed, one man came back and fell to Jesus' feet to worship Him. As much as God had done for them, they kept moving on with their lives and went about their business. It is important to know that Jesus wants us to be thankful for what He has done for us. So thankful that we worship Him with everything that we have including our lives. The Pharisees questioned Jesus about His healing of these men and they asked when the Kingdom would be established. He clarified for them that the Kingdom was in their midst because He was there and they had access to Him. We also have access to the Kingdom through the Spirit of God.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some other examples of Jesus healing people in Scripture? How should we view people being healed by Christ today?
2. Read Leviticus 13. What are some of the rules about leprosy that surprise you? Are they exclusively practical rules or, do you think there are spiritual connotations to them?
3. What role does faith play in healing? What about salvation? How do these two concepts meet in this passage?
4. When was there a time that God was asking you to take a step of faith? How did that end up? Was there anything you would've done differently?
5. What does it mean that the Kingdom was in their midst? What implications does this have on us in our current cultural context?

WRAP UP

Jesus healed many people. He still heals people today. We need to remember that even if He doesn't heal, He is still worthy of our worship. I owe Him everything regardless of if He heals me or not because He has done what no other could do. He has offered us forgiveness and restoration that allows us to not only have relationship with Him but, it heals us from the cancer of sin. That is something to worship Him for until the end of time..

The Gospel According to Luke

GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGEMENT

PART 9

Waiting on Him

READ GENESIS 18:16-33

INTRODUCTION

There are many today who think that God's judgement will delay forever. Some hope that it will delay forever so that they will not be required to stand before Him at the judgement throne. This is wishful thinking as everyone (saved and not saved) will stand before Him in judgement. For those who believe, we will stand before Him at what is called the "Bema Seat" and receive judgement to reward. For those who reject Jesus as their Savior, they will go before Him at the "Great White Throne" judgement and will be judged according to their works and will be found wanting. This is a scary place to find oneself in.

Here in Genesis 18 we see that Jesus is very patient in His judgement. He does not enjoy judging people and condemning them to the punishment that they have earned. Abraham deals with Him in this moment and finds out that He is a gracious God that does not judge those who are found to be righteous. What is encouraging about this is that Abraham kept asking for grace and the Lord continued to give it. This is not Him changing His mind or Abraham convincing Him of something. The Lord does not judge without just cause and will not punish those who may be found righteous. This is true to this day but it is key to note that Paul reminds us that there is none righteous and without Christ, we are lost to our flesh. (Romans 3:10-12, Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3)

Jesus will be coming again to exact His judgement on the entire earth. He has been very patient with humanity for a very long time but, eventually the judgement will come for all humankind. What is a mistake is to think that we can "get away" with sin and not expect to eventually have to stand before Him. It is far better to repent and follow Christ here and now than to think that you can stand up in His court where perfection is the standard. We have all fallen short of the glory and the standard of God which is what makes Jesus' sacrifice so needed. (Romans 3:23) He is patient (2 Peter 3:9) which is encouraging but note that He is patient in order that we might come to repentance. Repentance is key.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think we tend to assume God's judgement will delay? Is His patience a good thing or a bad thing? Why?
2. Why is it such a bad idea to think that we can stand up to God's scrutiny? How can we help others see the danger of this mindset?
3. Why do you think the Lord showed patience with Abraham in this passage? What might He have been trying to teach Abraham through this conversation?
4. Is there something in your life that you are hiding from Jesus thinking that He will not judge you? What is stopping you from laying it at His feet and asking for forgiveness?
5. Read 2 Peter 3:9. What directive do we see in this verse concerning Jesus' patience with us and how we should be using that time? What does it mean to repent of sin?

WRAP UP

Jesus has shown humanity much patience. This will come to an end at some point but, while we have time on earth we must be pointing people to Him and towards repentance. This is the reason why God has put us here on earth. We are to be the heralds of Christ's message of salvation to the whole world while we can. The judgement is coming and we do not want to see our friends, family, or even our enemies fall into the hands of a God who will judge them according to their works.

The Gospel According to Luke

CRYING OUT TO GOD

PART 10

Persistent Prayer

READ: LUKE 18:1-8

INTRODUCTION

Something that is fascinating about God and yet, often forgotten is that He desires to have a relationship with us. He is not an unrelational God but One that desires to be connected with and active in blessing His people. This means that our prayers to Him never will fall on deaf ears. He delights in hearing from His children through their prayers and listens with pleasure as we talk to Him. It is not that we are stating anything He doesn't already know (He knows all things) but, prayer allows us to have good relationship with Him as our Father.

A misunderstood part of prayer is that through our prayers, we will change God's mind and that is not correct. Prayer to the Father aligns my heart to His will and not the other way around. This means that when I pray for God's blessings, the goal is to start to appreciate and glorify Him in all things as opposed to treating Him like a genie that gives me my wishes as long as I say the correct words and do the right things. God is rarely formulaic in nature but rather, a God that requires me to change so that I may better serve Him.

This passage deals with a woman who was persistent in her requests. This is indicative of how we are to be in our prayer lives: persistent. (James 5:16) We pray with passion and we do so in order to see God's will be done here on earth. This kind of prayer life will lead into real relationship with Him and a better understanding of who He is and why He ought to receive all of the worship and praise that we have to offer and more. It also allows us to be joyful in everything instead of discontent. We become a people of action instead of being people who complain. We become people who are concerned with the needs of others as opposed to only focusing on our own needs. We are able to say that we rejoice in all things and in every situation, (Psalm 100:4)

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe and know that God desires relationship with you? What implications does that have on our lives when we truly believe it?
2. How does a good prayer life equate to having a good relationship with the Father? What aspects of your own prayer life can improve to have a better relationship with Him?
3. Why can it be so easy to go into prayer with a list of requests as opposed to going in looking for a relationship? How can we change that?
4. Read James 5:16. What does this verse say about our prayer life? What does it imply for us and our relationship with God?
5. What is the purpose of prayer? How should we then pray?

WRAP UP

Prayer can be complicated because there are times we feel as though we are talking to ourselves or that we are making outlandish requests to someone who isn't there or doesn't care. God is different than any other being in that, He loves having relationship with us and desires it in a holy and undeserved way. We have not done anything to deserve His kindness but, He gives it and gives it abundantly. This is one of the many reasons that our prayer life should never be ignored.

The Gospel According to Luke

RECEIVING SIGHT

PART 10

Your faith has saved you

READ: LUKE 18:35-43

INTRODUCTION

In these few verses we see the heart of Jesus for people come out quite clearly in a practical way. This man who cannot see notices that people are shuffling and getting excited and is told that Jesus was coming by. It is important to note that he immediately calls out on Jesus to come and heal him but He calls Him by the name that identifies Jesus' Davidic lineage. He was, in the calling of Jesus to Him, calling Jesus by His kingly title and one that was the cause for Herod's concern when Jesus was born. Jesus was the coming King and this man recognized it and called Him by His proper name.

Another part of His call out to Jesus was to ask for mercy. It was very difficult at the time to be a blind person. He was reduced to being a beggar and to rely on those around him to help in areas of need. This means that everything was done with a certain level of desperation and this moment was no different. His plea was for Jesus to show mercy and what is interesting is that he wasn't asking for finances but a genuine healing. Often we ask for deliverance from our current problem but we forget to ask for mercy concerning our more all-encompassing problems. Jesus is regularly showing us mercy and we don't even realize it. This man knew that he needed God's mercy.

Jesus, when He heals the man's blindness, also says something quite interesting: "Your faith has saved you". The man had trusted and had faith in who Jesus was as the Son of God and the Son of Man. This is a testament to the fact that Jesus is always more concerned with people's spiritual position than their physical position. He takes pleasure in healing people and we see Him heal people throughout Scripture but, He is always more interested in where they stand with the Father. That is no different today. Yes, He wants us to be healthy and will sometimes heal us but He is far more concerned with whether or not we will follow Him and spend eternity in His presence than our earthly health.

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for people to know that Jess was the Son of David?
2. What is mercy? How does Jesus show this man mercy and, how does He show us mercy today?
3. Have you ever been more focused on your immediate needs over the bigger picture? How can we fix that mindset to be focused on what God is concerned about?
4. What do you think Jesus meant when He told the man that his faith had saved him?
5. Why is God concerned with our Spiritual health over our physical? How can we be encouraged in His concern for both?

WRAP UP

The desire for God to save us is as old as the earth. We have it engrained into us that we need saving and we need a Savior. God sent His Son to be the One who would save us from our sin and not only a physical death or a temporary need. He is able to deliver from eternal torment when we place our faith in Him and trust Him to save us from every need great and small.

The Gospel According to Luke

ZACCHEUS

PART 10

Making things right

READ: LUKE 19:1-10

INTRODUCTION

Most people who have been to Sunday school will be familiar with the story of Zaccheus. There was an entire song sung about him and his stature. What we see in Scripture is a man who desires to see who Jesus was and, because of his height, he had to climb a tree. He was desperate to know who this person was that so many people had told him about. What is amazing is that he was willing to do whatever it took to get to just have a glimpse of this Man. In our own lives it is important to have the same veracity when it comes to knowing who Jesus is. He desires to be knowable and wants to have a relationship with us and it is key that we climb any tree to be able to see just a glimpse of Him.

Being a tax collector was not a popular job for a Jewish person and so the people were not favorable to Jesus eating with Zaccheus. Note that Zaccheus' sin was what people were concerned about and that Jesus would go to a sinner's house was outside of their socially acceptable norm. This is something that we see Jesus do regularly in that He spent time with sinners which made the people uncomfortable. The most important thing about Jesus spending time with sinners is that He never condoned their sins but He showed them what forgiveness is and how they could know the Father. He does the same for us today.

The story takes an interesting turn when Zaccheus comes down from the tree and immediately tells Jesus that half of his possessions would be given to the poor and that he would repay anyone that he had wronged four times over. This is interesting because he knew that Jesus could forgive sins and yet was still willing to suffer the consequences of those sins. There are times when our actions have an effect on others. A person's sins can have consequences for others and when that happens it can be important to try to make restitution where it is needed. Lives are not lived in a vacuum. Sometimes other people are affected and when that happens, it should be made right.

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the importance of trying to “see who Jesus is”? What can we do to better pursue a life that seeks Jesus?
2. What does it mean when we say that God is the unknowable, knowable God? What should we seek in our daily lives to know Him more?
3. What is a sin that we look at and think that people cannot be forgiven of? Why is it so easy to judge others when they have outward sins? How can we stop that judgement and start showing them love and care?
4. Why did Jesus spend time with sinners? What was His goal in meeting with them? What is the outcome of sinners getting to know Jesus?
5. What does it mean to make restitution in a Godly way? When is it needed? Are there times when it is not needed?

WRAP UP

Zaccheus was willing to climb a tree just to look at Jesus. He wanted the relationship. We need to be willing to “climb a tree” just to get a glimpse of Him. It is our desire to know Him more and more everyday. It should be our goal to grow a little closer to Him every day in the pursuit of righteousness and holiness. Christ is the One who saves us and we obey Him and seek after Him so that we can have better relationship with Him.

The Gospel According to Luke

BE READY

PART 10

He is Coming

READ: MATHEW 24:42-51

INTRODUCTION

Jesus, while speaking to the people, often would warn them to be ready for His second coming. Here in Matthew He tells them to stay awake because they would not know when that day would be. This was true for them but, even more so for us. We have no idea when Jesus will come back on the clouds or, for that matter, when we will meet with death and enter into His presence and there are a couple of ways that we can live our lives in response to that knowledge. Many will choose to continue living the old life in the flesh as opposed to being renewed while others will choose to effectively preach the Gospel of Jesus until His coming.

One thing that Jesus states is that the one who is working hard for Him when He comes for them will be one who is blessed. Working for Jesus means that we are daily going out to see His kingdom grow and His will be done. This is what it means to glorify Him and honor Him. We are to work hard for Christ. This is not so we can receive anything but rather, so He might be glorified in all the earth and that the lost and broken would turn from their sin and follow Him. When we do this, we will be preparing for the day He actually brings us into His presence and we will not be caught sleeping or unawares.

The danger that many people run is expressed in verse 48. We can often think that He will not be coming any time soon so we continue on in our lives doing whatever we think is right. There are times when we slack off and lose focus on what our job is as slaves to Jesus. The response of the Master is one of judgement and we forget that Jesus will judge us all one day and we should be working diligently to serve Him in all that we do so that when He judges us it is as unto righteousness and that we might not be found wanting. Otherwise, we will be punished as the lazy slave was here in Matthew.

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Jesus was so focused on His second coming? How would the people have received this information?
2. Is there something in your life that needs to be done that will help you to serve your Master better? How can you keep accountable to that change?
3. What are some of the ways we can “work for God’s Kingdom”? Can those things make you uncomfortable? Why?
4. Is salvation based on works? What does working for the Lord do for us? What does it do for others?
5. How often do you think about Jesus coming for you? How does that mentality change your daily living?

WRAP UP

Jesus does not want us to forget that He will come for us. This can be a scary thought for those of us who are living for ourselves but, for those who serve Him diligently, this is a glorious reminder that there is more to this life than just meets the eye and that one day we will be in His presence enjoying His eternal rest, where we can serve Him with joy and blessing. We pray for and long for that day.

The Gospel According to Luke

THE MESSIAH HAS COME

PART 10

The Triumphal Entry

READ: MATHEW 21:1-11

INTRODUCTION

Jesus entering into Jerusalem was something that was prophesied to happen during Daniel's day some 490 years beforehand. This day was so important that God told the prophets in the Old Testament to write of its events. (See Daniel 9:24-27 and Zechariah 9:9) The Messiah entered into Jerusalem and with Him came the beginning of a New Covenant. He was, at the time of His entry, heralded as the Son of David and the One who was coming in the name of the Lord. These sayings would have been clear to the people. This was their Messiah.

The expectation of the Jews was that the Messiah would come and overthrow the governments that had enslaved and tortured the Jewish people. They expected Him to reign over the world and put their enemies as a footstool as well as enter a new era of Jewish prosperity within the world. This was the popular opinion and expectation of the day when Messiah would come. It is interesting because that day will come in the future when Jesus comes as a conqueror and ruler of the world but that was not this day.

This day was reserved for the ushering in of God's Son to the people. A day that would see the people declare Him to be their Chosen One and yet, in only a few short days, would end with a lot of these same people turning their backs on Jesus and even assisting in the mockery of His crucifixion. How we look at who Jesus is can be similar. We can expect Him to perform for us and meet our needs. We can look to Him as our genie in a bottle and desire that He should give us every desire of our hearts. This is not treating Him as Lord and King. This is treating Him like a servant. The people of Jerusalem would learn very soon that Jesus was not going to perform what they desired but, if they looked closely, they would see that He was going to do something that they desperately needed.

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Is the Triumphal entry of Jesus significant? Why or why not?
2. Reading in Daniel and Zechariah, what do we see about who the Messiah would be and what the entry into Jerusalem meant for the people?
3. What are some of the expectations that you have or have had on Jesus that were not what He has in mind? What is the best method of releasing those expectations?
4. Do you think that the Jews' expectations on Jesus were fair? Why or why not?
5. Is Jesus who He said He was? Is He who the people said He was? Is Jesus your Lord or is He your servant? Discuss.

WRAP UP

The Triumphal entry into Jerusalem was a prophetic day that was certainly important. It was the day that the Lord started the last few days of His time with His disciples in the flesh. There would be other times, but none of them would be the same. Things were about to get very hard for Him, for the disciples, and the world in general. Soon, Jesus would be put on a cross for crimes He didn't commit and pay the price for our sins that He did not do. This is the love of our Savior.

The Gospel According to Luke

THE HEART OF CHRIST

PART 10

Correcting the Wayward

READ: LUKE: 19:45-48

INTRODUCTION

When we read this passage we can often miss what Jesus' heart was when He kicked out the sellers. We can be tempted to think that Jesus was acting out of anger towards the people and reacting to what He saw. What was actually going on was much more meaningful and powerful when we see how much Jesus was protecting and loving His people. He had just finished lamenting over the city of Jerusalem and how lost His people were. Jesus had a deep love and care for His people and expressed that love and that heartache for them and, as always, He wanted to see them turn to the Father and avoid the inevitable downfall that would come.

When Jesus starts to drive the sellers out, He quotes the Old Testament where God condemns the practice of profiting off of the people who are required to come to the Temple and sacrifice. (Is. 56:7, Jer. 7:11) Jesus, in casting these people out of the Temple, was showing His love for His people as He continued to lament where they had gotten to and how they had lost their way in seeking God. Part of caring for people is to protect them from those who would cause them to be misguided and miss out on a relationship with God.

Through His casting out the money lenders, Jesus had solidified the desire in the Pharisees hearts to try and kill Him. His words were causing a heart change in many people who were listening and the leaders wanted to do anything they could to stop Him from creating more issues for them. Jesus was pure in His desire to see people grow closer to the Father and was able to speak with authority and He was able to reach people in a way that the Pharisees couldn't. This is the love that Christ shows us. He fights for us, He defends us, and He protects us.

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever thought of this passage as Christ showing love towards the people? What influences our perspective in thinking that Jesus was exclusively acting out of anger?
2. Why did it bother Jesus that the money lenders were in the Temple? What was their wrong?
3. Have you experienced God's chastisement? What encouragement can we take from God protecting us, even from ourselves?
4. Why were the Pharisees angry about Jesus casting out the money lenders? Are there things in your heart or life that need to be cast out in the same manner?
5. How does it feel to know that God will protect you and fight for you?

WRAP UP

Jesus fought for His people and was brokenhearted that there were those who would misguide them. He was angry about the fact that His people were being taken advantage of and wanted to help redirect them into right relationship with the Father and protect them from wrongdoing. He fights for us too and will help guide us to a right relationship with God through studying His Word and seeking His face.

The Gospel According to Luke

THE HEAD OF THE BODY

PART 11

Jesus' Rule

READ: COLOSSIANS 1:15-20

INTRODUCTION

The authority of Christ was something that the Pharisees often would challenge Him on. They sought to know by what authority He gave them commands and instructions (Luke 20:1-8). Paul, here in Colossians, addresses the authority with which Christ came. He is the firstborn over all creation and everything was created by Him. He is before all things and He holds everything together. He is the head of the Church and was able to reconcile all things to Himself. This means that He is the authority over all creation and that is something to be in awe of.

Many people question the authority of Christ and their objections are many. Most of the time, it is a lack of a desire to change and be changed into the image of God because that requires sacrifice. This means that a person cannot continue living in their sin when they come under His authority because that means they are subjecting themselves to what He says is right or wrong. Jesus makes it impossible to be your own master. He is either King or He isn't and either answer in our own personal lives has consequences.

The positive consequence of making Christ our King is that we experience being a child of God and all of those benefits. Yes, eternal life is a big selling point to many but, there is so much more to being called a child of God than just Heaven. We experience His love, grace, mercy and forgiveness which are some of the best things that He has to offer. The consequences of making yourself the king of your life are less positive. There is much punishment to be had when I try and justify my own life on my own. I am not able to forgive sins and so, if I try to make everything subject to my standards, I fall well short of the glory of God and must suffer those consequences. (Romans 3:23)

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to give Christ the authority in your life? How do we do that daily?
2. Read Luke 20:1-8. What are the Pharisees complaining about with Jesus? How does He challenge them to change themselves?
3. What are some of the aspects of Christ's authority that Paul lays out in Colossians? Are there any areas that are left out of the list?
4. What is the effect of Christ being King over a person's life? How does that change the way that person lives?
5. Read Romans 3:23. What is the point of this verse? How does it encourage believers? Does it discourage anyone?

WRAP UP

We have to come to a place in our lives where we understand that Christ is the King over all creation and we are part of that creation. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord over all. The only difference will be if the knee is bowed in voluntary homage or in forceful recognition. One ends in rest, the other ends in eternal torment and judgement. We should choose wisely.

The Gospel According to Luke

WHOSE ARE YOU?

PART 11

The God you serve

READ: LUKE 20:19-26

INTRODUCTION

The Jewish leaders were always keen on trying to trap Jesus in His words. They looked for reasons to try and devalue what He had to say to the people because, if they could claim hypocrisy on His part, they would be able to throw out His rebukes concerning them. This is similar in our world today. There has always been an effort to try and disprove some aspect of the Word of God in order to disregard the changes that He requires us to make. Jesus was used to it but it often will catch us off guard if we are not careful. This becomes very key to studying Scripture and the various proofs that are available so that we do not have a blind faith but an informed one. (1 Peter 3:15-16)

The question of “should we pay taxes” has lasted even to the day we live in now. There is a desire to not give money that God has given us to various governments that we may disagree with. This is not what Jesus says here to these leaders. Jesus wants us to give over what the world wants in order to glorify Him more. This is not to say that someone who pays the appropriate tax amount is more holy but that Jesus’ focus is not on earthly wealth or goods. He is always concerned about what will make us more like Him. That means understanding that men will want things that glorify men but God wants what will glorify Him.

Jesus makes an interesting statement when He asks about the image that is on the coin. (vs 24) The image is that of Caesar. A coin that is inscribed with any image is not an image bearer of God. Humans are image bearers and we are to remember that on a daily basis. We do not bear the image of any ruler other than (hopefully) Christ. We are to bear His image and render to Him what is His; our lives. Money is perishable and changing but our soul will go on for eternity whether in Heaven or Hell. This means that the government can have their taxes but my life should be dedicated to the One who created me, God. (Romans 12:1-2)

ADVENT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why was it so important for the Jewish leaders to try and catch Jesus in His words? Have you ever had someone try to do the same to you? How did you handle that?
2. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16. What do these verses say about studying about Christ? How can we better study and be informed to give an answer when someone asks?
3. Should you pay taxes? What does Jesus say? Why do you think people have a hard time paying taxes even today?
4. Why is Jesus more concerned with our holiness than our finances? Do you think finances and holiness converge? How so?
5. Read Romans 12:1-2. What do these verses mean when looking at rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's? How can we better live as a sacrifice daily?

WRAP UP

It is important to remember two things about this exchange that Jesus had. 1. Jesus knew that they were trying to trap Him and He was able to draw their attention to something more important. 2. The hearts of men regularly do not desire the things of God and so money and earthly gain become the primary focus for many. We must look to God and die to ourselves daily so that we might experience a closer relationship with Him.

The Gospel According to Luke

WHOSE SON IS THE CHRIST?

PART 11

Are we looking to Him?

READ: LUKE 20:27-47

INTRODUCTION

In this passage, Jesus is confronted by two groups: the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection, and the scribes, who seek to test Him. The Sadducees attempt to trap Jesus with a question about marriage in the afterlife, but He responds by revealing the true nature of resurrection life—one that is far greater than earthly relationships. He then turns the conversation to the identity of the Messiah, challenging their limited understanding of who He truly is.

Jesus exposes the hypocrisy of the religious leaders, warning against their pride and desire for status. He calls His followers to see beyond mere religion and recognize the authority of Christ. This passage invites us to examine our own hearts—do we seek status and recognition, or are we humbly submitted to the Lordship of Christ? Jesus' answer to the Sadducees is powerful because it not only refutes their disbelief in the resurrection but also provides a deeper revelation of the nature of eternal life. He explains that in the resurrection, people will no longer marry because they will be like angels—fully devoted to God. This underscores the truth that eternal life is not simply an extension of earthly existence but a transformation into something far greater. Jesus then shifts the conversation to the nature of the Messiah, pointing out that David himself calls the Messiah "Lord." This was a direct challenge to the limited view the religious leaders had of the Christ, as they expected a merely human political ruler rather than the divine Son of God.

Following this, Jesus warns the people about the scribes, who love public recognition and the best seats in the synagogue while exploiting the vulnerable. Their external show of piety hides their corrupt hearts, and Jesus makes it clear that they will face severe judgment. This passage warns us against pride, hypocrisy, and a superficial faith that seeks personal gain rather than true devotion to God.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Sadducees ask Jesus about marriage in the resurrection? What does their question reveal about their beliefs?
2. How does Jesus' response about the resurrection challenge our understanding of eternal life? What does it mean to be like the angels?
3. Jesus points out that David calls the Messiah "Lord." Why is this significant? How does this reveal Jesus' true identity? In what ways do people today seek status and recognition in religious settings? How can we guard our hearts against pride?
4. Jesus condemns the scribes for their hypocrisy and self-serving actions. How can we ensure that our faith is genuine and not just for show?
5. What does this passage teach us about humility and true devotion to Christ? How can we live with an eternal perspective, focusing more on God's kingdom than on earthly concerns?

WRAP UP

Jesus' teaching in this passage reminds us of the eternal perspective we must have. The resurrection is real, and our understanding of Christ must go beyond human expectations. Are we living with the hope of eternity, or are we caught up in the temporary things of this world? Let's seek to live with humility, recognizing the true authority of Christ and setting our hearts on what is eternal. Additionally, Jesus' warning against hypocrisy calls us to examine our own hearts—do we serve God out of love and devotion, or do we seek recognition and approval from others? True faith is marked by humility, sincerity, and a focus on the things that matter in eternity.

The Gospel According to Luke

TRUE DEVOTION

PART 11

Giving from the heart

READ: LUKE 21:1-7

INTRODUCTION

In this passage, Jesus highlights the contrast between the giving of the wealthy and the sacrificial offering of a poor widow. The rich contribute large amounts out of their abundance, while the widow, though having almost nothing, gives all she has. Jesus commends her faith, showing that true devotion is not measured by the amount given but by the heart behind the gift. This moment serves as a lesson on generosity, trust in God, and wholehearted commitment to Him.

As the conversation shifts, the disciples marvel at the beauty of the temple, admiring its grandeur and magnificence. But Jesus challenges their perspective, foretelling its eventual destruction. This would have been shocking to them, as the temple was central to Jewish worship and identity. His words remind us that even the most impressive earthly structures are temporary, whereas faith and trust in God are eternal.

Through this passage, we are encouraged to examine our hearts: Do we give to God with a spirit of faith and sacrifice? Are we placing our hope in what is temporary or in God's eternal kingdom?

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Jesus praise the widow's offering? What does this teach us about faith and generosity?
2. How can we practice sacrificial giving in ways beyond financial contributions?
3. The disciples were impressed by the temple's beauty, but Jesus warned of its destruction. How does this challenge our view of what truly matters?
4. In what ways can we focus more on eternal things rather than temporary possessions or achievements?
5. What does this passage teach us about trusting God completely with what we have?

WRAP UP

Jesus' words in this passage challenge us to examine our devotion to God. The widow's offering teaches that true faith is not about the size of the gift but about the heart behind it. Likewise, Jesus' warning about the temple reminds us that even the most impressive things in this world are temporary. Let's strive to live with genuine devotion, knowing that God sees and values the faith behind our actions.

The Gospel According to Luke

STAY AWAKE

PART 11

READ: LUKE 21:29-38

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus continues teaching His disciples about the coming of the Kingdom, He uses a parable about a fig tree to illustrate the certainty of His words. Just as people recognize the change of seasons by observing nature, so too should they recognize the signs of God's unfolding plan. Jesus urges His followers to stay awake and remain vigilant, for the day of His return will come suddenly.

The distractions of life—worries, indulgences, and the pursuit of temporary things—can make it easy to drift spiritually. Jesus warns against becoming weighed down by these things, instead calling His followers to remain steadfast in prayer and watchfulness. Those who are alert and faithful will be able to stand with confidence when He comes.

This passage is a powerful reminder of the urgency of faithfulness. Jesus desires that we live in constant readiness, with hearts that are fully devoted to Him. The challenge is clear: are we awake to His presence and prepared for His return? We live in a time where it is easy to become complacent. The distractions of the world often pull our attention away from spiritual things. Jesus' call to stay awake is not just about looking for the end times—it's about living each day with purpose, focus, and faithfulness to God.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus warns about being distracted by the “cares of this life.” What are some modern distractions that can pull us away from being spiritually vigilant?
2. How does this passage encourage us to see our time on earth differently?
3. What habits or spiritual disciplines help keep you focused on Christ and His return?
4. Jesus calls us to pray for strength to endure. What are some prayers we can pray that align with His teaching in this passage?
5. How does this passage give hope and encouragement to believers?

WRAP UP

Jesus calls us to live with readiness, always alert to His presence and return. This passage challenges us to evaluate our hearts: Are we weighed down by the worries and distractions of life, or are we living in anticipation of His coming? As we continue in faith, let's encourage one another to stay awake, pray faithfully, and walk in obedience to Christ.

The Gospel According to Luke

PREPARING FOR PASSOVER

PART 12

Coming to the End

READ: LUKE 22:1-13

INTRODUCTION

As the Feast of Unleavened Bread, also known as Passover, draws near, the religious leaders are plotting to kill Jesus. However, they fear the crowds who are drawn to Him. In the midst of this, Judas Iscariot agrees to betray Jesus, setting into motion the events that will lead to His arrest and crucifixion. Judas, one of Jesus' own disciples, makes a deal with the religious leaders, allowing greed and selfish ambition to take root in his heart. This act of betrayal reminds us that even those closest to Jesus can turn away when their hearts are not fully devoted to Him.

Meanwhile, Jesus is making preparations for the Passover meal. He sends Peter and John ahead with specific instructions to find a man carrying a jar of water who will lead them to the location where they will celebrate the meal. This moment demonstrates Jesus' complete control over the situation—nothing is happening by chance. He knows exactly what needs to be done and provides every detail necessary for the disciples to follow His instructions. Even in the face of betrayal, He is guiding events according to God's perfect plan. This is a powerful reminder that no matter how chaotic things may seem, God is always sovereign and in control.

The significance of the Passover cannot be overlooked. This was a time when the Jewish people remembered God's deliverance from Egypt, yet now Jesus was about to become the ultimate Passover Lamb, bringing salvation not just to Israel but to all who believe in Him. The preparations for this meal symbolize the greater preparation Jesus is making for His sacrifice on the cross. His focus remains on obedience to the Father's will, even as darkness closes in around Him. This passage challenges us to consider our own role in God's unfolding plan. Are we submitting to His will, like Peter and John, or are we allowing sin and selfishness to guide our actions, like Judas? Are we trusting in God's sovereignty, even when things seem uncertain? Just as Jesus prepared for what was to come, we too must prepare our hearts daily to walk in obedience and trust in His perfect timing.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why were the religious leaders afraid to arrest Jesus openly? What does this reveal about their motives?
2. What do we learn about Judas' heart from his willingness to betray Jesus? How can we guard against similar temptations?
3. How does Jesus' detailed instruction to Peter and John show His authority and sovereignty?
4. Why is it significant that Jesus was intentional about preparing for the Passover meal? What does this teach us about obedience?
5. How can we actively trust in God's plans, even when we don't fully understand them?

WRAP UP

Luke 22:1-13 gives us a glimpse of both human sinfulness and divine sovereignty. The religious leaders plot in secret, and Judas chooses betrayal, yet Jesus remains fully in control, ensuring that God's plan unfolds exactly as intended. Are we actively seeking to follow Jesus with obedience and trust? Or are we allowing distractions and temptations to pull us away from Him? Let's choose to be faithful, trusting in God's perfect plan, even when the path ahead is unclear.

The Gospel According to Luke

THE LORD'S SUPPER

PART 12

Jesus' Betrayal at Hand

READ: LUKE 22:14-23

INTRODUCTION

As Jesus and His disciples gather to celebrate the Passover, He reveals that this meal holds a much deeper meaning than ever before. This is the moment when Jesus establishes the Lord's Supper, transforming a traditional Jewish feast into a lasting reminder of His sacrifice. He takes the bread and the cup, symbolizing His body and blood, and gives them to His disciples, calling them to remember Him.

The Passover had always been a time of remembering God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, but now Jesus shifts the focus. He is the true Passover Lamb, offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. His body will be broken, His blood will be shed, and through Him, a new covenant will be established—one based not on the law but on grace and redemption. This moment signifies the fulfillment of centuries of prophecy and foreshadows the ultimate act of love that Jesus will display on the cross. However, even in this sacred moment, there is betrayal. Jesus announces that one of the twelve will betray Him, shocking the disciples. They begin to question who it might be, revealing their own uncertainty. This moment is a reminder that while we may sit at the Lord's table, we must examine our hearts. Are we truly following Jesus in faith, or are we holding onto sin and selfishness? Judas, who had already made arrangements to betray Jesus, is sitting among them—participating in this sacred meal while his heart is set on deception. This contrast between Christ's faithfulness and Judas' betrayal highlights the importance of a sincere heart before God.

The institution of the Lord's Supper is not just a ritual; it is an invitation to deeper intimacy with Christ. Each time we partake in communion, we are reminded of His sacrifice and the grace He extends to us. This passage challenges us to reflect on our relationship with Jesus, to consider whether we are approaching Him with true devotion, and to embrace the reality of His new covenant in our daily lives. Are we remembering Jesus daily, living in light of His grace, and remaining faithful to Him even in difficult times?

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it significant that Jesus chose the Passover meal to establish the Lord's Supper? How does this connect to His mission?
2. What do the bread and the cup represent? How can we apply the meaning of the Lord's Supper in our daily lives?
3. Jesus speaks of a "new covenant" in His blood. What does this mean for believers today?
4. How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him? How does this challenge us to examine our own hearts?
5. In what ways can we keep the sacrifice of Jesus at the center of our faith and daily walk?

WRAP UP

Luke 22:14-23 is a powerful reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and the new covenant He established through His death. The Lord's Supper is not just a ritual but a call to remember, reflect, and live in the reality of His grace. Are we approaching the Lord's table with gratitude and humility? Are we living lives that reflect the sacrifice He made for us? As we remember Christ's body broken and His blood poured out, let's commit to walking in faithful obedience, trusting in the salvation He has provided.

The Gospel According to Luke

ON THE ROAD

PART 12

Christ Revealing Himself

READ: LUKE 24:13-35

INTRODUCTION

Two disciples walking the road to Emmaus are joined by the risen Jesus—and they don't even know it. This is not just a story of grief clouding vision; it's about how understanding, faith, and recognition are spiritually revealed. Luke sets the stage for a masterclass in how Christ uses Scripture to open eyes and hearts. The irony is thick: they talk about Jesus while Jesus Himself walks beside them. Their hope had been crucified, their faith scattered—and yet, Christ patiently draws them in, not with immediate displays of power, but with the Word.

These disciples had walked with Jesus during His ministry, heard His teachings, seen His miracles, and yet in this moment, they're unable to comprehend who He is. This is often true of us. We can know facts about Jesus, attend church regularly, even serve in His name—and still miss His presence right beside us. Jesus does something incredibly pastoral here. He doesn't scold them for not recognizing Him. Instead, He enters into their conversation. He listens to their sorrow. He walks at their pace. Then, He begins to teach. He opens the Scriptures—not with vague encouragement but with depth and clarity—showing how Moses, the prophets, and all of Scripture pointed to the suffering and glory of the Messiah. Their hearts begin to burn—not from emotion alone, but from truth taking root.

Then comes the turning point. They urge Him to stay. He breaks bread. And in that moment—fellowship, hospitality, and divine revelation collide. Their eyes are opened. Jesus is known. And everything changes. This is how spiritual transformation happens. Jesus walks with us, teaches us through His Word, and reveals Himself in ordinary moments—when we welcome Him, listen closely, and break bread together. This passage is a template for discipleship, a window into how Christ draws near, and a challenge: Will we recognize Jesus when He draws near in ways we weren't expecting?

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think the two disciples were kept from recognizing Jesus at first? What might this teach us about spiritual awareness?
2. How does Jesus use Scripture to help them understand what happened? What does this show about the importance of God's Word?
3. What do you think was significant about the moment Jesus broke the bread? Why was that the moment of recognition?
4. How does this story speak to seasons of disappointment or doubt in our own lives?
5. What can we learn from the disciples' immediate response after recognizing Jesus? How can we cultivate that same urgency to share the good news?

WRAP UP

Luke 24:13-35 is a powerful story of revelation and renewed faith. Jesus meets His followers in their confusion and sorrow, walks with them patiently, and opens their eyes through His Word and presence. Are we walking in awareness of Christ's presence in our lives? Are we allowing Scripture to shape our understanding of Him? Let's pray for eyes to see, hearts that burn with love for Jesus, and a boldness to share the truth of the risen Christ with others.

The Gospel According to Luke

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE FUTURE

PART 12

Our Savior Glorified

READ: LUKE 24:36-53

INTRODUCTION

The disciples had heard the reports—Jesus was alive. But in this moment, gathered together in uncertainty and likely fear of Roman or Jewish retaliation, they still didn't know what to make of it. Then suddenly, Jesus appeared among them and spoke words they desperately needed to hear: "Peace to you". His appearance is both sudden and gracious. Rather than rebuking them for their unbelief, Jesus reassures them with presence and peace. Luke is careful to emphasize the physicality of the resurrection. Jesus is not merely a vision or spirit; He invites them to touch His hands and feet and eats a piece of broiled fish in their presence. This underscores the bodily resurrection, an essential component of Christian doctrine (1 Corinthians 15:3–8). Jesus' actions affirm that the resurrection is a physical reality, not just a spiritual symbol.

He then "opened their minds to understand the Scriptures". The reference to the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms points to the threefold division of the Hebrew Scriptures, indicating that all of the Old Testament testifies about Christ. What had once been unclear to the disciples now becomes illuminated by the risen Jesus Himself. This is not new teaching—it is fulfillment. Jesus shows that the Messiah had to suffer and rise, in accordance with passages such as Isaiah 53, Psalm 16:10, and Hosea 6:2. Jesus also defines the content of the church's message: "repentance for the forgiveness of sins". This is not merely a private faith—it is a global commission. The gospel must go to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. And this commission is not in their own strength. Jesus tells them to wait for "power from on high"—a clear reference to the Holy Spirit, who would be poured out in Acts 2.

The final scene is Jesus' ascension. He lifts His hands, blesses them, and is carried into heaven. The disciples' response is striking. They do not retreat into fear, but return to Jerusalem with joy and worship. They understand now who He truly is, and their lives will never be the same. In this short passage, we see a foundation laid for the future of the church: a risen Savior, the truth of Scripture, the call to mission, the gift of the Spirit, and a response of worship. Jesus equips His followers for the future—not with ease, but with purpose, clarity, and a promise.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it significant that Jesus invited the disciples to touch Him and watch Him eat? How does this affirm the reality of His resurrection?
2. How does Jesus' explanation of the Scriptures (v. 44-47) help us see the Bible as one unified story pointing to Him?
3. What is the importance of repentance and forgiveness being preached to all nations? How does this shape our mission as a church?
4. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit (v. 49). How should the promise of the Spirit affect the way we approach God's calling in our lives?
5. Why do you think the disciples responded to Jesus' ascension with worship and joy? What does that say about their understanding of who He is?

WRAP UP

Luke closes his Gospel not with uncertainty, but with hope. Jesus, risen and reigning, commissions His disciples to be witnesses to the world. Though He ascends, He leaves them with peace, clarity, and joy. And He sends the Holy Spirit to empower them. We are part of the same mission. Christ calls us to proclaim repentance and forgiveness in His name. He gives us the same peace (John 14:27), the same Scriptures, the same Spirit. Will we walk forward in boldness, joy, and obedience, knowing that our risen Savior goes before us?

Let's be people who worship, wait with faith, and witness with power—just as they did.