



STUDIES IN LUKE

winter/spring 2011

**SANTA BARBARA
COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Sources

Abbreviation	Source
Bock	Darrell L. Bock, <i>The NIV Application Commentary: Luke</i> (Zondervan, 1996).
Bock Commentary	Darrell L. Bock, <i>Luke</i> , (Baker Academic, 1994), 2 volumes.
Green	Joel Green, <i>The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> (Eerdmans, 1997).
Gundry	Robert Gundry, <i>Commentary on the New Testament</i> , (Hendrickson, 2010).
Hughes	Kent Hughes, <i>Luke: That You May Know the Truth</i> (Crossway, 1998), 2 volumes.
Liefeld	Walter L. Liefeld, Luke, in <i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> (Zondervan, 1984).
Marshall	I. Howard Marshall, <i>The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text</i> (Eerdmans, 1978).
Morris	Leon Morris, <i>Luke</i> (IVP, 1988).
Ryle	J.C. Ryle, <i>Luke</i> , in <i>The Crossway Classic Commentaries</i> (Crossway, 1997).
Wilcock	Michael Wilcock, <i>The Message of Luke in The Bible Speaks Today</i> (IVP 1979).

Luke, The Gospel study guide has been written by our pastoral staff. Studies 1 and 3, 4, & 7 were written by Reed Jolley; studies 10, 17, & 18 by Susi Lamoutte; study 6 by Bonnie Fearer; studies 8, 9, 16, 19, & 20 by Steve Jolley; studies 2 & 5 by Benji Bruneel; studies 11, 12 & 13 by Mike Willbanks and studies 14 & 15 by Erik Anderson. Original illustrations have been contributed by several talented artists in our church community including Alexis Ireland, Claudia Cook, Krystal Vander Ark, Casey Underwood, and several students from the art class of George Chapman. Layout design created by Carolee Peterson. Winter 2011

Teaching Calendar

STUDY NO.	TITLE/TEXT	PAGE	TEACHING DATE
Study One	The Ministry of John Luke 3:1-22	7	1/30/11
Study Two	The Temptations of Christ Luke 4:1-13	13	2/6/11
Study Three	Rejection at Nazareth Luke 4:14-30	19	2/13/11
Study Four	The Kingdom of God Luke: 4:31-44	25	2/20/11
Study Five	The First Followers Luke 5:1-11, 27-32	31	2/27/11
Study Six	Two Healings and...Fasting Luke 5:12-26, 33-39	37	3/6/11
Study Seven	A New Israel Luke 6:1-49	43	3/13/11
Study Eight	The New Lifestyle Luke 6:17-49	49	3/20/11
Study Nine	The Kingdom Comes Luke 7:1-35	55	3/27/11
Study Ten	Being Forgiven Much Luke 7:36-50	61	4/3/11
Study Eleven	Authority Over Nature Luke 8:22-25	67	4/10/11
No Study	Church Retreat	---	4/17/11
No Study	Easter	---	4/24/11
Study Twelve	Authority Over the Devil Luke 8:26-39	73	5/1/11
Study Thirteen	Authority Over Disease and Death ... Luke 8:40-56	79	5/8/11
Study Fourteen	Who Do You Say That I Am? Luke 9:1-22	85	5/15/11
Study Fifteen	Follow and Listen Luke 9:18-36	91	5/22/11
Study Sixteen	Facing Jerusalem Luke 9:37-55	97	5/29/11
Study Seventeen	The Cost of Discipleship Luke 9:57-62, 14:25-35	103	6/5/11
Study Eighteen	The Message Seen and Heard Luke 10:1-24	109	6/12/11
Study Nineteen	Praying Jesus' Way Luke 11:1-13	115	6/19/22
Study Twenty	The New Demons Luke 11:14-26	121	6/26/11

Introduction to Luke

The Scottish Book of Common Prayer (1637) contains the following prayer:

Almighty God which calledst Sint Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be a physician of the soul: grant we beseech thee, by the wholesome medicines of his doctrine, all the diseases of our souls may be healed, through thy Sonne Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Notice the Scottish believers testified to and sought to be healed by *the wholesome medicines of [Luke's] doctrine*. As we begin our study of the third Gospel, we should pray a similar prayer. The Gospel we call Luke is God's word for us. It tells the story of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, and it tells this story in such a way that we might come to believe in the one who came to die for our sins.

Luke is the longest of the four Gospels (1,152 verses) and it is the only of the four which is addressed to a specific individual. Furthermore, Luke is the only Gospel with a sequel, the book of Acts.

Luke

Luke is never named in the third Gospel but the evidence that he wrote this book has strong support from other places in the New Testament, and from early church history. The early church believed Luke wrote this Gospel and his authorship was never doubted until recent times.

Luke was not one of the 12 disciples, rather this writer was a travelling companion of Paul during his missionary journeys and while Paul was on his way to Rome as a prisoner. Luke is also known as *the beloved physician* (Colossians 4:14).¹ Though we can't be sure, it seems that Luke was not a Jew. We do know his Greek is sophisticated (unlike Paul's), he has a deep interest in history and precision and his Gospel is written to persuade a Gentile audience of the truth of the message about Jesus.

Digging Deeper: The Concerns of Dr. Luke

What is Luke's burden? Why does he write this lengthy Gospel? Most scholars believe the third Gospel, along with its companion, the book of Acts, was probably written before the Apostle Paul was martyred. If that is the case, this Gospel was originally penned in the early 60s AD, thirty or so years after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

¹ Luke is referred to by name in the New Testament in Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24.

2 INTRODUCTION

New Testament scholar Darrell Bock finds four primary concerns that lay behind the Gospel of Luke.¹

First, Luke is grappling with the question of how Gentiles are included with the Jews in God's plan of salvation. Luke wants the reader to see that salvation is for everyone! Jesus came to save sinful humanity, not a specific sub-set of humanity. Accordingly we will find Jesus reaching out to Jews, Greeks, Romans and Samaritans. He cares for men, but also for women (a lowly class in the first century). His reach extends to widows, to slaves, the lame, and the immoral.

One interesting example of what is called Luke's *universalism* is found in the way he quotes Isaiah 40. All four Gospel writers cite this chapter with regard to the ministry of John the Baptist. Only Luke, however, gives us the fuller quotation from Isaiah ending with the words, *and all flesh shall see the salvation of God*.²

Second, Luke grapples with why the Gentiles seem to now outnumber Jewish believers by the time of his writing. In Luke-Acts the author shows the church reaching out to Israel, again and again, yet being rebuffed, turned away. The Gospel of Luke *lays the groundwork... detailing how the nation and especially its leadership reacted to Jesus*. (Bock Commentary, 1, p. 2)

The third issue addressed by Luke is that of a crucified messiah. How is it that God's anointed one, the messiah who is presented in a regal manner in Luke 1-2, ends up on a cross? We will unpack Luke's answer to this problem in the weeks and months ahead, but suffice it to say at this point that nothing happens to Jesus apart from what we might call divine necessity. One of Luke's favorite words is the Greek word *dei* (δεῖ) which is translated *must*, or *it is necessary*.³ This word occurs 101 times in the New Testament with 40 of those occurrences coming in Luke-Acts. Nothing happens to Jesus or takes place by Jesus by chance or accident.

In Luke,

The adolescent Jesus *must* be in the temple (2:49) contrary to his parent's wishes.

Jesus *must* preach the gospel of the kingdom (4:43).

Jesus *must* heal the women afflicted by Satan (13:16).

¹ Bock Commentary, 1, pp. 1-2. Bock's massive commentary on Luke consists of two volumes and over 2,000 pages!

² See Isaiah 40:3-5, Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; John 1:23 and Luke 3:4-6.

³ Many of these insights come from Dr. Ryan Wassell's unpublished paper, *Luke's use of dei In Light of the Synoptic Tradition and the Pauline Corpus: A Preliminary Investigation With Special Emphasis on the Sovereignty of God*.

More important, at the peak of his popularity Jesus announces that he *must* go to Jerusalem and suffer the pain and ignominy of the cross (9:22). And when Jesus finally arrives in Jerusalem to suffer and die, he goes to the cross not as an unfortunate preacher whose luck ran out, but *as it has been determined* (22:22). At the end of Luke's Gospel we find Jesus explaining all that took place to two oblivious disciples walking toward the town of Emmaus. He says,

O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory? (Luke 24:25-26)

Fourth, Luke contains much on what it means to be one of Jesus' disciples. What is required to follow Jesus? What is the cost of commitment to Jesus? How shall we live as we await his second coming?

This is a major burden of the Gospel of Luke: to define Jesus' mission and that of the disciples who follow him. The bulk of Luke explains how Jesus prepared the disciples for his departure and prepared them to minister in his absence. (Bock Commentary, 1, p. 2)

Luke 9-19, which chronicle the journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, contain much material unique to the third Gospel.¹ Here Jesus shows us the way of discipleship. As Bock writes,

The section's thrust is that Jesus gives a new way to follow God, which is not the way of the Jewish leadership. The theme is "listen to him."

A Simple Outline of Luke²

1. Luke's preface and the introduction of John and Jesus (1:1–2:52)
2. Preparation for ministry: anointed by God (3:1–4:13)
3. Galilean ministry: revelation of Jesus (4:14–9:50)
4. Jerusalem journey: Jewish rejection and the new way (9:51–19:44)
5. Jerusalem: the Innocent One slain and raised (19:45–24:53)

¹ About half of the material in Luke is unique to the third Gospel (meaning it is not found in Matthew, Mark or John). Most of this unique material is found in these chapters.

² Bock Commentary, 1, p. 20.

4 INTRODUCTION

Flying High: Several Major Themes in Luke

Glory

Luke has, as one writer put it, *a preponderance of references to glory*.¹ Consider:

In the lengthy description of Jesus' birth we find references to glory in 2:9, 2:14 and 2:32. Matthew tells the story without using the word glory.

Satan tempts Jesus with the *glory* of the kingdoms of the world (4:6).

When Jesus launches his ministry, he is *glorified by all* (4:15).

When Jesus heals, the people glorify God (5:26; 7:16).

Jesus is coming again *in glory* (9:26; 21:27).

The disciples see Jesus' glory at the transfiguration (9:32).

When Jesus performs an exorcism, the one delivered *glorifies* God (13:13).

Jesus' suffering on the cross was the necessary path to future *glory* (24:26).

Indeed, Luke 2:14 could be considered a purpose statement for the entire Gospel.

*Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*

Jesus is the savior of the world. Glory to God in the highest!

Sovereignty

Luke has a special interest in history. He goes out of his way to show the reader historical details not found in the other Gospels. History, though, all of history, is under the sovereign control of God himself. See especially 13:22; 22:22, 42.

The Kingdom of God

For Luke, the kingdom of God has arrived and is present in the person and work of Jesus. When Jesus casts out demons that is a sign that the kingdom has come (11:20). The era of the laws and the prophets ended with the ministry of John the Baptist, now the era of the kingdom has come (16:16). Indeed, the kingdom of God is in the midst of the people who surrounded Jesus (17:20-21).

¹ *The Glory of God in the Synoptic Gospels, Acts and the General Epistles*, by Richard R. Melick Jr. in *The Glory of God*, ed. By Christopher Morgan & Robert Peterson, 2010, p. 83.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit more than the other Gospel writers. The baby Jesus is conceived by the Holy Spirit (1:35). John the Baptist and Simeon are said to be *full of the Holy Spirit* (1:15-17; 2:25-27). Jesus is anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism and led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit (3:22; 4:1). At the end of the Gospel Jesus tells his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the power of the Holy Spirit themselves (24:49).

Prayer

In Luke we are more likely to find Jesus praying and instructing his disciples to pray than in the other Gospels. See 9:18, 28-29; 11:1-13; 18:1; 22:39-46.

The Dangers of Worldly Wealth

Luke includes much from the lips of Jesus warning that wealth is a danger to the Christian life. It is only in Luke that we find the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (16:19-31). In Luke the rich are singled out for special warnings (6:24-24) and those who are poor are considered blessed (6:20-21). The successful businessman who keeps building bigger barns to store his wealth is called a fool because covetousness has destroyed his soul!

As we begin this study of the third Gospel let us pray that, with Luke, our praise will be the Gospel. Let us pray that *by the wholesome medicines of his doctrine, all the diseases of our souls may be healed, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God!*

STUDY ONE: Luke 3:1-22

The Ministry of John



John the Baptist is a towering figure in the Bible. He is the last of a long line of prophets who pointed toward messiah. Each of the four Gospel writers include John's ministry as they move to present the life of Jesus. John ushers in the messianic age that the Jews had been yearning for over the centuries.

At the outset, Luke sets the story of John (and Jesus) against the backdrop of world history. Remember, Luke wants to show that Jesus is for everyone, and thus he lists the names of several Roman magistrates and of the shared priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. Who are these people?

Tiberius was the emperor of the Roman Empire. His reign began in 14 A.D. which dates this chapter in 29 A.D.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea from A.D. 26-36.

Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great and inherited a portion of his father's kingdom, Galilee and Perea. His rule lasted from 4 B.C. to 39 A.D.

Philip was tetrarch (ruler) of Ituraea, an area east of the Jordan River.

Lysanias ruled over Abilene, probably an area near Damascus.

Caiahpas / Annas were both high priests in Jerusalem. Luke refers to their *high priesthood* in the singular, as if they shared the office. This is probably because Annas influenced his son-in-law's priesthood after the office belonged to Caiaphas.

With the following outline in mind, read Luke 3:1-22.

- 3:1-6** The Ministry of John
- 3:7-14** The Preaching of John
- 3:15-18** The Promise of John
- 3:19-20** The Imprisonment of John
- 3:21-22** The Fulfillment of John

8 STUDY ONE

Make some notes from the chapter of those things that stand out or are confusing upon your first reading. What questions do you have of this passage?

The Ministry of John (3:1-6)

Luke introduces the ministry of John the Baptist uniquely. Unlike Matthew and Mark, he doesn't tell us about John's strange clothes and Spartan diet. Instead, he goes straight to John's message: A baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

What is shocking about John's message is that baptism and repentance were for everyone, Jews and Gentiles alike. Jews were used to baptizing Gentile converts. Here, though, comes a prophet who says that they, too, need to be baptized.

3:4-6 contain an extended quote from Isaiah 40. Matthew, Mark and John all quote Isaiah 40:3, but Luke goes further, including Isaiah 40:4-5. Why would Luke give us this longer quotation from Isaiah 40? Recall the purpose of Luke's Gospel.

The Preaching of John (3:7-14)

Re-read these verses. How do John's evangelistic methods differ from our own?

Interestingly, in Luke it is the *crowds* that are coming to John. In Matthew it is the *Pharisees and Sadducees* who come to John. Again, Luke wants to emphasize that the gospel is for everyone.

3:7-8 Literally, John calls his listeners *offsprings of snakes*. In the Old Testament there are several references to the enemies of God being vipers or snakes (see Isaiah 59:5; Jeremiah 46:22, etc.). What is at stake here is that the people are coming to John for cleansing without repentance. They want what has been called *cheap grace*, that is, grace without a corresponding change of lifestyle.

“Offspring of vipers” implies that though the crowds had come to be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, they hadn’t yet repented of those sins. They wanted forgiveness without repentance, as though baptism as such would effect the forgiveness. (Gundry, p. 235)

With the above in mind, what would you say to a friend who wanted to become a Christian but was unwilling to repent of a certain sin in his or her life?

What would you say to a friend claiming to be a *Christian* who has never repented from a particular sin and has no intentions to repent?

Respond to the following quotation by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is the grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.¹

¹ *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 47. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the famous Lutheran martyr from WW2, published this book in 1937. The book, which is essentially a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7, challenges the church of his time to understand the call to discipleship. The quote used here is perhaps the second most famous quote from the book. The most famous quotation is, *When Christ calls a man he bids him come and die*. Bonhoeffer was hanged to death just a few weeks before the end of WW2.

10 STUDY ONE

We have to be careful here. Repentance, in itself, can never secure our forgiveness. Only the death of Christ can forgive our sins. Yet, as J. C. Ryle puts it,

Without repentance no soul was ever saved. We must know our sins, mourn over them, forsake them, and abhor them or we will never enter the kingdom of heaven. There is nothing meritorious in this. It forms no part of the price of our redemption. Our salvation is all of grace, from first to last. But the great fact still remains that saved souls are always penitent souls. (Ryle, p. 48)

Respond to the above quotation.

John warns that God's wrath is coming (3:7). What is John's second warning to his listeners? How does this second warning speak to you personally?

3:10-14 Notice the three questions John gets from *the crowds*, the *tax collectors* and the *soldiers*. While *the crowds* were somewhat neutral, tax collectors and soldiers were not highly thought of. Tax collectors were known to exact more tax than was due (keeping the excess) and poorly paid soldiers were known to extort money from the people they were to protect.

What is John's answer to each group? How should we apply these answers to our own time and place?

Insert your current occupation and ask John, *What should we do?* How do you think John would respond?

Examples:

And the school teachers came to John and asked. . .

And the attorneys came to John and asked. . .

And the engineers came to Jesus and asked. . .

And the mothers came to Jesus and asked. . .

The Promise of John (3:15-18)

3:15 shouldn't be overlooked. John's ministry was so impressive that the people are wondering if John is the messiah! John shouts a resounding *NO!* to the question.

3:15-17 Read these verses carefully. According to John, how is Jesus (*he who is coming*) different from the desert prophet? In what ways is Jesus greater than John?

Do you consider Jesus with the same wonder and respect as John did? Explain.

Notice how these verses show how John fulfills both Gabriel's prophecy (Luke 1:16-17) and Zechariah's prophecy (1:76-79).

3:17 What are the implications of this verse? Is it possible to be neutral with regard to the coming messiah?

12 STUDY ONE

The Imprisonment of John (3:19-20)

Luke is very brief in his account of John's imprisonment which will lead to his death. For a fuller description of why John is incarcerated read Matthew 14:3-5 and Mark 6:17-20.

The Fulfillment of John (3:21-22)

In these verses the baton is passed. John will now fade from center stage and all attention in Luke's gospel will be directed toward Jesus.

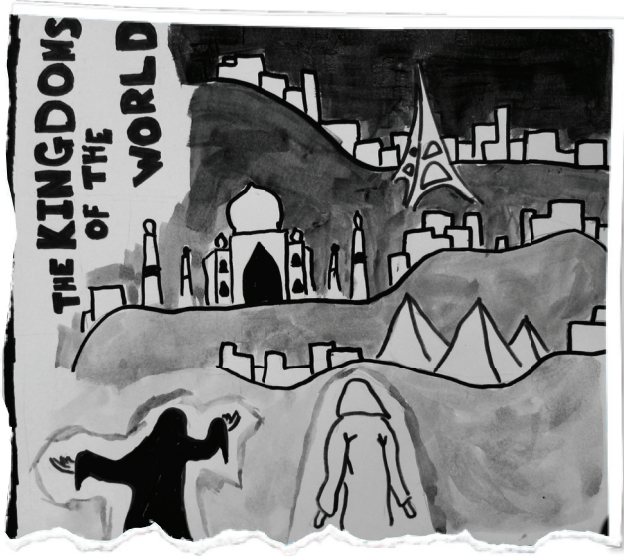
Unlike the other Gospels, Luke almost down plays the baptism of Jesus. It is referred to in passing, but the emphasis is on the descent of the Holy Spirit on Jesus, anointing him for his earthly ministry. The Father's approving voice is heard and Jesus is ready. *All flesh shall see the salvation of God!*

Spend time, as a homegroup, giving thanks and worshipping the God who became one of us so that we might see his salvation.

Sermon Notes

STUDY TWO: Luke 4:1-13

The Temptations of Christ



Life is often marked by ups and downs, some shifts so dramatic as to make us feel we've been strapped into a roller coaster without our knowledge or consent. Moments of intense joy and satisfaction followed by deep disillusionment and frustration leave us feeling unsure when the next drop or turn will come. In Luke 4, we see that Jesus' life took just such a dip in a way that we will never know.

Jesus' public ministry has just begun in a most dramatic fashion: as he came up out of the waters of baptism, the Father's voice rang out from heaven, *You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased* (3:22). This moment must have constituted the highest of highs!

Yet, Jesus' life now takes him from the mountaintop of God's affection to the desert of trial.

Read Luke 4:1-13. Read it slowly and write down any questions that arise or anything that stands out to you as you read.

This is, certainly, one of the more intense situations in which Jesus will find himself prior to the final week of his life. In this short passage, Jesus faces difficulties and trials that will test the very core of who he is, his love for and devotion to God, and his role as Messiah.

Often Christians believe that times of testing and trial indicate the removal of God's blessing and providential guidance. Luke leaves his readers no such option as he begins the chapter with a dual reminder of the Holy Spirit's integral part in this event. The reader is told in verse 1 that Jesus is *full of the Holy Spirit* and is *led by the Spirit in the wilderness*. Not only was God present in Jesus' time of trial and temptation, the Father was guiding the Son to it!

14 STUDY TWO

If the Holy Spirit was actively involved in this incident, does that indicate that God was tempting Jesus? Not at all. In his commentary on Luke, Walter Liefeld identifies distinct types of testing found in Scripture:

It is important here to distinguish between three kinds of tempting (*peirasmōs*, testing).

1. Satan tempts people, i.e. lures them to do evil. God never does this nor can he himself be tempted in this way (James 1:13). Further, not all temptation comes directly from Satan; often it comes from our own lower nature (James 1:14-15).
2. People may tempt (test) God in the sense of provoking him through unreasonable demands contrary to faith. This is what Israel did in the desert and what is probably referred to in Jesus' quotation of Deuteronomy 6:16.
3. God tests (but does not tempt) his people, as he did in the desert (Deuteronomy 8:2).¹

Can you think of a time of testing or trial in your life that God has used for his own glory? What lessons about the character of God did you draw out of that time?

The Spirit has led Jesus into the desert, and he fasts for forty days.² At the end of this time of fasting, Jesus finds himself face-to-face with the tempter who is more than ready to pounce on his weakened foe. The battle is real, the stakes are the highest of all, and the outcome of this encounter has eternal consequences.

4:3-4 Seeing Jesus' weakened state (*he was hungry*, v. 2), Satan begins his attack in verse 3 by saying, *If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread*. Although we might read this as a challenge of the divine sonship of Jesus, the Greek construction of Satan's words does not permit such an interpretation. Grammatically, Satan's challenge assumes that the clause following "if" is true. Daniel Wallace notes that the force of Satan's words is "If—and let us assume that it's true for the sake of argument—you are God's Son, tell this stone to become bread."³

¹ Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 863.

² Liefeld finds here a number of connections to the story of Israel in the wilderness. *Jesus is in the "desert" (v. 1) for a period of "forty days" (v. 2). This probably relates to Israel's experience in the desert after the Exodus... The parallel with Israel becomes stronger if it is meant as a comparison between Israel as God's "son" (Exodus 4:22-23; Hosea 11:1) who failed when tested and Jesus as his unique Son who conquered temptation.* Liefeld, "Luke," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 862

³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 693.

If Satan's attack is not on the authenticity of Jesus' sonship, what is his tactic?

Can you find any parallels to the ways in which you experience temptation?

In verse 4, Jesus replies to Satan by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3, *Man shall not live by bread alone*. Read Deuteronomy 8:1-5. What is the theme of Moses' message to the people of Israel? How does it relate to what Jesus said to Satan?

We find that, even in a time of extreme and undeniable physical need, Jesus' reliance on the Father to meet his needs is unshakable.

4:5-8 Satan's second temptation relates to the human desire for significance and power. Having failed to get Jesus to compromise by turning a stone into bread, Satan now shows Jesus *all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time* (v. 5), and offers, *If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours* (v. 7).¹

Again, in verse 8, Jesus responds with Scripture, quoting Deuteronomy 6:13. As before, the original context for the quotation is significant. Read Deuteronomy 6:10-15. What is Jesus saying to Satan by quoting this verse?

¹ U2's 2004 hit song *Vertigo* features a paraphrase of this line: *All of this, all of this could be yours. Just give me what I want, and no one gets hurt.*

16 STUDY TWO

Satan offers Jesus a shortcut to his destiny. Although all power and kingdoms are subject to Christ, it is on account of the cross that all things have been handed over to him (see Philippians 2:8-11 and Ephesians 1:15-23). In the face of the coming suffering that was to be his, Jesus remained faithful to the Father.

4:9-12 Finally, Satan takes Jesus to *the pinnacle of the temple* and said to him, “*If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here* (v. 9).” This temptation takes an unexpected turn as the Deceiver quotes Scripture, as well.

In verses 10 and 11, Satan quotes, correctly, Psalm 91:11-12. Where, then, is Satan’s misstep in this exchange?

What lessons can we draw from this exchange concerning our own practices of reading, interpreting and applying the Scriptures?

Satan employs Scripture in a manner that does not align with the character of God whom all Scripture reveals. It is a misuse and misunderstanding of the text that reminds us anew of the need for a Christian to know and understand the entire counsel of God.

In verse 12, Jesus responds by quoting part of Deuteronomy 6:16, *You shall not put the Lord your God to the test*. The remainder of the verse in Deuteronomy reads, *as you tested him at Massah*. For an explanation of what took place at Massah, read Exodus 17:1-7. What did the attitude of the Israelites reveal about their confidence in God?

How does Jesus' response demonstrate his reliance upon and trust in God?

This is a story that we should rightly find stunning. All of the odds are stacked against Jesus, and yet he overcomes the challenges. Physically, Jesus is weak and needy, yet we find that he is spiritually up to the task. How is he able to stand firm under such circumstances? What lessons for our own lives can we draw from Jesus' experience?

The author of Hebrews celebrates the faithfulness of Jesus in his work of redemption. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does Jesus' faithfulness in the face of temptation encourage you?

Write out a prayer of thanksgiving to our faithful Great High Priest. Be prepared to share the prayer you write with your homegroup.

18 **STUDY TWO**

Sermon Notes

STUDY THREE: Luke 4:14-30

Rejection at Nazareth



In Luke's Gospel there is a heavy emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit (see introduction). It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the Spirit empowers and guides every move of Jesus. The Spirit descended upon him at his baptism. Jesus was *full of the Holy Spirit* (4:1) when he returned to the Jordan. He was *led by the Spirit into the wilderness*. Now, in chapter four, after his temptations in the wilderness, Jesus returns *in the power of the Spirit* to Galilee. Furthermore, as Jesus selects a portion of Isaiah to read in the synagogue, the first words he cites pertain to the fact that the *Spirit of the Lord is upon me* (that is, upon Jesus).

This section falls into two halves. On the one hand, as Jesus travels through Galilee teaching in the various synagogues he is, *glorified by all* (4:15). And the people are impressed even in his hometown, Nazareth. As he reads and comments on the scriptures in his synagogue, the people seem to embrace him even as they marvel over his wisdom and knowledge.

On the other hand Jesus is rejected in short order.

Read this Luke 4:14-30. Notice the two halves of Jesus' reception among his own people. Jot down any thoughts, highlights and questions you may have which arise from reading this passage.

4:14-22 Jesus Accepted

4:23-30 Jesus Rejected

20 STUDY THREE

Jesus Accepted (4:14-22)

4:14 says that Jesus returns to his hometown and a *report about him* had already made its way to Nazareth. In Luke's gospel Jesus hasn't done anything yet, but Luke wants to signal the reader that Jesus has been busy in his ministry prior to this event.

4:16 What do we learn about Jesus' weekly habits from this verse?

4:18-22 Jesus goes to his hometown synagogue. What was this meeting like? We aren't sure. Luke's Gospel contains the earliest record of what went on in a synagogue worship service. From later sources we know that synagogue worship contained singing from the Psalms (145-150). The *Shema* was recited (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Then the Eighteen Benedictions, or prayers were recited aloud. After, the Scriptures were read.

An officer went to the holy ark, took out the Torah scroll,¹ removed its cloth covering, opened it to its designated place, and placed it on the table where it was read from by various attenders. The Torah was then returned to the ark, and a portion from the prophets, the *Haftarah*, was read. (Hughes, 1, p. 140)

Most likely it was at this point that Jesus, the hometown boy now grown-up with a reputation that preceded him, read from Isaiah 61.

Before going on in this study, what do you think the people heard from the quotation of Isaiah 61:1-2, and Isaiah 58:6?

After his brief reading, Jesus shocks his listeners by rolling up the scroll, sitting down and saying,

*Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*² (Luke 4:21)

¹ The Torah refers to *the law*, or the first 5 books of the Old Testament.

² Sitting down was the posture of a rabbi when teaching (see Matthew 5:1). By sitting down Jesus takes a position of authority.

This is probably a brief summary of a longer sermon given by Jesus at this point (see 4:22). The content of Jesus' sermon appears to be that *today* is the time of fulfillment. The promises of Isaiah are coming to fruition, not in the future, but right now in the person and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth!

The quotations from Isaiah 61 and 58 speak of:

Proclaiming good news to the poor
Proclaiming liberty to the captives
Proclaiming recovery of sight to the blind
To set at liberty those who are oppressed
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor

In short, Isaiah prophesies a coming messianic age when perfect justice will prevail and the Lord's favor will be enjoyed. Perhaps Jesus shocked his listeners by cutting Isaiah 61:2 in half. He cites the part about the *Lord's favor*, but stops short of proclaiming *day of God's vengeance*.

At the outset, the audience is impressed. *All spoke well of him!* The child who grew up in their village had, indeed, made much of himself. His handling of the scriptures was impressive, his oration was gracious. So impressive was Jesus that they began to ask one another, *Isn't this Joseph's son?* Jesus is accepted, but only to a point.

They were astonished that someone from their own town, one whom they could call *Joseph's son*, could speak like this. Notice that Luke speaks of astonishment, not admiration or appreciation. They wondered at his preaching, but they did not take it to heart. (Morris, p. 127)

Did you have a time in your life when you were *astonished* at Jesus, but you didn't admire or worship Jesus? What moved you from astonishment to admiration? What would you say to a friend who is impressed with Jesus but leaves it at that?

Jesus Rejected (4:23-30)

4:23 In response to the crowds approval, Jesus cites a short proverb. What does it mean? What is the crowd asking for?

22 STUDY THREE

How can, and how do we ask for the same thing when we come to Jesus?

4:24 contains one of the more famous lines from the mouth of Jesus, *No prophet is acceptable in his hometown*. What does this mean? Where have you seen it lived out in your experience? In our church?

4:24-27 Jesus refers to the ministries of two Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:1-24; 2 Kings 5:1-14). The two, well known, examples each show prophets reaching out to and caring for non-Jews. And in both stories Gentiles place their faith and trust in a prophet of God.

Read each of these sections of Scripture noticing the faith of the widow and of Naaman. What do you find?

4:28-30 shows the people's response to Jesus' teaching.

The fine citizens of Nazareth had heard enough. It was bad enough to be told that they were poor and blind and captive and oppressed, but now to be told they were less spiritual and less wise than the *Gentiles*, both Naaman and the widow, was just too much. . . [W]hen Jesus cut through their comfortable religious façade, they tried to lynch him—and on the Sabbath too! He would have been tossed off the cliff and then stoned had he not “walked right through the crowd and went on his way” (v. 30). (Hughes, 1, p. 145)

As the apostle Paul put it, *The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God* (Romans 8:7).

J. C. Ryle sees in the crowd's response to Jesus' teaching a rebellion against the sovereignty of God. Sovereignty refers to God's absolute authority and power. To say that God is sovereign is to say that he answers to no one.

Respond to the following quotation. Do you find yourself relishing over or rebelling against the sovereignty of God?

We learn...how bitterly human nature dislikes the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. We see this in the behavior of the men of Nazareth when our Lord reminded them that God was under no obligation to work miracles among them....

Of all the doctrines of the Bible, none is so offensive to human nature as the doctrine of God's sovereignty. To be told that God is great and just and holy and pure, man can bear. But to be told that God has mercy on him he chooses is a truth that the natural man cannot stand. It often fills him with an anger toward God. Nothing, in short, will make him submit to God but the humbling teaching of the Holy Spirit. (Ryle, p. 59)

Spend time, as a homegroup, submitting to and worshipping the God who is sovereign.

24 **STUDY THREE**

Sermon Notes

STUDY FOUR: Luke 4:31-44

The Kingdom of God

I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God... Luke 4:43

The Kingdom of God. What do these words convey? The words *kingdom of God* are found 31 times in the third Gospel (with six additional references to *the kingdom*). From the outset, the message and ministry of Jesus was the proclamation and inauguration of God's kingdom and Luke's Gospel is full of references to this kingdom. The angel Gabriel speaks of the never-ending kingdom of Jesus' when he tells Mary she will bear the messiah (1:33). At the end of the Gospel, the words of the criminal on the cross (23:42) look forward to the coming kingdom of God. Even Joseph of Arimathea who buries Jesus after the crucifixion is looking for the kingdom of God (23:51).



What do the words *kingdom of God* convey? We will have to investigate the life and ministry of Jesus to find out.

In this chapter, Luke is still introducing his readers to the ministry of Jesus. Think about what we are seeing in Luke 4. (Bock Commentary, 1, p. 422)

- 4:14-15** A Summary of Jesus' Ministry
- 4:16-30** A Sample of Jesus' Preaching
- 4:31-44** A Survey of How Jesus Ministered

Our passage says Jesus *went down* from Nazareth to Capernaum. Nazareth is 1,200 feet above sea level and Capernaum is 686 feet below sea level. The town sits on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee and became Jesus' hometown when he wasn't in Judea.

26 STUDY FOUR

Read these 13 verses a few times. Try to put yourself in the frame of mind of a first-century Jew living in Capernaum. Perhaps you have heard about Jesus, perhaps not. He comes to town, teaches with authority and then does some interesting things. How does Luke want to impress us as we begin reading of the works of Jesus? What questions does your reading provoke?

As Jesus inaugurates the kingdom of God, Luke wants us to know that he has absolute authority over everyone and everything. Let us unpack these paragraphs with the following outline:

- 4:31-32** Jesus' Authority in Teaching
- 4:33-37** Jesus' Authority over Satan
- 4:38-41** Jesus' Authority over Sickness and Death
- 4:42-44** Jesus' Preaching of the Kingdom of God

Jesus' Authority in Teaching (4:31-32)

What impresses the people of Capernaum is the authority of Jesus' teaching. They are *astonished*, not necessarily because Jesus was teaching something new, but because he spoke with authority (see, Matthew 7:18-29). The Greek word for *astonished* is strong, meaning, *to strike with panic or shock* (Hughes, 1, p. 148).

The people were accustomed to their rabbis quoting other rabbis who quoted still other rabbis. In fact, they bragged about this. As Rabbi Elieser is quoted in the Talmud, *Nor have I ever in my life said a thing which I did not hear from my teachers.*

Jesus, however, simply teaches and quotes no one¹. The crowds are shocked.

In our time *authority* is almost a dirty word. We crave *conversation* and *dialogue*, but rarely authority. As believers, we have not only the words of Jesus, but we have the word of God (1 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible is our authority for life and doctrine. How should our response to the Bible parallel the crowd's response to Jesus' teaching? How is your Christian life guided by the authority of God's word? Where do you find yourself fighting the authority of God in your life?

¹ The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, is a great, extended example of Jesus' teaching. At the end of that sermon the crowds marvel for the same reason, he teaches with authority.

Jesus' Authority over Satan (4:33-37)

In 1 John 3:8b we learn, *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.* In the next sections of this passage we find Jesus doing exactly that as he exorcises demons and heals the sick.

Leon Morris makes the interesting observation that the Bible says little about demon possession before or after the earthly ministry of Jesus. It says much, however, about the demonic during Jesus' ministry. (Morris, p. 129) With Jesus we find a conflict of kingdoms. The god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4) is being overthrown in the person of Jesus. Thus we find numerous encounters between the Son of God and the demons.

Think of the scene described in these verses. The people are sitting in amazed silence as Jesus teaches. Suddenly his oration is interrupted. What happens? What, specifically, does the demon say?

What should strike the reader is how simply and easily Jesus takes care of the problem. Jesus speaks to the demon, the demon comes out, and Luke lets us know *[the demon] had done him no harm.*

This is in stark contrast to ancient rites of exorcism which were elaborate with ceremony and ritual. One ancient pagan rite of exorcism reads as follows:

Take oil made from unripe olives, together with the plant mastigia and lotus pith and boil it with marjoram (very colorless), saying, 'Joel Ossarthiomi, Emori, Theochipsoith, Sithemeoch (plus additional nonsensical tongue-twisters). . . . come out of so-and-so.' But write this phylactery on a little sheet of tin, 'Jaeo, abaothioch, Phtha. . . ,' and hang it around the sufferer. . . . But when you're adjuring [the demon to come out], blow by sending your breath from above [down to your feet] and [bouncing it back] from the feet to the face; and he [the demon] will be drawn into captivity. (cited by Gundry, p. 241)

What message could we take from Jesus' authority over Satan? Should we, as Christians, be afraid of Satan and his minions? Why? Why not?

28 STUDY FOUR

Jesus' Authority over Sickness and Death (4:38-41)

Jesus goes to the house of a man who will soon become one of Jesus' disciples and part of the rabbi's inner circle (Peter, James and John). Simon will be nicknamed *Peter* in Luke 6. Once there, Jesus finds Simon's mother-in-law to be very sick with a high fever.

How does Jesus heal this woman? What is the parallel to the exorcism Jesus has just performed?

What is your experience of the healing power of Jesus? Does Jesus still heal in this dramatic, instantaneous way today? Michael Wilcock has an interesting take on this question. Read and discuss the following.

Luke presents throughout this whole section a Jesus who utters words of power and in these particular instances a Jesus who is the Healer of Men's ill. And Jesus is the same today: 'Thy touch has still its ancient power; No word from Thee can fall'.¹ But his methods are his own, and not the over-simplified ones his patients would sometimes prescribe for him.

I would therefore make a broad distinction between two methods of healing: not the obvious distinction between the miraculous and the medical, but one which lies deeper than that. Where his object is to be known as the Healer, he works immediately; such cures are, as it were, for the shop-window—the kind of success story which establishes the reputation of a great surgeon or physician. I see no reason why in some circumstances today Jesus may not choose to work in this way and for this purpose. But where he is already known, he may well say to his trusting patient: 'I could of course give you immediate relief; but I would rather take the opportunity to do something more far-reaching, which will be to your greater benefit in the long run. You will find it more protracted and perhaps more painful, and you may not understand what I am doing, because I may be treating disorders of which you yourself are unaware.' He will then set to work to deal with the needs of the whole person, rather than with the obvious need only. He may aim at a calming of spirit, or a strengthening of courage, or a clarifying of vision, as more important objectives than what we could call healing. Indeed the latter may not be experienced at all in this life, but only at the final 'saving and raising' of the sick, when their mortal nature puts on immortality. (Wilcock, pp. 67-68)

With the above in mind, how should we pray for the sick in our church?

¹ From a 19th century hymn by Henry Twells, *At even, ere the sun was set*.

What should be our expectations of physical healing in this life?

4:40-41 When the sun goes down the Sabbath is officially over. The people, seeing or hearing what is going on, bring their sick to Jesus. Now Jesus doesn't even have to say anything. He simply touches them and they are healed. Furthermore, other demons are cast out, proclaiming Jesus to be *the Son of God!*

Jesus' Preaching of the Kingdom of God (4:42-44)

The crowds, of course, want to keep Jesus in Capernaum, but our Lord has other plans. He *must* preach the kingdom of God in the other synagogues of *Judea*.¹

Jesus' authority in this passage is presented in an ever-widening scope. He moves from the synagogue, to healing the mother-in-law of a friend, to having the people bring their sick and demon-possessed from the surrounding areas. Finally Jesus himself goes out to bring the message of the kingdom of God to the synagogues of Israel.

As he goes he will continue to demonstrate the authority that allows him to lay claim to people's devotion and commitment. Any reader who does not know Jesus is challenged to see that Jesus came to minister and present God's kingdom. One need only to respond to him. Those who know him stand reassured that he delivers what he offers. (Bock Commentary, 1, p. 442)

Reflect on this study. Write a couple of sentences describing how a closer look at Jesus' authority in so many realms affects your faith. As Christians in a busy and overly stimulated world, how can we keep sight of Jesus' power and authority that we read of in Luke 4?

¹ Judea in Luke seems to be a synonym for *the entire land of the Jews*, as opposed to the southern part of Israel. See 1:5; 6:17; 7:17; 23:5 and Bock Commentary, 1, p. 441.

30 STUDY FOUR

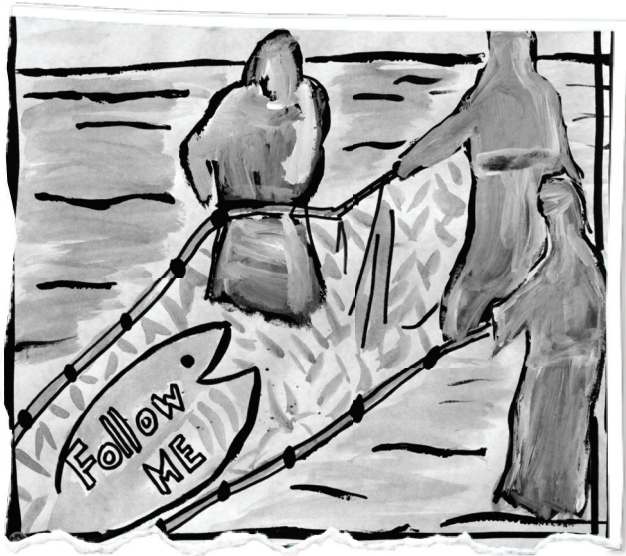
Spend time as a homegroup worshipping Jesus for *delivering on what he offered*. Worship the Authority of the whole universe.

Sermon Notes

STUDY FIVE: Luke 5:1-11, 27-32

The First Followers

In the world of Twitter, users can select which celebrities and friends they “follow.” By simply logging in, one can see all the recent updates (of 140 characters or less) of most anyone they choose. Celebrities like Taylor Swift, Oprah Winfrey and even Barack Obama boast followings exceeding 4 million. Though their followers likely check religiously for the most mundane of updates, nothing they read there is likely to change the world.



When it comes to being a follower of Jesus, the scenario couldn't be more different. When Jesus calls people to follow him, everything changes. In two distinct episodes in Luke 5, Jesus calls men to follow him as disciples, and their responses are immediate, dramatic, and life changing.

Read Luke 5:1-11. Make a note of anything that stands out or is unclear as you read.

Luke begins this story with a subtle reminder of the content and substance of Jesus' ministry. We learn that *the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God* (v. 1). This is the first occurrence of the phrase *word of God* in Luke, and, by its use, the reader is reminded of the prophetic and divine nature of Jesus' ministry. The crowds, though likely fascinated by the myriad healings already performed, pressed in to hear Jesus as one who taught the very words of God (see 4:32 and John 6:66-69).

People are attracted to and fascinated by Jesus for any number of reasons. What are some reasons that people are drawn to Jesus today? How should the church respond to those who are curious about Jesus, but perhaps not explicitly interested in hearing the word of God?

32 STUDY FIVE

The crush of the crowd causes Jesus to seek a better platform from which to teach, and he chooses Simon Peter's boat. Then, once away from the shore, Jesus makes a seemingly absurd request of Peter, *Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch* (v. 4).

The fishermen,¹ hard at work on the shore *washing their nets*, likely perceived this to be—at the very least—a burdensome suggestion. They had, after all, already been fishing all night long and were now washing their nets, likely in hopes of wrapping up their evening of frustration.

Can you think of a time when God called you to do something that felt taxing and, perhaps, unnecessary? How did you respond? What did you learn from that experience?

The two halves of Peter's response in verse 5 give a glimpse at the battle that must have raged in his heart and mind. On the one hand, his professional pride and experience told him that this was a fruitless endeavor, a waste of time, and a potential embarrassment for both him and Jesus (*Master, we toiled all night and took nothing!*). On the other hand, Peter had already been an eyewitness to Jesus' power to heal when his own mother-in-law had been healed simply at Jesus' words. So, Peter responds in faith, saying, *but at your word I will let down the nets*.

What are some of the inclinations and commitments in your own life that war against the desire to respond in faith to the commands and demands of Jesus?

5:6-9 Having followed Jesus' instructions, the men now find themselves overwhelmed with the size of the catch they have brought in. Verse 9, in fact, says that the men were *astonished*.

Calvin comments:

It was no unusual thing, indeed, that fishers cast their nets, on many occasions, with little advantage: and that all their fruitless toil was afterwards recompensed by one successful throw. But it was proved to be a miracle by this circumstance, that they had taken nothing during the whole night, (which, however, is more suitable for catching fish,) and that suddenly *a great multitude of fishes* was collected into their nets, sufficient to fill the ships. Peter and his companions, therefore, readily conclude that a *take*, so far beyond the ordinary quantity, was not accidental, but was bestowed on them by a divine interposition.²

¹ Although Jesus' conversation is directly with Peter, the verbs in verse 4 are second-person plural, revealing that these instructions were for all of the men working with him.

² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke*, translated by Rev. William Pringle, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), p. 240.

His co-laborers may have been *astonished* at the catch of fish, but Peter was overwhelmed in another, more significant, sense. The realization of his failings in light of Jesus' power was too much for him and *he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*

Peter's response is not out of the ordinary for one who has just witnessed the power of God firsthand. Read the following passages and write down anything that stands out as you read.

Exodus 33:17-23, 34:6-8

1 Kings 18:30-39

Isaiah 6:1-5

Ezekiel 1:28¹

In light of these passages, how would you characterize Peter's response? Was it appropriate, given what had happened?

Think of a time when you were astonished by the power of God. How did you respond? Be prepared to share with your homegroup.

Jesus sees that Peter *and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken* and says, "*Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men*" (vv. 9-10). What are the similarities and differences between their previous vocation and the new one that Jesus gives them? Why would Jesus give them such a charge on the heels of the miraculous catch of fish?

¹ Ezekiel is responding to the vision of the glory of God that occupies all of 1:4-28.

34 STUDY FIVE

Although the calling of the disciples by the lake included such prominent apostles as Peter, James and John, Jesus' group of followers is not yet complete. There are still others to call and the next one made for an unlikely choice.

Read Luke 5:27-32 and make a note of anything that stands out to you as you read.

If Jesus' choice of fishermen as followers surprised any of those who were so closely monitoring his growing influence and fame, the addition of Levi—identified elsewhere as Matthew—went well beyond surprising. He was, after all, a tax collector, and *as such he had incurred the dislike of those who looked on such officials as crooked and serving an unpopular government* (Liefeld, p. 883).

For some context on the perception of tax collectors, read the following passages.

Matthew 18:15-17

Luke 3:12-13

Luke 18:9-14

Based on these passages, how would you summarize the widespread opinion of tax collectors in 1st century Israel?

Are there any parallels to our culture? What groups of people are considered the social outcasts?

The basis for the scribes and Pharisees' complaint in verse 30 is that Jesus is dining with those they consider unworthy. In fact, though Luke simply refers to Jesus' tablemates as *tax collectors and others*, in verse 29, the scribes and Pharisees explain exactly what they see in verse 30, when they ask Jesus, "*Why do you eat with tax collectors and sinners?*"

In first-century Palestine, dining together signified mutual acceptance and inclusion. From the particular view of God's kingdom held by these religious leaders, it would not be possible for one who claimed to represent God to have fellowship with such people. God, after all, was a God of holiness, justice, and perfection and would have no room for those whose lives clearly did not meet these standards.

How does your understanding of God's holiness allow for Jesus' fellowship with such people?

In verse 31, Jesus responds to the complaint of the Pharisees and scribes by saying,

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Jesus saw his mission as one of rescue, healing, and restoration. How do you think that the religious leaders saw themselves fitting into such a program? How did Jesus view them?

Each of the callings in this chapter include those who Jesus called leaving everything to follow him (vv. 11, 28). For these first century disciples, trusting in Jesus had tangible and practical results. The cost of their discipleship was high!

This shouldn't come as a surprise to us. Throughout his ministry, Jesus was continually warning people of the high price of following him. He told the rich young ruler to sell everything he had and to give the money to the poor. He cautioned the 12 that the world would hate them. He divided the crowds by saying that they should take up an instrument of death and follow him.

What has following Christ cost you? Be specific.

36 STUDY FIVE

Ironically, for the disciples, the path to gain is through loss. By forsaking everything familiar and safe and following Jesus into the dangerous and unknown future, they demonstrated the type of faith that the Father rewards. Read Luke 18:28-29. Jesus promises the disciples that their sacrifices in this life will be greatly rewarded, far beyond their imaginations.¹ How can this promise help us to remain faithful when the cost of discipleship soars beyond what we think we can bear?

Jesus issues a compelling and irresistible call to follow him and these men's lives—indeed, all of the world—are never the same because they stepped out in faith. Spend some time praying that you would respond in faith, no matter the cost, each time that Christ issues the call to follow him with your life.

Sermon Notes

¹ Jesus is not saying that sacrificial discipleship is the path to earthly fame and fortune. Instead, the gain of living for the kingdom and the eternal life that accompanies such faith far outstrips the things left behind in our obedience to God's calling.



STUDY SIX: Luke 5:12-26, 33-39 Two Healings and a Question About Fasting

The grand scope of Scripture illustrates a two-fold theme: (1) we have deep, personal need of a Savior; and (2) Christ is the authoritative—and compelling—answer to that need. Jesus proclaims in Matthew 5:3, *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Our study this week illustrates “poverty of spirit” meeting its answer in Christ in three situations—two healings, and a discussion about fasting.

Two Healings

Read Luke 5:12-16.

The first story of healing (vv. 12-16) involves the healing of a man with leprosy. When we see leprosy referred to in Scripture, the term is inclusive of all kinds of skin rashes or diseases. While he may or may not have had what we call leprosy, this man would have been condemned nonetheless. According to Old Testament law, a leper was to be cast out of society, rejected and isolated. Anyone coming into contact with a leper would also be considered ceremonially unclean. Lepers were required to wear a bell and shout, *Unclean! Unclean!* in order to allow the crowds time to part and flee. Obviously, the true curse of this disease was not limited to physical suffering; the final blow was the devastating end of community with others.

The leper in these verses doesn’t simply approach Jesus and ask for healing. We are told that he *fell on his face and begged him*. The Greek word used to describe this prostration is the word used for *kiss*, and is a word often used to describe the prostration of worship, to bow to the earth, as if to *kiss* the ground. He cries out, *if you will, you can make me clean*.

Clearly, this is a man who is acutely aware of his great need for Christ. How is it with you? How aware do you feel now, or have you felt in the past, of your need for Christ? If you have not felt that great need, what substitute have you sought?

38 STUDY SIX

Jesus' healing response has three notable parts to it. What strikes you about each of these three things?

His touch:

His words:

His instruction:

Have you had an experience of God's healing, whether physical or emotional? If so, what was restored or made new?

Jesus could have spoken one word and healed the leprous man. Instead, he did something that would have been utterly shocking to the crowds gathered that day. He reached out and *touched* the leper. Some translations say that he *took hold of him*. (Was it an embrace?) This was simply unthinkable in the ancient world. In this compassionate gesture, Jesus allows himself to become ceremonially unclean, yet the man is healed. What does this healing story foreshadow? (Hint: Read Isaiah 53:4-5 and Colossians 2:13-14.)

5:14 shows Jesus instructing the man to not tell anyone about this healing, but instead to go directly to the priest and make an offering for his cleansing. (For more background, see Leviticus 14.) Why do you think Jesus gave him these instructions?

The fact that Luke highlights this particular healing early in Jesus' ministry is quite intentional. By healing a man who embodied the definition of *outcast*, Jesus is ushering in a new kingdom—one that extends to Gentiles, and is inclusive of outcasts of all kinds. The healing of the leper also shows a restoration to community, and for what greater purpose did Christ come but to restore community between us and our heavenly Father?

Read Luke 5:17-26

The second story of healing involves a paralyzed man and his friends. As you re-read verses 17-26, what stands out to you about the scenario portrayed here?

There is a Yiddish word that could be applied to the characters in this true story, and it is *chutzpah*—a word that means *audacity*, also denoting a certain kind of courage and determination in the face of odds. Their friend is paralyzed; they believe Jesus can heal him; the crowds have pressed in so they can't reach him. What are they to do? As the men lower their friend through the roof, over the heads of those crowded below, it is an almost comical scene. (Picture dirt and thatching, and probably a few tiles raining down.) As Jesus witnesses this whole thing, he sees a different word to describe what these men are doing. What is it?

Write your own definition of this word below.

The man is now before Jesus, laying on the mat and quite obviously paralyzed. Jesus speaks first. What is unexpected about what Jesus says?

In this moment, we can only imagine what must have been going through the mind of the paralyzed man. Was he indignant? Perhaps. Disappointed? Most likely, yes. However, Jesus was attending to the most important need first—he forgiveness of sins. In so doing, Jesus is illustrating another “new kingdom principle”—that salvation is _____. (Fill in the answer using Ephesians 2:8-9.)

The presence of the Pharisees and teachers of the law is the first thing mentioned in this story. What are we told about them?

40 STUDY SIX

Contrast the stretcher-bearing friends with the Pharisees and teachers of the law:

The friends were tearing away at the roof, trying to get their paralyzed friend before Jesus.
The Pharisees were (v. 17): “_____”

Faith in action versus, perhaps, a more serious paralysis. Put another way, the stretcher-bearing friends displayed a perseverance to get to Jesus—a perseverance only comes from a “poverty of spirit,” or deep knowledge of their great need.

Interestingly, the Pharisees’ accusations of blasphemy were not spoken aloud. Not only had Jesus proclaimed a man’s sins forgiven, he also *perceived [the Pharisees’] thoughts*. The verse goes on to say that when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them! One would think that this interaction alone would have arrested the Pharisees’ persecution of Jesus.

What is the riddle that Jesus puts before the Pharisees?

How does he “answer” that riddle?

The significance of this second healing is crucial to our understanding of all that follows in the gospel of Luke. Jesus, through this healing, announces his *authority*. He does not deny that forgiveness can come only from God; he announces his authority to forgive sins precisely because he comes as *the Son of Man*. To prove that authority, he heals the paralyzed man before him by telling him, *I say to you, rise, pick up your mat and go home*.

A Question About Fasting

Read Luke 5:33-39

Again, the Pharisees are present and grumbling, this time at Levi’s party. The question they ask is why the disciples of Jesus do not fast. The larger context of this question is the Old Testament practice of fasting, which had grown from one command to fast during the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus 16:29, 61), to a regular practice of fasting, commended by the Pharisees. R. Kent Hughes, says the following:

Predictably, by Jesus’ time the Pharisees had decreed that godly people fast twice a week (on the second and fifth days of the week—Mondays and Thursdays). For them fasting meant mourning. Some Pharisees viewed it as a sacrifice, a mournful offering of one’s

own flesh to God that would gain God's attention. The overall effect of this was to view true religion as solemn, joyless, and gloomy. Therefore, when fasting the Pharisees tried to look as forlorn as possible. (Hughes, 1, p. 190)

Jesus responds to the question of fasting by giving three metaphors. Write them below and explain the significance of each:

1.

2.

3.

Read verse 39 from as many translations as you have available. What is Jesus' point here?

In verse 35 Jesus announces that the day will come again when fasting will return. We live in that time, between Christ's ministry on earth and the second Advent of his return. Do you practice the discipline of fasting? If so, for what purpose do you fast?

John Piper says that fasting in our current age encourages a deeper desire for God. He continues:

If you don't feel strong desires for the manifestation of the glory of God, it is not because you have drunk deeply and are satisfied. It is because you have nibbled so long at the table of the world. Your soul is stuffed with small things, and there is no room for the great.¹

In conclusion, Jesus makes it clear—through two stories of healing and a question about fasting—that he is coming not as a “reformer” of Judaism, but to make *all* things new. He comes with compassion and with authority. All we need in order to enter that eternal kingdom is the poverty of spirit that recognizes our need for Christ our Savior!

Nothing in my hand I bring.
Simply to the cross I cling.

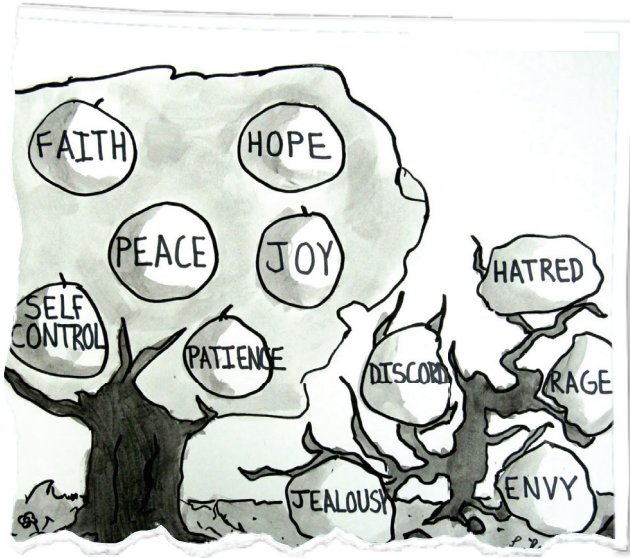
¹ *Hunger for God* by John Piper, Crossway Books, p. 23.

42 **STUDY SIX**

Sermon Notes

STUDY SEVEN: Luke 6:1-49

A New Israel



Change. How do you like change? *Change is hard. People hate change. The only constant in life is change.* Phrases such as these are used often in common conversation. When we are satisfied and snug, we resist change ferociously. And when it comes to religion, perhaps we hate change more than in any other area of life. Churches have split over a change. A change in service times, in the style of music in the Sunday services, a change in leadership can put some churches to the test!

The Pharisees and Sadducees were no different during the time of Jesus. They had a religion that was working quite nicely, and they loved things the way they were. They

knew who they were and what God expected of them. *Then*, Jesus made his appearance. And with Jesus, everything changed!

In the early chapters of his gospel, Luke shows the ministry of Jesus getting off to a spectacular start. Indeed, at the outset, Jesus is *glorified by all* (4:15). In the scripture from last week's study and in Luke 6, Jesus' universal popularity begins to flag among those most threatened by change.

First, Jesus answers questions about fasting (5:33-39) and says that a new era has arrived (new wineskins will be needed for new wine).

Then, as we come to Luke 6, Jesus performs two miracles on two Sabbath days. The battle lines are drawn with the Pharisees. Michael Wilcock explains.

Luke now brings us to a point of crisis in the story of the Saviour of the world. . . . [F]ar from trying to placate the opposition, [Jesus] seems deliberately to aggravate it. In chapter 6 he throws down the gauntlet to the fault-finding Pharisees. He precipitates a crisis, by making clear how different his teaching is from theirs, and by challenging men to come to *him*, and to hear and obey *his* words (6:46-47). (Wilcock, p. 75)

44 STUDY SEVEN

With this in mind, consider the following outline as you read Luke 6:1-49 (At least skim verses 17-49, we will study this sermon in more detail next week).

- 6:1-11** Jesus: Lord of the Sabbath
- 6:12-16** Jesus: Creator of a New People
- 6:17-49** Jesus: Giver of a New Law

Make some notes of those things which stand out as you read. What questions do you have of this chapter?

Jesus: Lord of the Sabbath (6:1-11)

Sabbath keeping was, and is, a central component of belonging to the people of God. Sabbath means to *cease*, to take one day of seven and stop. Keeping the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments, but the notion of Sabbath goes back all the way to creation. God himself observed a Sabbath, after six days of creating, God ceased from his creative activities and rested.

By the time of Jesus, though, the religious leaders had turned a day of rest into an arduous exercise in religion. They had it down to a science. Various laws had grown around Sabbath observance for centuries. The Pharisees had rules for how far one could walk on Saturday, whether one could eat an egg laid by his own chicken (after all, egg laying does constitute work) or even whether it was appropriate to pluck one's gray hair on the Sabbath. Sabbath keeping had become, in a word, exhausting!

Re-read what took place on these two Sabbath days during the ministry of Jesus. In what ways is Jesus pointing to his own authority in these two stories?

A Question of Work (6:1-5)

The disciples are not trespassing in this story. Nor is there an Old Testament law against plucking grain on the Sabbath (see Deuteronomy 23:25). The issue is that of working on the Sabbath.¹ Notice what happens in these verses. The Pharisees raise their eyebrows over the disciples' apparent violation of the law. They address a question to them, but Jesus answers. Jesus' reply points back to a story recorded in 1 Samuel 21:1-6 when David and his men helped themselves to the *bread of the Presence* which was only to be consumed by the priests.

David's action was technically a breach of the law, for only the priests should eat this bread (Lev. 24:9). But the need of his band overrode the legal nicety and no-one blamed him. Human need must not be subjected to barren legalism. (Morris, p. 143)

By pointing out this story from the life of David, Jesus is saying the Pharisees had missed the point of the command to keep the Sabbath. He might have been able to get away with this, entering in to a nice theological discussion, but Jesus goes further. Look again at verse 5. This is a shocking assertion. Jesus claims to be *lord* of the Sabbath. In claiming to have authority over a divine institution, and furthermore, to permit your disciples to break the law of Moses, is a tacit claim to be Messiah.

A Question of Healing (6:6-11)

How is this Sabbath encounter different from the first?

Notice, Jesus again asks a question of his interrogators. What is it?

What do you make of verse 10? We can imagine a moment of silence as Jesus looks around at his opponents. What is he doing with that silence?

These two miracles primarily show the absolute authority of Jesus over the traditions of the Pharisees. Before we go on, though, let's ask what these verses teach us about our observance of a day of rest each week.

¹ See Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

46 STUDY SEVEN

What does this passage tell us about Sabbath keeping (or non-Sabbath keeping)?

In one sense, Christians are living in a perpetual Sabbath because of the work of Jesus on the cross (Hebrews 4:4-11). On the other hand, in every era since creation the notion that we were designed to work six days and rest one day is assumed in the Bible.

What does it mean to keep the Sabbath as a New Testament Christian?

What are your practices of Sabbath keeping? What benefit do you gain from these habits?

Jesus: Creator of a New People (6:12-16)

Notice these verse along with 6:17. Jesus has a *great crowd of his disciples*, but in 6:12ff. he chooses from them twelve and *named* them *apostles*.

To be a *disciple* means to be a learner, one who hears. To be an *apostle* means to be sent. Jesus designates twelve disciple/apostles. Why?

Surely the number corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel. We will see that Jesus is forming a new people of God that includes both the sons and daughters of Abraham and the nations.

Read Luke 22:29-30. What will the twelve disciples/apostles do in the coming kingdom of God?

But who (or what) are the twelve tribes of Israel? Notice what Paul does with this idea. In Ephesians 2: the apostle speaks of the new people of God, comprising both Jews and gentiles.

For through him we both [Jews and gentiles] have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18-22)

The church is built on the foundation of the *apostles and prophets* (see also Ephesians 4:11-12). As Wilcock puts it,

Accordingly, the church can be described as ‘the Israel of God’, the ‘chosen race . . . royal priesthood . . . holy nation . . . God’s own people’: indeed, ‘if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring’. (Wilcock, p. 78)¹

How should the above inform our understanding of the church? Who are we as God’s people? What difference should this make in the way in which we go about living our Christian lives?

Of course the 12 disciple/apostles are unique. Judas Iscariot was later replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:23-26), and the church was built on the call and the authority of these 12 men.

In another sense, however, if we have come to Christ, we are both disciples and apostles. We are learners who are to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his voice, and we have been sent into the world with a mission.

Briefly describe your role as a disciple and as an apostle (one who learns and one who goes).

¹ See Galatians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Galatians 3:29, Romans 4:11-12.

48 STUDY SEVEN

Michael Wilcock summarizes Luke 6 with the following paragraph. Respond to his thoughts.

Chapter 6 thus shows us the new sabbath of peace with God, the new apostolic community of the church, and the new way of life for the Christian. Each one replaces a spoilt version of itself by going back to the original. Each one is a preview of the splendid reality which will be seen in its fullness only in the next world. But although we cannot hope to see that fullness in this world, there is no evading the challenge that Jesus expects us to get as near to it as we can—daily rejoicing in our Father, loving towards our brethren, and holy within ourselves. (Wilcock, p. 87)

Sermon Notes

STUDY EIGHT: Luke 6:17-49

The New Lifestyle

During Jesus' short three years of public ministry there were times when he was extremely popular. The setting of Luke 6 was during such a time when the crowds were flocking to him, to hear his teaching and to be healed from their diseases. This *multitudinous* crowd was made up of some followers of Jesus and many who were simply curious.¹ What follows in these verses parallels Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. Where Matthew gives us Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Luke gives us Jesus' Sermon on the Plain (see 6:17).

The two reports are similar but not identical. Matthew 5-7 is more than three times as long as Luke 6:17-19. The differences in these two accounts show how the gospel writers crafted their material for their own specific purposes and audience. Some of Luke's account is not found in Matthew, or any other of the teachings of Jesus for that matter (6:24-26, 38-40). William Hendrickson points out, *It is not only possible but very probable that many of the sayings found in the Sermon on the Mount were repeated by the Lord as he traveled from place to place.* (Hendrickson, p. 335) As any preacher knows, if you have some good material it is worth repeating.



As we learned last week in study seven, Jesus is in the process of forming a new people of God that will require a new lifestyle. The newly constituted people of God will need a law by which they can their lives under God's authority. This law, though, is unlike anything they had ever heard. Read Luke 6:17-49 and reflect upon this mini Sermon on the Mount. Allow the outline below to help you organize the passage. Take some notes as to your initial thoughts and questions.

- 6:20-26** A Reversal of Values
- 6:27-38** A Radical Call to Love
- 6:39-45** A Real Integrity
- 6:46-49** A Relationship of Obedience

¹ Gundry helps us to understand the word play in Luke 6:17. A '*multitudinous multitude*' makes awkward (even humorously awkward) English. But for emphasis Luke uses an adjective and a noun that go back to the same root. So something of the emphatic wordplay is lost in a relatively bland translation such as 'a great multitude.' (Gundry, p. 339)

50 STUDY EIGHT

A Reversal of Values (6:20-26)

To be a disciple of Jesus is more than just polite religious words; it is a whole new way of life. Our passage begins with series of blessings and woes that form four pairs. List the four blessings and the four woes. How do they reverse the values that our culture normally finds appealing?

Blessing

Woe

Respond to this statement by Leon Morris on the blessings and woes we find in the teaching of Jesus.

Together with the following woes these beatitudes make a mockery of the world's values. They exalt what the world despises and reject what the world admires . . . They pronounce a surprising verdict on qualities and states which people have universally regarded as desirable. But the world's blessings may encourage an attitude of self-sufficiency which is fatal to spiritual growth. (Morris, p. 147)

To which of the four woes that Jesus pronounces are you most susceptible? Why?

What is Jesus trying to do with this teaching? Why does he seek to reverse the dominant values of both the first and twenty-first century culture? Put differently, what is so great about being *poor*, *hungry*, *weeping*, and having people *hate* us? Is Jesus against being *rich*, *full*, *laughing*, and people *speaking well* of you?

A Radical Call to Love (6:27-38)

A central part of Jesus' call to a new lifestyle is the command to love. This section is succinct, clear, and forceful. Jesus' listeners must have been shocked at this teaching since they were hearing something they had probably not heard before. *Love your enemies* was not what the Jewish leaders were teaching the people. As Matthew 5:43 points out they were saying, *Love your neighbor and hate your enemy*. This section of Jesus' sermon is not very hard to interpret, but the real work for us is in applying it to our lives. For you to embrace this new law of love, what changes will you need to make in your life? Be specific.¹

Jesus, the master illustrator, uses several examples of what love looks like practically for the Christian. List the illustrations in this passage. Do these real life situations help you understand love? Add to these examples from your own life as you attempt to live out this teaching.

Jesus' call to a life of love might be described as a worldly love. Respond to the statement below.

Love, doing good, blessing, and praying for those who are our enemies also assumes another reality, that we are in relational contact with the outside world. The ability to be struck on the cheek means we are in striking distance and have risked making the effort to have contact. The fortress mentality that sometimes invades the church is a form of retreat, as well as a denial of what Jesus calls for from disciples in this sermon. (Bock, p. 197)

As verses 32-35 point out, it is easy to love some people and difficult to love others. How do these verses speak to you? Who are your *enemies* (v. 35)? Who is it difficult for you to love?

¹ The Greek language has several words for love, whereas in English we only have one. Jesus does not use the word for natural affection (*storge*), romantic love (*eros*), or for friendship (*philia*) but he uses the word for love (*agape*) that pointed to a decision to love, even those who are unlovely.

52 STUDY EIGHT

For the disciple of Jesus, there is an important connection between the mercy and the blessing of God and our call to act in a loving way. Jesus says that when love characterizes our lives, we *will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your father is merciful.* (6:35-36) How does God's example of love and mercy help in our decisions to act with love towards others?

Verses 37-38 point out a connection between love and forgiveness. Read Ephesians 4:32. How does this verse help you apply Luke 6:37-38? What is the relationship between love and forgiveness?

Luke 6:38 can be a little confusing to 21st century readers. Leon Morris gives us some help.

The metaphor is from measuring out grain in such a way as to insure the full volume is given. You *lap* is really your 'bosom' and refers to a fold the outer garment made as it hung over the girdle. It was used as a kind of pocket. Jesus concludes this section with a reminder there is a reciprocity in the affairs of life. We get back what we put into life. He is apparently making use of a proverbial saying which in one form or another turns up in a number of rabbinic sayings. (Morris, p. 152)

A Real Integrity (6:39-45)

Jesus always condemned hypocrisy. In Luke 6:39-45 we see two pictures of spiritual integrity that expose hypocrisy. Don't miss the fact that Jesus is quite willing to use humor to make his point. The hypocrite has a huge log sticking out of his eye while he is trying to remove a tiny speck from his brother's eye. What simple point is Jesus trying to make with this illustration? Can you think of times when you have done this very thing?

Jesus is teaching his followers to carefully examine themselves before they engage in judgment of others. Why is it that we are so often blind to the shortcomings in our own life? Why is it that we can't see the log in our own eye? What can we do to avoid this kind of hypocrisy?

In the picture of the tree and the fruit (vv. 43-45) we learn that good people are a lot like good trees. They both produce good fruit. Jesus quickly switches metaphors in verse 45 from a tree to the heart. The point seems to be that it is our inner nature that produces the fruit of our life. What does this tell us about the Christian life? How have you seen Jesus change your heart?

Reflecting on the Jesus' words, *for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks* (v. 45). Darrell Bock comments: *The mouth is a litmus test of who we are spiritually.* (Bock, p. 199) How have you seen this to be true in your own life?

A Relationship of Obedience (Luke 6:46-49)

Jesus' sermon ends with a clear call for his followers to put his teaching on this new life into practice. Talk is not enough. Spiritual action is required. What would you say to someone who claims to be a Christian but does not even attempt to obey his teaching? Have you ever lived like this?

Gundry comments on this incongruity.

In Jesus' audience are those who confess him as their Lord but don't obey his commands. This disobedience contradicts their confession. The doubling of "Lord" highlights the contradiction. And the question "Why . . . ?" doesn't expect an answer, because it makes nonsense to call Jesus "Lord, Lord" but disobey his words. (Gundry, p. 253)

What is the difference between the two men in the story?

54 STUDY EIGHT

What is the difference between the two foundations in the story?

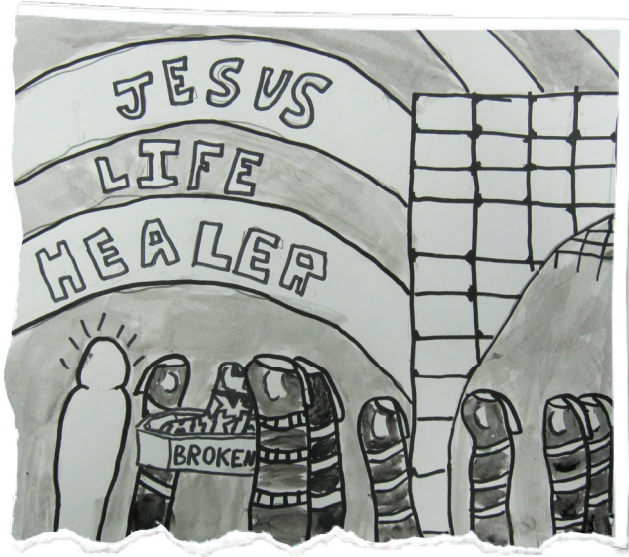
These words in 6:46-49 have an obvious application to the storms of life. At different times, in various circumstances, and with different degrees of severity, every Christian will face difficulties in life. When you have faced the storms of life, have you found your foundation to be solid? Be ready to give your homegroup a practical example from your life.

Jesus' sermon is fascinating and penetrating in every paragraph and sentence. We have looked at it very briefly and it is easy to get lost in the many details. Gather your thoughts into a big picture. Summarize Luke 6: 17-49 into just a sentence or two. To what type of life is Jesus calling his disciples?

Sermon Notes

STUDY NINE: Luke 7:1-35

The Kingdom Comes



The question of identity followed Jesus everywhere he went. People were bewildered and constantly asked, *who is this man?* In Matthew 16:13 Jesus asked his most intimate disciples, *Who do people say the Son of Man is?* The answers varied. It appears some people thought Jesus was John the Baptist, while others thought that possibly he was one of the Old Testament prophets, maybe Elijah or Jeremiah. There was obvious confusion. It took the apostle Peter to provide the correct answer: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.* (Matthew 16:16)

In Luke 7:18-35 John the Baptist is in jail and asks essentially the same question.¹ The perplexed John sends two of his disciples to

Jesus asking, *Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?* (v. 20) John is asking if Jesus was the Messiah. John has good reason for the confusion. Go back and read Luke 3:7-9, 15-17. What kind of Messiah had John been expecting? John had assumed that Messiah would come as judge bringing wrath, destruction and fire. Jesus, however, must first come as savior before he can return as judge.

In this study of Luke 7:1-35 we are going to break from tradition and examine our passage starting from the back and then move forward. Before we look at the healing of the centurion's servant (vv. 1-10) and the raising from the dead the widow's son (vv. 11-17) we will ponder John the Baptist's question about the identity of Jesus. Read Luke 7:18-35. Use the simple outline below to help you think through these verses. Write down your initial thoughts, observations and questions.

- 7:18-23** John's question to Jesus
- 7: 24-30** Jesus' view of John
- 7: 31-35** Jesus' parable of rebuke

¹ John the Baptist had been taken into custody by King Herod Antipas. See Luke 3:19, 20.

56 STUDY NINE

What is Jesus' response to John's question? What are these two messengers to report back to John? (vv. 22-23)

What is Jesus' point in this answer?

What does Jesus mean when he says, *And blessed is the one who is not offended by me* (v. 23)? How would a first-century Jew have been offended by the teaching of Jesus?

Fast forward to our own day and culture. How are modern Americans offended by the teaching of Jesus?

In verses 24-30, Jesus is quick to make sure there is no misunderstanding and that everyone knows of the greatness of John the Baptist. The surprise in Jesus' commendation is when he points out that as great as John the Baptist is, he is not as great as the new members of the kingdom of God. *Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he* (v. 28). Wow! What is Jesus saying? What does it mean to be a member of the kingdom of God? The subject of the kingdom of God was introduced as far back as Luke 4:43. Looking ahead, we see that Jesus will say in Luke 8:1, *Soon afterward he went through all their cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God*. What does it mean to say that the essence of the good news is the kingdom of God?

In verse 31 Jesus asks a rhetorical question about what the people of this generation are like. Given the context found in verse 30 Jesus probably has in mind primarily the religious leaders. He compares them to an ancient game that children played.¹ What is the point of this mini-parable which Jesus quotes?

It seems in verses 33-34 that neither John the Baptist nor Jesus could make the religious authorities happy. John abstained from ordinary food and drink while Jesus did not follow John's ascetic practices. The Pharisees didn't like either option and condemned both of them. What were John and Jesus accused of due to their eating and drinking practices? What does this tell us about the Pharisees?

It is now time to move back to the beginning of our passage. When John asked Jesus about his identity Jesus basically responded by pointing to his actions and works. Jesus tells John's messengers to go back to prison and tell John what they have seen; *the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up* (v. 22). As Bock points out, *Jesus' ministry is one of substance not mere claims*. (Bock, p. 215) In the immediate context of our passage the substance of Jesus' work was seen in two miraculous healings. It is to those healings that we now turn.

The healing of the centurion's servant (7:1-10)

Read Luke 7:1-10. What stands out to you in this story? What makes this story different from other healing stories found in the gospel?

¹ *The picture is apparently of a group of children sitting down to make music while their companions perform more strenuous activities at their bidding. They call out instructions to their playmates, and when they are not obeyed, they reproach them.* (Marshall, p. 300)

58 STUDY NINE

From one perspective this miracle story is really more of a character study of the centurion. Look for clues as to who this centurion is. What do we know of this centurion and his faith? How would this encourage Luke's readers? How does this encourage you?

This centurion is obviously a gentile. Possibly he was a Roman forced to serve with the forces of Herod Antipas. He is a man of faith and Jesus is so impressed that he *marveled at him* because of his trust. Consider Gundry's comments on why Luke is making a point of the centurion's faith.

Luke wants to encourage his Gentile audience to exercise similar faith even though, like the centurion, they're neither face-to-face with Jesus nor Jewish. The gospel isn't just for Jews (see especially 24:47-48; Acts 10-11, 13-28) (Gundry, p. 253)

Think about the gospel message and the nations. Ponder this good news that starts in a rather insignificant corner of the Roman world and then expands to the whole world. Have a little fun and try to name as many countries that you can think of that SBCC is involved with in our missions outreach. How many different nationalities of believers can you name that are a part of SBCC?

The raising from the dead of the widow's son (7:11-17)

Read Luke 7:11-17. Take notes of the details of this story and any question you have. As is often the case, in circumstances of pain and suffering Jesus responds with *compassion*. How would the fact that this woman is a widow and that this is her only son have caused Jesus to respond like this? What would a widow with no son face in first century culture?

The dead son is being carried on a *bier* (v. 14), which is a plank of wood that serves as an open coffin. Wilcock provides some helpful New Testament context for this miracle.

Of the three recorded instances of Jesus' raising the dead, John has the story of Lazarus, while the other three Gospels all have the story of Jairus's daughter. Only Luke adds this extra one, putting it here in chapter 7 as if to illustrate just how good the good news is—it brings salvation not only into the realm of disease but into that of death itself. (Wilcock, p. 90)

What are the four response of the crowd to this miracle in verses 16-17?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What is your response? Certainly the most dramatic of the miracles of Jesus are the raising of the dead and his own eventual resurrection. How do these miracles point to the heart of the gospel message? What do you expect to happen when you die?

Before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, John records a discussion he is having with Martha, Lazarus's sister. Jesus said to her, *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?* (John 11:25-26) Christian faith has an explanation and solution to the problem of death. What is it? How is this answer the solution to our greatest problem?

Ponder this section from Luke 7:1-35. What are one or two take home points that help you in living the Christian life this week?

60 **STUDY NINE**

Sermon Notes

STUDY TEN: Luke 7:36-50 Being Forgiven Much



Sin. This word is not particularly attractive. This word might produce guilt or shame; it might bring painful memories or regret. This word might provoke anger at someone whose sin has hurt you or it may simply be a word that feels repulsive or confusing because of negative connotations. John Stott comments,

Sin is an unpopular subject, and Christians are often criticized for harping on it too much. Yet it is only because Christians are realists that they do so. Sin is not a convenient invention of parsons to keep them in their job; it is a fact of human experience.¹

As a believer, one must grapple with the reality of sin. Most Christians just wish the

idea would go away. The truth is that all have sinned and it must be dealt with. These fifteen verses of Luke present Jesus' treatment of one woman's sin.

Read Luke 7:36-50. Pay attention to the three people Luke presents. Note their actions, words and attitudes relating to one another.

Pharisee

Woman

Jesus

¹ John Stott, *Basic Christianity*, Second Edition, IVP, 1971, p. 61.

62 STUDY TEN

7:36-38 A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to his home for a meal. Hughes provides a likely portrayal of the setting.

In that day the homes of well-to-do people were built around central courtyards in which formal meals were served. The guests reclined on the left elbow on low-lying couches, eating with the right hand. One's feet would extend away from the table, in keeping with the belief that the feet were unclean and offensive by nature. At such occasions the doors of the home were kept open, and the uninvited townspeople were free to wander in to observe the conversation. Typically there was a great deal of coming and going by the onlookers. (Hughes, 1, pp. 275-276)

Once Jesus situated himself at the table, a woman entered the room. There are two noteworthy points about this woman. First, she was *a sinner*, or *one who had lived a sinful life* (NIV). Most likely she was a prostitute or someone who had a pattern of promiscuity that was known broadly enough that she was recognized by Simon. Second, she very likely had prior contact with, or exposure to, Jesus and his teachings.

Now re-read verses 37-38. Consider the environment, the woman's actions and her passion. This woman did not cry willfully; rather, she cried out of raw emotion. She wiped the tears off of Jesus' dirty feet with her hair,¹ and then poured costly perfume on them. What was going on in her heart and mind that brought her to this moment?

7:39-43 In the Pharisee's view, this woman was detestable and *he said to himself "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."* Jesus confronts Simon with a parable addressing sin and forgiveness. The parable included a moneylender and two debtors—one greatly in debt and the other less in debt.²

Read through verses 39-43. How do you think the Pharisee and the woman each perceived themselves as debtors? How did Simon consider the woman?

¹ Women did not unbind their hair in public.

² A parable spoken by Jesus in Matthew 20 equates one denarius with pay for one day's labor. In this context that would be almost two months wages for one and almost a year and 5 months pay for the other!

When you reflect on your own *debt* as a result of sin, do you appraise it by quantity? Do you gauge the severity of your sin? (If so, how?) What comes to mind when you try to define your debt? As a homegroup, compare and contrast your answers with one another.

In Jesus' parable both debtors owed the lender and both could not pay. Respond to the following quote.

Jesus' point is not only that both Simon the moralist and the prostitute were debtors/sinners, but that both were equally insolvent. If you are unable to pay it does not matter how great the debt is. You are insolvent, period! And that is the condition of the whole human race. (Hughes, 1, p. 279)

Note what the apostle Paul says about sin.

Romans 3:23

Ephesians 2:1-3

How would you define or describe sin in your life? Not specific sins, but sin in general. What place does it hold in your life? What influence does it have?

64 STUDY TEN

There are many people around us who do not believe in Jesus. Some of those have heard the gospel but do not believe because they feel like they do not need Jesus. They feel they are good people. What might be their view on what we call sin? How might this view of sin influence them?

As Christians, how can we talk with our non-believing friends about sin?

7:44-50 The rest of this passage addresses the interconnection between Jesus' forgiveness and a person's response. The woman entered the room to find Jesus and honor him. Expressing her love for Jesus, the woman not only performed the social graces a good host often would, she went far beyond. Not only did she wash Jesus' feet, she washed them with her tears and dried them with her hair! Not only did she honor him with a kiss, she continually kissed his feet! Not only did the woman anoint Jesus, she anointed him with a costly perfume (as opposed to common olive oil normally used by a host)! The sinful woman had embraced what she was hearing and learning of Jesus. She responded with great extravagance.

Finally, Jesus turns to the woman and says, *Your sins are forgiven* (v. 48) and then *Your faith has saved you, go in peace* (v. 50). If this was the only passage of scripture we had available, we might conclude that good works produce forgiveness. However, a progression of salvation is not the point. What is important is that Jesus forgives a woman's sin. This brief story is filled with the interconnection between forgiveness, faith and loving Jesus.

When and how did you become aware of God's provision of forgiveness? Regarding your faith: was that sudden, with an identifiable moment of inception, or did it develop over time?

STUDIES IN LUKE 65

As a believer, how do you express your love to Jesus? He forgave you and you put your faith in him. How have you since responded? How do you honor him? How would you like to further respond to God's act of mercy in your life?

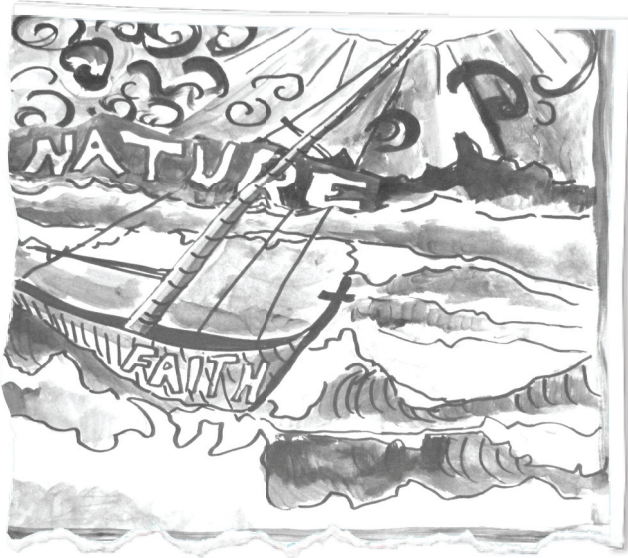
As a homegroup, take some time to share with one another your responses to these last two questions. Pray for each other, first thanking God for his mercy in your lives and the faith that has resulted from that. Then pray that your faith in, and love for, our Lord Jesus would grow immeasurably and abundantly over the next several months as you continue to study the Gospel according to Luke, and beyond.

66 **STUDY TEN**

Sermon Notes

STUDY ELEVEN: Luke 8:22-25

Authority Over Nature



According to a year end news report, *“Earthquakes, heat waves, floods, volcanoes, super typhoons, blizzards, landslides and droughts killed at least a quarter million people in 2010.”*¹ Hurricanes, tsunamis, tornados, and the like make headlines regularly reminding us of both the enormous power of nature and the helplessness of those who find themselves in the vicinity when they strike.

What specific events do you think of that show the tremendous power of nature?

Of course, it need not be a natural disaster that reveals the power of nature to us in a personal way. Have you ever been in a situation where you experienced first hand the overwhelming power of nature? (the surf, a lightning storm, high winds, etc.) Share with your homegroup a time when you’ve experienced the power of nature up close.

Read Luke 8:22-25. Because it is only four verses take time to read it three times, pausing for a minute or two between readings to ponder and observe. Try to imagine that you were in the boat. What would be going through your mind?

Write down any initial observations or questions that come to mind.

Observations

Questions

¹ “2010’s World Gone Wild: Quakes, Floods, Blizzards” by Seth Borenstein and Julie Reed Bell

68 STUDY ELEVEN

Any number of commentaries will point out to the reader how the topography of the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding area can produce swift and violent storms. Clearly the disciples feel their very lives are in jeopardy.

This text does not speak only to those who are at risk from literal storms! All of us find ourselves at times in situations beyond our control, leaving us feeling helpless and scared. Think of situations in your life, either in the past or something you are currently going through, that have left you feeling helpless. How do you respond in these kinds of situations?

It must have seemed to the disciples that Jesus was oblivious to their plight—after all, he was asleep! Do you ever feel as if God either doesn't know or doesn't care what you are going through?

Assume someone in your homegroup is in such a place right now. What assurances, from Scripture or from your own experience, could you offer this friend that God does indeed both know and care about his or her needs?

Luke is communicating something very important about Jesus in this story. He is more than a good teacher or ethicist. Early readers who were familiar with the Old Testament would immediately have thought of passages that spoke of God's power over the waters. Read these verses:

Psalms 65:7

Psalms 89:9

Psalms 107:23-32

Last week we saw that Jesus' forgiveness of a sinful woman at a dinner party caused the other guests to ask the question, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" Now here in the story of the calming of the storm, the same question is asked! "Who is this?" One of Luke's central concerns throughout his Gospel is that we feel the weight of this question.

Note these other passages where the same question gets asked.

Luke 5:21

Luke 7:18-19

Luke 9:9

Luke 9:18

Think of a time in your life when you were forced to ask this question—*Who is this Jesus?* What circumstances have forced you to consider (or reconsider) the nature of Jesus?

Have you ever had a crisis situation that became a faith building experience like it was for the disciples in the boat? Explain.

Notice how the disciples are first afraid because of the storm, but after Jesus reveals his power over the storm, their response is *fear and amazement*. Mark says they are *terrified*. (Mark 4:41)

Is this an odd reaction? Or is it appropriate? Does Jesus inspire *fear and amazement* in you?

70 STUDY ELEVEN

The disciples are not the only ones to ask an important question in this story! Jesus asks, *Where is your faith?* What tone of voice do you imagine he uses? Is Jesus frustrated? Disappointed? Reassuring?

How does faith affect the way we go through trials? Is a true Christian a stoic—completely unaffected by adversity?

Consider Horatio Spafford, a lawyer from Chicago who knew suffering intimately. He experienced the tragic loss of a young son and then the destruction of almost all his real estate investments in the Great Chicago Fire. Then in 1873, his wife and four daughters were traveling ahead of him on a ship to Europe when the boat went down and only his wife survived. You can imagine his grief as he boarded a boat to be reunited with his wife. On this trip across the Atlantic, he penned these words:

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control,
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

How is Spafford's example of faith in the midst of life's storms instructive?

Mark records Jesus' words as he rebuked the storm, *Peace! Be still!* (Mark 4:35-41).

Katerina von Schlegel, a leader of the Pietist movement in 18th century Germany, wrote a beautiful hymn that draws on this text...

Be still my soul! Thy God doth undertake
To guide the future as He has the past.
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;
All now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul! The waves and winds still know
His voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

Find a few minutes alone this week and listen to this song.¹ Close your eyes and allow these words to minister to your soul.

¹ Search online for "Be Still My Soul + Libera" for a great rendition!

72 **STUDY ELEVEN**

Sermon Notes

STUDY TWELVE: Luke 8:26-39

Authority Over the Devil

As we come to this passage, we find the second of three miracle stories in Luke 8 demonstrating Jesus' authority and power. After his confrontation with nature's storm, Jesus would now confront an equally violent storm of demonic activity. Here in the land of the Gerasenes,¹ Jesus performs his most famous exorcism.

Before going on with the study, take a moment to reflect on your own reaction to the concept of demon activity and exorcism. What goes on in your mind and heart when you think of these things? Skepticism? Fear? Curiosity? Horror movies you wish you hadn't seen? If you've ever been witness to such things, share your recollections with your homegroup.



With regard to the devil and the demonic, C.S. Lewis gives the following warning:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist and magician with the same delight.²

As we read and discuss this passage, we would do well to avoid both of these errors!

¹ The location is debated. Variations on the name of the inhabitants of the region (Gadarenes, Gergesenes) found in your Bible are a reflection of the variants in the original manuscripts. It seems that copyists of the text were wrestling with the fact that known locations such as Gerasa was over 30 miles south-east of the lake, while Gadara is 6 miles away and Gergesa was closer still. It is a moot point however as either one of the farther removed cities may have controlled a sea-side tract of land.

² C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, p. 9

74 STUDY TWELVE

Read Luke 8:26-39. Then, note any things that strike you as interesting and any questions that come to mind. You should have no problem coming up with a list of questions that this text elicits!

Observations

Questions

Notice the effect of the demons on this wretched man! List some of the ways he has been victimized and write down the condition in which he is found. (See also Mark 5:5.)

Legion... A Roman legion consisted of 6,000 foot soldiers. The point here is that this man has become home to a large regiment of demons. *'Legion' brought an image of great numbers, efficient organization, and relentless strength.* (Hughes, p. 307)

Read and respond to the following quotation. Do you agree with Bock?

Though we rarely deal with overt cases of demon-possession, that fact should not stop us from realizing the impact the demonic has on us daily. It is not entirely clear why demon-possession is so rare in the Western world. Those who work in other cultures where the demonic is more openly accepted speak openly about its presence and see more cases of demon-possession than we do. Do we underestimate its presence? Or does Satan have less need to manifest himself openly in a culture that denies his existence? I suspect a combination is at work. The Scripture makes it clear that a fallen world is still influenced by the presence of sin and Satan, and will be until the Lord's return finishes what this healing represents. (Bock, p. 243)

While we may not see *overt cases of demon possession*, there is no shortage in our day of the kind of destructive behavior and isolation we read about here. What are some examples of the destructive, isolating effects of evil in our culture? In your life?

Do you normally think of these kinds of evil as symptoms of demonic influence? If we acknowledge the influence of demons, does that free sinners from responsibility? (“The devil made me do it”?)

Ephesians 6:12 says,

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

How does the rest of this paragraph advise us to engage in this struggle? What does this look like practically in your life?

How do the following characters in the story respond to Jesus?

The demons:

The demon possessed man:

The local citizens:

76 STUDY TWELVE

Why did the locals respond the way they did? Mark's gospel goes into a bit more detail than Luke, telling us that the *large herd of pigs* numbered about 2,000. That's a lot of bacon! Of course these were not pets... this was big business. Sure, a man formerly tormented by demons was given new life, but what about the local economy?!

The supreme irony is that there are two casting-outs in this story. First the demons are cast out. Then Jesus is cast out!

These people feared that if Jesus stuck around, their way of life would be threatened. What do we fear? Are there any place in our lives that feel threatened by Jesus' presence?

What sacrifices in your way of life have you had to make to follow Jesus?

This story brings to light a truth we need to come to grips with: Jesus' ministry leads to rejection as well as acceptance. Some of us have labored with the false impression that if we (or a friend or family member) could just see tangible proof of God's power, we would believe and submit our lives to Him. Yet this is not the case. The Gerasenes reject Jesus not because they lack an undeniable sign, but because of it!

Read the following verses:

Luke 6:22

2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Have you experienced rejection because of your identification with Jesus? How so? If not, is it more likely a sign of God's grace or a weak identification with Christ?

We must not miss the big picture in this story! A man whose life was completely broken was radically transformed by Jesus. Jot down some ways his life was changed. How is he different by the end of the story?

How has your life been changed because of Jesus? What is your testimony of God's work in your life? Take some time as a homegroup sharing your testimonies of what Jesus has done for you.

The question, *Who is this man?*, does not get asked explicitly in this story as it did in our last study. But the healed man's answer is implicit in his response:

Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you. So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him (v. 39).

Spend time as a homegroup worshiping this God who has made himself known to us in Christ! Glory in his power! Glory in his compassion!

78 **STUDY TWELVE**

Sermon Notes



STUDY THIRTEEN: Luke 8:40-56

Authority Over Disease and Death

In 2009, the United States spent \$2.5 trillion on health care.¹ Each year the costs continue to soar. Yes, we have remarkable technological advances designed to help fight this war against disease and death. We have medical experts who continue to do an admirable job doing research and caring for patients. The bottom line, however, is the same...the enemy continues to wreak havoc. This is a war we cannot win.

Write down some names of these formidable foes—specific diseases and ailments that continue to inflict harm and, ultimately, cause death to the human race.

Luke 8 begins with Jesus traveling around the countryside, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God to the large crowds that gathered everywhere he went. The first century paparazzi were after him everywhere he turned! And so he got in a boat with his disciples and headed off to the other side of the lake. Then, having calmed a storm and healed a demonized man, he crossed the lake once more and when he arrived the crowds were waiting!

Read Luke 8:40-56. As you read these two interweaving stories, make some notes describing two of the main characters. What is their situation? What is their position in society? How do you think they are feeling as the story unfolds?

Jairus

The Bleeding Woman

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Health_care_in_the_United_States

80 STUDY THIRTEEN

What do their stories have in common? How are their situations different?

Kent Hughes observes,

Here we have two desperate representations of life: one well-off, the other poor; one accepted, the other excluded; one familial, the other alone. Yet both were beyond human help. For twelve years the girl and the woman had led such different lives, but now adversity had bound their souls together unawares, and they would both be recipients of God's life-giving power. (Hughes, p. 316)

Let's look at what drew each to Jesus...

Jairus (8:40-42a)

We know Jairus was a man of prominence in his community because of the position that he held. As the *ruler of the synagogue*, he was responsible for the arrangements of the synagogue services. He has a problem, however, for which his status offers no solution.

Jairus was like so many who have come to Christ. It was not his love for Christ that brought him—it was not what he hoped to do for Christ—it was his desperation, and a glimmer of hope. Despair is commonly the prelude to grace. (Hughes, pp. 316-17)

What first attracted you to Christ? Was it love or was it something else? Perhaps you are not yet a Christian but are just investigating the person of Christ. What do you find compelling about Jesus?

Do you have a sense of your desperation for Christ? If you don't feel desperate, how can you cultivate an awareness of this reality?

Sick Woman (8:42b-43)

How do the following verses shed light on her desperation?

Leviticus 15:25-27

Mark 5:26

How do these texts shed light on the physical, social, financial and religious¹ implications of her ailment? Can you think of examples of how illness and disease in our day can affect people in similar ways?

Now let's look at how Jesus dealt with each of these desperate people:

Sick Woman (8:44-48)

On first reading, it may seem that the cure was somewhat of a magical affair...just a simple touch and power involuntarily and automatically flowed from Jesus. How does Jesus correct this misunderstanding in his response to the woman?

Jesus tenderly addresses the woman as *Daughter*, the only such instance in the New Testament and publicly confers God's *peace* to her. In light of the ostracism she had experienced, and her fears in approaching Jesus, how must his words have affected her? How have you experienced the tenderness of God?

¹ We should not equate ceremonial uncleanness with sinfulness. *The purity laws were primarily designed to teach lessons about the holiness of God and the corruption of man. God's presence in the midst of his people could not be taken for granted and was to be carefully safeguarded. Human beings, living in a sin-tainted world, are not automatically qualified to come into God's presence and "must prepare themselves both ritually and morally before approaching a holy God."* <http://graceandknowledge.faithweb.com/unclean.html>

82 STUDY THIRTEEN

Have you ever experienced personal healing from God? If so, like the woman, give testimony!

Jairus (8:49-56)

Can you imagine how painful it was for Jairus to wait and watch Jesus stop to deal with the woman and her health issue while his daughter remained in dire need? What are you waiting on God for?

Henri Nouwen, a Jesuit priest, university professor, and beloved author, told of a conversation with a colleague who confessed, *You know, ... my whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted, until I discovered that my interruptions were my work.* Nouwen reflected on this attitude toward interruptions,

Don't we often look at the many events in our lives as big or small interruptions, interrupting our many plans, projects, and life schemes?... And doesn't this unending row of interruptions build in our hearts feelings of anger, frustration and even revenge, so much so that at times we see the real possibility that growing old can become synonymous with growing bitter? But what if our interruptions are in fact our opportunities, if they are challenges to an inner response by which growth takes place and through which we come to a fullness of being? What if the events of our history are molding us as a sculptor molds his clay, and if it is only in a careful obedience to these molding hands that we can discover our real vocation and become mature people? What if all the unexpected interruptions are in fact invitations to give up old-fashioned and out-moded styles of living and are opening up new unexplored areas of experience? And finally: What if our history does not prove to be a blind impersonal sequence of events over which we have no control, but rather reveals to us a guiding hand pointing to a personal encounter in which all our hopes and aspirations will reach their fulfillment?¹

Respond to Nouwen. How should the truth that God providentially rules over all the affairs of life influence the way we see "interruptions"? Where in your life is it difficult to exercise faith and accept God's timing for events?

¹ Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: the Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*, pp. 52-53.

Of course, this story is not just about how to handle interruptions in life or how to behave when we feel desperate. Jesus heals a chronically sick woman and raises a girl from the dead! They are more than metaphors for our lives. These are historical events which demonstrate Jesus' sovereignty even over disease and death! As such, these miracles both speak to God's ability to intervene in the darkest moments of our lives and point forward to a time when these enemies will no longer terrorize us.

Read the following passages. What difference do they make in your life?

John 11:25-26

1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Hebrews 2:14-16

Revelation 21:1-4

Both of these desperate people we've looked at in this passage find themselves at the feet of Jesus. That is a good place to be! Spend some time there as a homegroup praying for those in your lives and in our church who are sick and suffering. Pray for healing and that they would know the HOPE that we have because of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. Pray that all of us at SBCC would courageously bring our requests to Jesus and grow in faith as we see him respond to our needs.

84 **STUDY THIRTEEN**

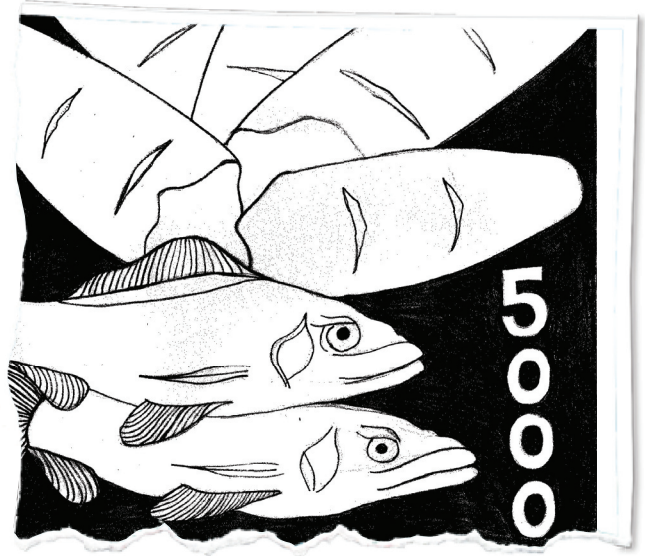
Sermon Notes

STUDY FOURTEEN: Luke 9:1-22

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Early one morning you grab a cup of coffee and open your Bible. You happen to find yourself in Luke 9, and all of a sudden a question jumps off the page, Jesus is looking at you and he wants to know, *Who do you say that I am?*

For two thousand years the world has tried to answer this question. Historians have tried to pin him down into the books of history, spiritual gurus have admired his teachings, presidents have picked and chosen their favorite words from sermons. Yet none of that matters, Jesus is looking at you and asking, *Who do you say that I am?* After eight chapters in Luke's gospel are you prepared to answer that question?



As we come to chapter 9, we arrive at the end of Jesus' ministry in Galilee. Soon he will turn towards Jerusalem and make his way towards the fulfillment of his earthly ministry—the cross. Luke 9:1-50 serves as a transition from his ministry in Galilee to his march to the cross. In this section, Luke brings together the issue of Jesus' identity with the nature of our discipleship. Luke seems to pan back and forth between these two themes, as he details the final episodes before Jesus shifts his focus to the cross. We'll be studying this transitional section (9:1-50) in the next few studies.

Read Luke 9:1-22, and as you read, ask these two questions: *What does this say about the nature of discipleship?* AND *What does this say about the identity of Jesus?* Jot down any thoughts, questions or comments that come to mind from reading this section.

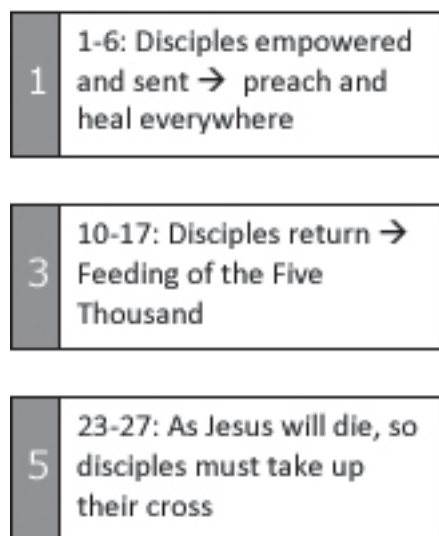
Discipleship

Jesus' Identity

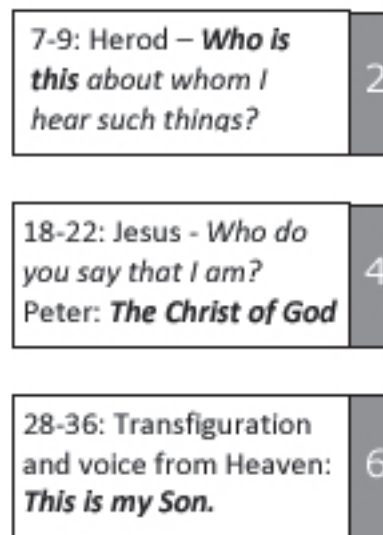
86 STUDY FOURTEEN

In 9:1-36 we get six episodes that alternate the reader's attention between the disciples and Jesus.

Regarding Discipleship



Regarding the Identity of Jesus



Luke alternates between these different episodes in order to draw the reader's attention to the relationship they have to one another and how each influences the other. Luke's gospel suggests that one cannot properly understand the identity of Jesus apart from genuine discipleship. Yet, one cannot be an authentic disciple without properly understanding Jesus' identity. (Green, p. 352) This week's passage addresses the first of these issues, and the next study will focus on the latter.

Discipleship

9:1-6 In these verses the disciples are more active than they ever have been in the Gospel thus far. Up to this point they have been passive witnesses to Jesus' action. From what we have read to this point in Luke, how would you describe Jesus ministry? What has he been doing?

Notice how the disciples begin to participate in similar activities to those of Jesus. Read Luke 4:18-19 and 4:36, how does this resemble what we find in 9:1-2? Compare and contrast these texts.

Clearly the disciples are told to do as Jesus has done: to proclaim the kingdom and to heal. In 9:11 Jesus again demonstrates the very thing he told the disciples to do. Luke 9:1-6 instructs us that just as Jesus' life is marked by the dual ministry of word and deed, the lives of his disciples should be similarly marked.

How do you work out this dual ministry of *word and deed* in your life? Do you tend to do one more than the other? Discuss with your homegroup ways you can grow in each of these.

9:10-17 With what problem are the disciples presented?

Notice the irony:

In the first scene they are instructed to take nothing, not even bread and money—that is, they are instructed to put their faith into action in the crucible of missionary activity; in the second, however, their responses reveal a lack of faith regarding such basic provisions as food. (Green, p. 357)

Have there been times in your life when you have doubted God's presence, work or provision, after having seen it prior in life? What causes us to doubt God like this?

Jesus performs this miracle and yet the disciples participate in the feeding. Look at verses 15-17, list the actions of Jesus and the Disciples' actions in this story. What do they each do?

Jesus

Disciples

Darrell Bock writes,

This miracle of provision obviously indicates how Jesus meets needs. But there is a second key to the miracle, in that this provision comes through the disciples. (Bock, p. 256)

88 STUDY FOURTEEN

How might this shape the way we view God's continued actions in the world? How can we participate in what God is doing? In what ways could we offer ourselves and our resources to be used by God?

Identity of Jesus

The other major theme in these texts is Jesus' identity. Look at Herod's questions in verses 7-9. What was "going on" that Herod heard about?

Luke has placed the story of Herod's perplexity regarding Jesus' identity (vv. 7-9) right smack in the middle of the mission of the twelve (vv. 1-6, 10). This placement helps us understand the nature of what Herod has heard: Herod is concerned with the work of both Jesus and his disciples (Green, p. 361).¹ Think about what Luke is saying, *the disciples' actions declare something about Jesus!*

How have you seen the actions of Christian people impact non-believers views of Jesus?

Take stock of your own life. Think about your non-Christian acquaintances and friends. What does your life say to them about the identity of Jesus?

9:18-22 lets us listen in on a conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Jesus presses them on questions about his identity. Peter's response (as a representative of the twelve disciples) is quite remarkable: Jesus is *the Christ of God!*

For the first time in Luke's narrative of Jesus' public ministry, a human being recognizes Jesus as God's Messiah. As readers, we are aware of Jesus' identity as Messiah, but so far this knowledge has been declared in Luke's gospel only by supernatural characters.²

¹ Green also notes, "This intrusion serves immediately to cast a dark cloud across the hopeful mission of the twelve, since Herod appears in the narrative almost as a bad omen."

² The supernatural beings that have professed Jesus as Messiah are: angels – 1:31-35; 2:11; demons – 4:41; and God – 3:22.

When did you first recognize Jesus as the Christ, your savior? What happened that caused this conviction in your life?

In Peter's confession we have what will prove to be a major turning point in the gospel. Following his declaration of Jesus as the Messiah, Jesus is quick to tell his disciples what his being Messiah actually means: suffering and death. And with that we get the first instance of Jesus predicting his death and resurrection in Luke's gospel. (This will be discussed in more detail in the next study).

This conversation between Jesus and the twelve markedly resembles the previous episode with Herod. The crowd's options for who Jesus could be (Elijah, John the Baptist, prophet of old) are the same, however Herod remains perplexed while the disciples confess Jesus as the Christ. (Green, p. 369)

The similarity between these two episodes raises the question, *What is the difference between Herod and the disciples? Why does Herod not grasp what the disciples do?*

What do you think Luke is saying about discipleship and how it relates to understanding the identity of Jesus?

Reflect on the relationship between understanding who Jesus is and following him. How has following him impacted your understanding of who he is? Try to think about specific examples in your life when this has happened.

Jesus asks us, *Who do you say that I am?* Luke 9:1-22 suggests that in order to adequately answer that you must become a disciple and follow him, go with him and learn from him.

90 STUDY FOURTEEN

As we conclude this study on discipleship read and respond to the following quote by J.I. Packer from *Knowing God*:¹

Now, when the New Testament tells us that Jesus Christ is risen, one of the things it means is that...anyone anywhere can enjoy the same kind of relationship with him as the disciples had in the days of his flesh.

The only differences are that, first his presence with the Christian is spiritual, not bodily, and so invisible to our physical eyes; second, the Christian, building on the New Testament witness, knows from the start those truths about the deity and atoning sacrifice of Jesus which the original disciples grasped only gradually, over a period of years; and, third, that Jesus' way of speaking to us now is not by uttering fresh words, but rather by applying to our consciences those words of his that are recorded in the Gospels, together with the rest of the biblical testimony to himself. *But knowing Jesus Christ still remains as definite a relation of personal discipleship as it was for the Twelve when he was on earth.* The Jesus who walks through the gospel story walks with Christians now, and knowing him involves going with him, now as then.

Sermon Notes

¹ J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 38, emphasis added.

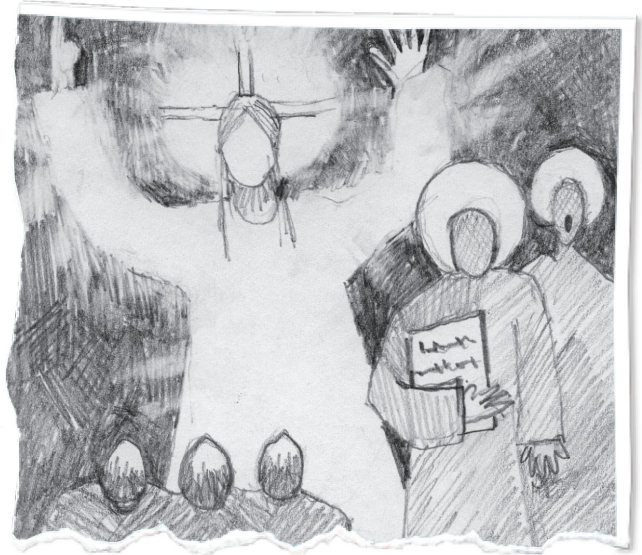
STUDY FIFTEEN: Luke 9:18-36

Follow and Listen

Grab all the glory now. No cross, no wrath, no judgment. Just be all you can be. We are constantly bombarded in our culture by appeals to our native narcissism. The religious version of this message—purveyed for some time by liberals and many evangelicals today—makes God a means to an end rather than the end for whom we exist. In all of its varieties, this is the theology of glory. Yet it is not the glory that the gospel promises up ahead for those who in this life share in Christ's suffering and humiliation. It is the glory that we demand here and now by our own efforts, denying the reality of sin and death.¹

Michael Horton in his book, *Christless Christianity*, fears that American Christianity is slowly losing its centerpiece: Jesus Christ. So called disciples are not sure whom they are following. Horton concludes they end up following themselves and their own desires!

Last week we studied the first few sections of chapter nine, and looked at what they had to say about discipleship and the identity of Jesus. We found that Luke's gospel suggests that you cannot truly understand who Jesus is apart from genuine discipleship. This week we pick up on those same themes, but find Luke saying that we cannot appropriately live as a disciple without properly understanding the identity of Jesus.



Read Luke 9:18-36, and as you do ask these two questions, *what does this say about the identity of Jesus?* AND *what does this say about the nature of discipleship?* Jot down any thoughts, questions or comments that come to mind from reading this section.

Identity of Jesus

Discipleship

¹ Michael Horton, *Christless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2008), 91.

92 STUDY FIFTEEN

As we noted in the previous study, the three episodes in this section (vv. 18-22; 23-27; 28-36)¹ alternate focus between the identity of Jesus and the disciples, and each episode aids in understanding the others.

The Christ Who Must Suffer

In **9:18-22**, we read Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ. Peter's remarkable statement is a major turning point in the gospel as the shadow of the cross begins to loom over the disciples. Following Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Messiah, we get the first instance of Jesus predicting his death and resurrection in Luke's gospel.

Notice verse 21. Following Peter's confession, Jesus *strictly charged and commanded them to tell this to no one*...² Compare this with Luke 4:41, why do you think Jesus does this?

The Greek of verse 21 and 22 is quite interesting. Verse 22 begins with a participle—*eipon* or "saying"—which describes the action previously mentioned in 21. What Jesus says in verse 22 is part of his command to tell no one. How does that help make sense of his command?

Jesus *commanded* the disciples *to tell this to no one, saying* that he must suffer and die. It seems that the disciples' recognition of Jesus as the Christ is still somewhat lacking. In a sense, Jesus' prediction of his death serves to tell them what the title *Christ* actually means! You cannot understand *the Christ* without understanding the cross. Joel Green writes,

The disciples must maintain silence because the Son of Man must suffer and be vindicated...the time for proclaiming openly the messiahship of Jesus will come following the events Jesus has just predicted. (Green, p. 370)

Think about popular conceptions of Jesus in our culture. Who do the people in your life understand Jesus to be? How might their understanding of Jesus be lacking? How do they strike a balance between the cross and Jesus' deity?

¹ See chart in Study 14 for how these episodes fit into the larger section.

² The grammar of this phrase in Greek (which literally means, *But rebuking, he commanded them*) is used to add strength and emphasis to the verb "command". Note: the Greek word for *rebuke* is the same here and in 4:41.

Following *That* Christ

9:23-27 *And he said to all...* Jesus turns from his discussion with the twelve to address all who were following him at that time with some pretty harsh statements. If you want to be a disciple of Jesus you must be willing to deny yourself, take up your cross, lose your life and follow him.

In the ancient world, choosing for Jesus meant certain opposition from people in the world. *Thus, from the beginning, the choice of Jesus had built into it a sense of going a different way...* If we are too comfortable in the world and if no one can tell our lives are different, it may be because we have not taken the full journey of discipleship Christ calls us to take. (Bock, pp. 266-68, emphasis added)

What does it look like for you to deny, to lose, to take up your cross, and to follow? How have you followed Christ by *going a different way*?

It is important to note that this call to take up our cross follows Christ's own prediction that he will do the same. In fact, in taking up our cross we are quite literally following him.

The way he treads is to be the way they must tread....The life must be lost before it can be saved; the suffering must come before the glory. For an exceptional few, there is a glimpse of glory before death, but as a general rule the order is reversed...first the cross, then the crown. (Wilcock, p. 107)

Once again understanding who Jesus is (and the importance of his death) informs our understanding of discipleship. How does your understanding of a crucified Messiah serve as your impetus to take up your cross?

Many people come to Jesus expecting one thing and get another. They don't understand the connection between losing everything to gain Christ. Verse 24 says, *For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.* Compare and contrast this verse with Philippians 3:8-11. How have you applied these verses in your life?

94 STUDY FIFTEEN

9:27 has confused many over the years. What does it mean that some will *see the kingdom of God*? Wilcock offers a few interpretive possibilities: the transfiguration that immediately follows, or later events such as the resurrection, the ascension or Pentecost. (Wilcock, p. 107)

He goes on to explain, *The connection between this saying and what precedes it seems clearest if, whatever it refers to, it is taken as an exception to the rule, "First suffering, then glory."*

Transfiguration

9:28-36 Here, we get what many think is the fulfillment of the promise in 9:27, that some will *not taste death until they see the kingdom of God*. The story of the transfiguration is a marvelous picture of the unveiling of the glory of Christ. This passage plays with two interconnected senses, sight and hearing. This scene is filled with words and phrases that deal with sight ("appearance," "saw," "behold!"), as well as astonishing images. Simultaneously, while the disciples "see" all of these things, we are told of what they "hear" and the command for them to "listen."

List all of the things that the disciples see and hear below:¹

They see:

They hear:

The disciples see but they do not yet perceive what is going on. Look at 9:33. What do you think was going through Peter's mind when he made that request?²

Peter seemed to want to stay with Christ in his glory, but failed to understand what lay ahead for both Jesus and his disciples.

9:35 The disciples, unable to make sense of what they are seeing, hear a voice from the cloud, *"Listen to him!"* While the disciples (and maybe us as readers) are caught up in what they are seeing, God does not want them to miss what is being said: Jesus was speaking about *his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem* (v. 31).

The voice from the cloud makes three statements about the identity of Jesus, which are quite

¹ Much of the imagery draws on Old Testament events specifically with regard to Moses: ascending a mountain, the glowing face, the suggestion to build tents (that is, tabernacles), God's presence being in a cloud. Not only this but the presence of Moses and Elijah with Jesus further serves to imply a *continuity between their work on God's behalf and his own*. (Green, p. 381).

² It's okay if you are confused, the text says that Peter does not know what he is saying!

important. Each of the statements—*This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!* (9:35)—show Jesus to be the fulfillment of *three of the great figures of the Old Testament faith*. (Wilcock, p. 110).

Ponder and respond to what each of these titles means as you read each of the following passages:

This is my Son – Psalm 72; Psalm 2:7-9

My Chosen One – Isaiah 42:1-4; Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Listen to Him! – Deuteronomy 18:15

The story of the transfiguration brings this all together: Jesus is the fulfillment of all that Israel was waiting for; Jesus is indeed the Christ of God that Peter confessed; but that means he is the one who will suffer, die and be raised for God's people.

As disciples, we are called to follow him and to listen to him, especially paying attention to his death and his call for us to come and die. There are many voices in our world. To whom will we listen? As disciples we need to listen—the Messiah *must* suffer and die! And likewise, we must suffer and die, daily. We cannot appropriately live as disciples without properly understanding the identity of Jesus: glory only comes by way of the cross.

As we conclude, read and respond to the following quotation by Dietrich Bonhoeffer on properly understanding discipleship, Jesus, the cross and grace:

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. ... Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all it is *costly* because it cost God the life of his Son: "you were bought with a price," and what cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.¹

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 45. Emphasis his.

96 **STUDY FIFTEEN**

Sermon Notes

STUDY SIXTEEN: Luke 9:37-55

Facing Jerusalem

After the glorious affirmation that took place on the mountain of Jesus' transfiguration, *This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him* (9:35), Jesus comes down the mountain to the reality his all too fallible disciples. As the crowds continue to clamor for Jesus' attention, he is faced with the failure of the nine disciples that had been left behind. Our passage for this study, Luke 9:37-55, is a collection of five stories in which the failings of Jesus' disciples and his response to these deficiencies are highlighted.



It is also in our passage that the focus of Jesus' ministry and of Luke's gospel begins to change. It is in the fifth story, where Jesus is rejected by a Samaritan village (9:51-56), that Luke tells us he has, *set his face to go to Jerusalem* (9:51). *To set ones face* is an Old Testament idiom that means to resolve.¹ This is Luke's way of telling the reader that Jesus was determined, resolved, to carry out the task for which he had come to earth. His mind is fully made up as he looks to the coming cross.

Read Luke 9:37-55. Read this short section in several translations. Before continuing in this study guide take a few notes. Simply read the passage and make some observations. What stands out? What questions about these five stories come to mind? What do you make of Jesus' disciples?

Let's look at our five stories in more detail. Commentator Michael Wilcock observes that each story, *sheds an unfavourable light on Jesus' disciples, and makes plain how deficient they were, even now, in one respect or another.* (Wilcock, p. 111) Darrell Bock points out that, *This is also the first of a series of passages, extending to 9:56, where the disciples need serious correction.* (Bock, p. 277)

¹ Good examples of where this expression can be found are Genesis 31:21; Jeremiah 21:10; 44:12.

98 STUDY SIXTEEN

For each of our five stories answer at least the following three questions.

1. How did the disciples fail? Where were they immature or deficient?
2. How did Jesus respond to them in this failure?
3. How do you see yourself in this story?

Story 1 - The Healing of a Young Boy (9:37-43a)

How did the disciples fail? Where were they immature or deficient?

How did Jesus respond to them in this failure?

How do you see yourself in this story?

In 9:1 Jesus empowered his disciples for ministry; *And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.* Why were the disciples unable to cast out the demon in this boy?¹ What has gone wrong?

Jesus is certainly frustrated with his disciple's lack of faith. Yet his dismay goes beyond his intimate followers to a *faithless and twisted generation* (v. 41). These words of judgment from Jesus sound harsh. Why is Jesus upset at this point in his ministry with those around him?

¹ This story has parallels in Matthew 17:14-21 and Mark 9:14-29.

Story 2 - Jesus Foretells His Coming Death ...Again (9:43b-45)

How did the disciples fail? Where were they immature or deficient?

How did Jesus respond to them in this failure?

How do you see yourself in this story?

Respond to and discuss the observation below.

Granted the cross was a scandalous, offensive thing, against which they instinctively rebelled, this was even the second time Jesus had told them about it, and would by no means be the last. Yet in spite of his obvious willingness to teach them, they were reluctant to ask him (9:45), and did not really begin to understand the cross until after the resurrection (24:25f.) (Wilcock, p. 112)

Besides their own lack of understanding there is an additional reason why the disciples did not grasp what Jesus was saying. *It was concealed from them, so that they might not perceive it* (v. 45). Hendrickson gives us some options for understanding this verse. (Hendrickson, p. 517)

Commentators differ widely on the identity of “the Concealer.” Who or what was he or it? Among the many answers given to this question the follow four stand out.

- a. the apostles' own preconceived ideas
- b. the devil or “the forces of evil”
- c. Jesus
- d. God the Father

100 STUDY SIXTEEN

What are your thoughts on this rather cryptic verse?

Story 3 - The Disciples' Pride (9:46-48)

How did the disciples fail? Where were they immature or deficient?

How did Jesus respond to them in this failure?

How do you see yourself in this story?

In light of the monumental sacrifice Jesus is soon to make on the cross, this is a somewhat humorous passage that finds the disciples involve in a petty argument about who will be greatest in the kingdom. Jesus, *knowing the reasoning of their hearts*, uses an object lesson of a young child. It must have been a bit embarrassing. What is Jesus' point with the object lesson of the young child?

In different ways, at various times, and often only in our own minds, we think about our own *greatness*. Think about yourself and your own self-evaluation. Let the quote below guide your thoughts. How do you measure your *greatness*?

Regarding each disciple's desire to be the greatest, we often like to make distinctions, such as between the lovely and the unlovely, between the gifted and the problem people, between the important people and the rest of humanity. To think this way is a travesty on the image of God in every person to think this way.... By highlighting the value of a child, Jesus raises everyone's stature. If the lowly are to be welcomed in Jesus' name, all are to be welcomed. (Bock, p. 280)

Story 4 - Ministry Jealousy (9:49-50)

How did the disciples fail? Where were they immature or deficient?

How did Jesus respond to them in this failure?

How do you see yourself in this story?

Story 5 - Rejection and Rebuke in a Samaritan Village (9:51-56)

How did the disciples fail? Where were they immature or deficient?

How did Jesus respond to them in this failure?

How do you see yourself in this story?

102 STUDY SIXTEEN

The disciples reacted to rejection the way many of us might; *Let's go get those foolish people!* How is Jesus' reaction different from that of his disciples? What can we learn from this story about our own cultural rejection as Christians?

Gather up your thoughts from this study in Luke 9:37-56. What are one or two simple points of application you can make to your life this week as you live for God?

Sermon Notes

STUDY SEVENTEEN: Luke 9:57-62; 14:25-35

The Cost of Discipleship

Throughout history there have been men and women who have become leaders of many people, influencing even more. In the Gospels we read of such a man. Jesus was powerful, he had command over nature, exercised dominance over demons and spoke with authority. As Jesus traveled, teaching, healing and performing miracles, he encountered people who wanted to associate with him. They wanted to live under his influence and leadership. Luke provides selected dialogue with three such people as he walks along the road towards Jerusalem.

Read Luke 9:57-62. What stands out? What questions come to mind?

9:57-58 While walking along someone said to Jesus, *I will follow you wherever you go*. What was Jesus' response?¹ What do you think his tone was? What was Jesus intending to communicate to this person?



A fox's hole and a bird's nest provide security, stability, comfort and a place to nurture offspring. They are natural habitations. *But the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head* (v. 58). What does that say about the prospect of becoming a disciple of Jesus? What might someone be giving up today?

¹ In the preceding passage, Luke records an incident when Jesus and his disciples had been traveling. They approached a Samaritan village in hope of finding lodging. For an unknown reason Jesus and his party were sent away. They were rejected and homeless.

104 STUDY SEVENTEEN

9:59-60 The process of death and mourning was significant in the Jewish culture. Marshall provides a window into the situation Jesus is addressing in these verses.

Burial of the dead was a religious duty that took precedence over all others, including even the study of the Law... To assist in burying a person who had no claims on one as a relative was a work of love which carried great reward from God both in this life and in the next world. It follows that the burial of a father was a religious duty of the utmost importance. To leave it undone was something scandalous to a Jew. (Marshall, p. 411)

Most likely this person's father was still living, otherwise he or she would have been home making proper arrangements. It is also possible the father had died. Either way, Jesus basically says, *Set aside your supremely important cultural and religious duties, then go do what is more important: proclaim the kingdom of God.* Jesus declares that the dead should be left *to bury their own dead*, meaning that while those who have spiritual insight go proclaim the truth of God's kingdom the spiritually dead can bury the physically dead.

Is there an equivalent in the 21st century? Is there a duty or responsibility so significant as the burial of a family member was then? What is the highest obligation a man or woman carries in our time?

Can one carry out those important tasks and keep the spread of the gospel as the highest priority? Explain.

9:61-62 The third person comes to Jesus and says *I will follow you, Lord, but...*. Conditions. There are other things that are important—more important. Jesus responds using the analogy of a plow, a farming implement familiar to the hearers. Hughes sheds light on Jesus' point.

It was proverbial in ancient culture that one could not look back while plowing and drive a straight furrow. Those who pine after what they left behind, who are always remembering the comforts of home and hearth, who dream about how life might have been had they not stepped onto the road with Jesus, who keep looking in the rearview mirror, will not do well on Jesus' road. (Hughes, 1, p. 374)

Respond to the previous quote. If Hughes were writing with you in mind, how might he customize his statement around the most common distractions you face as a disciple? What do you tend to *pine after*?

Move forward five chapters. Luke includes another very pointed teaching of Jesus regarding discipleship. Read Luke 14:25-35. List the three statements of Jesus which conclude with ...*cannot be my disciple*.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

14:26 In this one sentence, Jesus catches everyone's attention—then and now. If taken literally, Jesus says we must hate everyone who is important to us, including ourselves. The fifth commandment is *Honor your father and your mother*, not hate them. The New Testament teaches on husbands loving their wives and brothers being reconciled to one another. Jesus loves little children—why tell us to hate them? And hate oneself? God created humans in his own image!

Jesus is speaking paradoxically. It is not that we need to hate family and self. Rather we are to love God and hold him so dearly that in comparison our affection towards self and others looks pitiable. It is a matter of degree, allegiance and priority.

Consider the relationships that are dearest to you. In light of verse 26 how would you rank your love and devotion to God in the mix with your closest human relationships?

14:27 Another shocking statement. *Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*¹ In that time to bear one's own cross would be equivalent to carrying an electric chair or holding a syringe containing the lethal solution you will soon be injected with. Ultimately the *cross* is referring to self-denial. For Jesus, that meant denial of many things concluding in physical death. For many people, self-denial means eradicating certain goals, passions or activities from your life—features of your life that are inconsistent with the kingdom of God as well as those that are seemingly harmless.

¹ See also Luke 9:23.

106 STUDY SEVENTEEN

How would you describe self-denial in your life?

14:28-32 The word *cost* is most commonly associated with money. How much must be spent to procure the desired goods? What is the price to acquire a particular service? Then there are other types of cost. Time, energy, reputation and accomplishment. Respond to the following statement.

Virtually every accomplishment in life requires counting the cost. Do you want to be a great violinist? Jascha Jeifitzat at age seventy-five had logged some 102,000 hours of practice! If you want to be an artist, remember that daVinci's anatomically perfect sketches came only after incredible effort—on one occasion he drew a thousand hands! Do you want to be an Olympic champion lifter and set a world record? Your training lifts added together just might equal the weight of the Sears Tower!

Jesus says every would-be disciple must count the cost before he enters discipleship. And what is the cost? Every possession he has and everything he is—every corner of his life. (Hughes, 2, p. 128)

Jesus employs illustrations of counting the cost as building a tower or winning a war (or, if not, negotiating peace). Have you counted the cost of being a disciple of Jesus? What did you consider? If you are a follower of Jesus and have not *counted the cost*, where might you start?

14:33 In this verse Jesus makes his statement unmistakably clear. Unless a person puts Jesus first, higher in priority than everything else, that person cannot be his disciple.

14:34-35 Jesus has instructed the crowd regarding discipleship. He finishes with this, *Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?* Salt is a stable compound which cannot lose its taste or its saltiness unless mixed with tainted salt or other substances. Likewise, if the disciple mixes the wrong things into his or her life, that disciple will become less and less effective.

How is discipleship with you? Ponder the following questions. Does Jesus hold a higher position of importance than everyone else in your life? Are your roles and responsibilities more pressing than the kingdom of God? Do you value your possessions and money appropriately? When *driving the plow* are there distractions that draw you off track? Is your *saltiness* diminished by mixing priorities, activities or anything else into your life that weakens your commitment to follow Christ?

As you consider your answers, what are the desires of your heart? How would you like to grow as a disciple?

Studying Jesus' teachings on discipleship can be encouraging and sobering all at the same time. As Jesus' disciples, we are followers. As followers we are walking along, one step at a time.

Spend some time praying, working through what you have focused on in this study. As you pray, offer yourself to Jesus. Ask him to help you order your priorities and desires, your goals and aspirations. Pray through every component of your life, both large and small—roles, relationships, abilities, possessions, money, thoughts, _____ (you fill in the blank).

May God bless the study of his word!

108 **STUDY SEVENTEEN**

Sermon Notes

STUDY EIGHTEEN: Luke 10:1-24

The Message Seen and Heard



Have you ever considered what would happen if Jesus died and nobody knew? Or, what if Jesus died and rose from the dead and nobody talked about it? The most overwhelmingly significant event EVER and no one said anything about it? What if the disciples were frightened and did not tell anyone? What if current day preachers and missionaries disregarded Paul's exhortation to the Roman church?

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? Romans 10:13-14

This is a clear and direct statement. The message of Jesus must be spread.

Read Luke 10:1-24. Take notes on what stands out to you and any questions that arise.

In the end of Luke 9, Jesus made clear what it takes to follow him. A disciple must set his or her priorities such that the kingdom of God and the message of Jesus take priority above all else. Chapter 10 begins, *After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead...* These people had counted the costs of discipleship and chosen to carry out the mission Jesus placed before them.

10:1-3 Seventy-two people were being sent out in pairs. What are the details of this sending? How will they go? Where will they go? What will it be like?

110 STUDY EIGHTEEN

10:2 Jesus uses the agricultural metaphor of harvest that would have been very familiar to the hearers. Consider what a harvest would be like. For the predominately non-agricultural minds of our day this is harder to grasp. Think through a harvest in terms of size, scope and urgency. What would that have looked like? How does that relate to the kingdom of God? Why were they to pray?

10:3 Although these missionaries must have found some comfort in the fact that Jesus was aware of the danger they would face, it was still danger. Respond to the following quote from Leon Morris. What is he saying?

They go to no easy task. *Lambs in the midst of wolves* are in no enviable situation. The simile points both to danger and to helplessness. God's servants are always in some sense at the mercy of the world, and in their own strength they cannot cope with the situation in which they find themselves. They must look to God. (Morris, pp. 200-201)

10:4-9 Jesus gives clear instructions for these disciples to follow. They were to travel lightly and move quickly because of the urgency of their mission. Once they arrived, if they were welcomed they were to stay, heal and preach. If they were rejected there was a protocol for their departure. Jesus addresses food and sustenance—that they were to be comfortable receiving free meals as missionaries, and were to accept whatever was put before them.

When they entered the host's household, they were to say, *Peace be to this house!* (10:5-6) Peace was a common greeting upon arrival. This *peace*, however, is more than a friendly *hello*.

A greeting on entering a house was a normal practice and the wording of the greeting is also normal. It follows that the special mention of the greeting in this context must convey some deeper sense; the word 'peace' is no longer an empty formality but refers to the peace which is associated with the coming of the salvation of God. 'The greeting which they give on entering a house is not a wish. It is a gift which is either received or rejected as such'. (Marshall, p. 419)

Upon entering the house and offering peace to the occupants, the peace will either be received or rejected. If a person received the peace that the missionaries brought to them, he or she was welcoming the coming salvation of Christ.

STUDIES IN LUKE 111

Fast forward almost two thousand years to your current life situation. Consider the environment(s) in which you spend time. Are there people who have not heard the gospel? Are there people who could use a next installment of the gospel message?

Think through 10:1-9. What are the important points regarding the mission of the seventy-two? What could inform you as you share, or contemplate sharing, the good news of Jesus?

List names of people you know who haven't heard the gospel or could hear it again. Do you feel compelled to bring the message of peace in the gospel of Jesus to any of these people? Explain.

10:10-16 Jesus instructs the seventy-two regarding their response to those who reject them, and ultimately reject him. He then describes the outcome of that rejection with an illustration regarding a town. As he does, he refers to several cities found in scripture. The following note from the ESV Study Bible sheds light on these cities.

Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were the cities in which most of Jesus' miracles were performed, and yet their occupants rejected Jesus' mission and remained unrepentant... **Tyre and Sidon** were Gentile cities in Phoenicia and were often the object of condemnation by OT prophets for their Baal worship and arrogant materialism. **Sodom** was the epitome of a "city of sin." Yet, Jesus says, even Sodom would have repented if it had witnessed his miracles and the reality of his kingdom. (ESV Study Bible, note on Matthew 11:20-24)

How serious was it to reject Jesus? Read verse 16. What does this mean? Give some examples of what this might look like today.

112 STUDY EIGHTEEN

Is it still as serious to reject Jesus as it was when he was walking on Earth? What bearing does this have on whether or not you share the gospel? If you find it difficult to tell others about Jesus, how could you change that?

10:17-20 The seventy-two return. There is no record of their journeys but they come back expressing joy! What were they joyful about? What was Jesus' response?¹

Jesus mentions two things to rejoice in. What are they and what is the difference between them? Why does he mandate one over the other?

Respond to the following quote from Hughes.

At the same time, Jesus moderated his followers' joy: "However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (v. 20). He was not saying they should not rejoice in spiritual power, but that there is a *primary* rejoicing, a rejoicing that takes precedence over it—namely, that their names were inscribed in God's book in heaven.

In considering our own lives, there may be some to whom God has given many gifts. He may have given you influence in the church or power among people. Perhaps your gifts and influence have been used in many ways to thwart Satan and encourage the godly. Is this wrong? Should you not be joyful? Of course you should! We ought to be grateful for the gifts, influence and success God has granted us. But there is a better joy—the joy that our "names are written in heaven." (Hughes, 1, p. 378)

¹ Jesus had given the seventy-two authority over the enemy. The allusion of Satan falling from heaven like lightning signifies that Satan's power had been averted as they cast out demons.

In what do you typically rejoice? What do you think causes you to do so? What would help to keep your primary rejoicing focused on your name being *written in heaven*?

10:21-24 Luke concludes his section on the seventy-two with Jesus rejoicing *in the Holy Spirit* that the Father had revealed much to them. Hughes fleshes out the personal descriptions used by Jesus.

“The wise and learned” were the Christ-rejecting religious establishment of Jesus’ day, and “the little children” in this context were the seventy[-two] disciples—the unlearned fisherman, publicans and common people who had just returned from a successful preaching ministry for Jesus. “Little children” (literally, “infants”) describes those who are childlike and unspoiled by learning, who have listened to Jesus because they haven’t presumed to be wise. They are the humble who are open to being helped and enlightened. For these Jesus offers praise for God’s revelation to them. But in respect to the scribes, Pharisees, priests, and elders... those were the wise and learned in their own eyes, Jesus praised the Father for his hiddenness. (Hughes, 1, p. 383)

What are the characteristics of the two categories of people mentioned? Why did God reveal to some and hide from others?

Look back over verses 1-20. What did the Father reveal to the *little children* and hide from the *wise and understanding*?

Jesus has been in the process of revealing great things to the disciples as they hear his teaching and see his works. There is a sense of excitement as Jesus turns to them privately and says,

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear and did not hear it.
(Luke 10:23-24)

114 **STUDY EIGHTEEN**

As a homegroup pray for one another that you have eyes to see and ears to hear the truth of the kingdom, to see and hear what many great leaders did not! Pray that in turn you would boldly share the peace and salvation you find in the gospel of Christ with those who have yet to see and hear.

Sermon Notes



STUDY NINETEEN: Luke 11:1-13 Praying Jesus' Way

In Luke 11:1-13 Jesus disciples request that he teach them how to pray just like John the Baptist taught his followers. Jesus responds with what has become known as the *Lord's Prayer*, or more correctly, the *Disciple's prayer*. In Luke's gospel we find a deep interest in the importance of prayer. Luke records no fewer than eleven prayers of Jesus in his Gospel, seven of which are only found in this Gospel. In addition, Luke gives us nine of Jesus' teaching on prayer and exhortations to pray.¹

The passage as a whole has three parts: the Disciple's prayer (vv. 1-4), a brief parable on prayer (vv. 5-8) and a two-part exhortation to pray (vv. 9-13).

Read Luke 11:1-13. What stands out to you about Jesus' instructions for prayer? What is confusing? What is encouraging?

The Disciple's Prayer (11:1-4)

The fuller and more frequently used version of this prayer is found in Matthew 6:9-13. Possibly Jesus taught this prayer more than once in slightly different versions or Luke has edited Matthew's record. Compare the difference between the two versions of this prayer. What does Matthew include that Luke leaves out?

¹ The ESV Study Bible has an excellent summary of these prayers of Jesus.

116 STUDY NINETEEN

Notice that the prayer, while it could be prayed privately, is essentially a corporate prayer. This is indicated by the pronouns *us*, *our*, and *we*. What is the point of the church praying together corporately? Many Christians would understand prayer as a private matter between them and God. Why should believers pray together?

The prayer begins with addressing God as *Father*, indicating that we are to approach God with intimacy and trust. When you pray and think of God as *Father* what comes to mind? Why is it important for the Christian to understand the fatherhood of God?

The next part of the prayer, *hallowed be your name*, tells us that the God we are praying to is to be shown reverence because he is in fact almighty God. *Hallowed* means made *holy* or *reverenced*. Gundry's translation of this phrase is helpful: *Father, your name be treated as sacred*. (Gundry, p. 279) For some there is a tension between praying to God as *Father* and at the same time recognizing his holiness. How have you come to a balance in your prayer life?

Respond to this statement by Darrell Bock.

Access that develops close relationship need not destroy respect. So the first address to the Father is the statement that his name be "hallowed," that is, kept holy. God is unique and set apart in character. As we pray to him, we recognize that we are not communicating among peer. Rather we come humbly before a being who is unequaled in the universe. (Bock, p. 309)

What are we practically praying for when we pray, *Your kingdom come*? What does this prayer mean for you personally? Be ready to give some very practical answers to your homegroup.

The next part of the prayer, *give us each day our daily bread*, is about as down to earth as it gets. At a minimum we learn that prayer is intimately connected to daily life. Leon Morris points out that, *Christians live in a state of continual dependence on God*. (Morris, p. 212) What does it mean for you to pray, *give us each day our daily bread*?

Verse 4 addresses sin, forgiveness and temptation. What are we asking when we pray verse 4?

How is God's forgiveness of us to inform our forgiveness of others? (See Ephesians 4:32.) Think of people in your life who you need to forgive. Has the forgiveness you have received from Christ helped you to forgive them? How?

Respond to Bock's insightful summary of this prayer.

The prayer as a whole reflects a disciple's total reliance on God and his care. Whether it be in the circumstances that led to his control of history, the provision of basic needs like food, or spiritual protection, the disciple knows that God's presence is an absolute necessity. That recognition is at the heart of this prayer. Thus the prayer bonds the disciple to God, recognizing that the affairs of life are often a matter in which we either walk alone or walk with our hand in his hand. The disciple's prayer acknowledges that our hand needs to be in his hand. (Bock, p. 310)

A Brief Parable on Prayer (11:5-8)

This short parable on the friend asking for bread at midnight is meant to be humorous. As you read this parable picture the scene in your mind. What was taking place in this story? What is funny about it? What is the point of the parable?

118 STUDY NINETEEN

Verse 8 has a Greek term that is very important to understanding this passage, but rather difficult to translate in English. This is the only place in the New Testament that this word shows up. The ESV translates the word (*anaideian*) *impudence*, which means a lack of sensitivity to what is proper. Consider the various translations of this word below.

impudence (ESV)
boldness (NIV)
audacity (NIV 2010)
persistence (NAS)
shameless audacity (TNIV)
shameless persistence (NLT)
importunity (KJV)

Gundry gives us some help in understanding this unusual word and a pastoral encouragement on how the Christian should pray.

Audacity consists in shameless boldness. The audacity to which Jesus here refers shows itself in asking a friend in the middle of the night to loan him three loaves of bread, this at the cost of rousing the friend from bed, waking up his little children, and opening the door. . . . Friendship won't bring the desired result. Audacity will. So pray with an audacity born of confidence that God will answer your prayers. For such audacity is a virtue. It pleases God. He is not like the sleeping friend. He never sleeps. (Gundry, p. 280)

Do you have the virtue of audacity in your prayer life? What have you prayed for with shameless audacity or persistence?¹

An Exhortation to Pray - in two parts (11:9-13)

So as to make sure his point is not missed Jesus uses three verbs, *ask*, *seek*, and *knock*, to highlight the need for persistent prayer. In verse 10 what is the threefold answer to these three requests?

asks:

seeks:

knocks:

¹ The parable in Luke 18:1-8 also prompts the prayer to be persistent.

STUDIES IN LUKE 119

After Jesus encourages his followers to *ask*, *seek* and *knock*, he gives an illustration that shows how God would like to answer our prayers. What is the point of the illustration?

In verse 13 there is a rather surprising and abrupt statement about the *Holy Spirit*. Why does Jesus add this gift of the Holy Spirit in a teaching on prayer?

In this study we have looked at the teaching of Jesus on prayer from several perspectives. What are one or two take home points for you? What lessons will you incorporate into your prayer life this week?

As a homegroup practice praying together the disciples prayer from 11:2-4.

120 **STUDY NINETEEN**

Sermon Notes

STUDY TWENTY: Luke 11:14-26

The New Demons



Jesus came announcing salvation and the kingdom of God, healing the sick and casting out demons. Remarkably, Luke 11:14 tells the miracle of casting out a demon in only a single verse.¹ In Matthew, Mark and here in Luke, all three gospels consistently show the conflict between Jesus and the forces of evil as he often expelled demons. The issue is the authority of Jesus and the presence of his kingdom.

Read Luke 11:14-26. What stands out to you? What are the issues between Jesus and his critics? What are the questions you have of this story?

Some of Jesus' critics claimed that he cast out demons by *Beelzebul*. Who is this *Beelzebul*? It seems clear that Jesus sees *Beelzebul* as Satan. Yet why this name?

Our best understanding of the evidence seems to be that the Jews took this name of a heathen god and understood it in terms of the similar sounding Hebrew, 'lord of the dung'. They applied it to a prominent demon, perhaps Satan himself. Jesus clearly understood it to refer to Satan. (Morris, p. 215)

What is the response of Jesus to those who claim he performed this miracle by the power of *Beelzebul*?

¹ The parallels to our passage are found in Matthew 12:22-30, and Mark 3:22-27.

122 STUDY TWENTY

It seems there were two groups of critics. In verse 16 what does the second group want to see from the miracle working Jesus?

Does anyone dispute the validity of the miracle? What is the proof that the demon has indeed been cast out (v. 14)?

In verse 20 Jesus makes his case: *But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.* Commentator Bock says: *[T]his is one of the most crucial statements of his ministry.* (Bock, p. 318) What is so important about what Jesus says in this verse? What does it tell us about his ministry?

Jesus uses an Old Testament phrase, *the finger of God*, from Exodus 8:19. What would come to mind for Jews familiar with the Old Testament when Jesus uses this phrase?

Jesus goes on to emphatically make his point by telling a short parable. What is his point in this parable? (vv. 21-22)

Stop for a moment and think about your trust in Jesus and your walk of faith. What comfort do you find from this miracle of Jesus and his exchange with his critics? Do Christians have anything to fear from Satan and demons?

STUDIES IN LUKE 123

Read 1 John 4:4. What comfort do you find from this verse?

C.S. Lewis wrote an insightful fictional look at how Satan and demons might attack and derail Christians called *The Screwtape Letters*. In the preface to the book Lewis says this about the demonic.

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight. (*The Screwtape Letters*, p. 3)

Into which error do you tend to fall?

In Luke 11:24-26 Jesus adds a short story about the return of an *unclean spirit* (*evil spirit* NIV) to an empty *house*. Make sure you see the details of this story.

What does the *house* stand for in the story?

What shape was the *house* in when the unclean spirit returned?

What does the unclean spirit bring with it when it returns?

Why is the unclean spirit described as wandering through *waterless places seeking rest*?

The curious reference, *waterless places* (*arid place*, NIV), is probably making use of the imagery found in the Bible where the desert is a place where demons dwell.

Demons were often associated with waterless places, apparently because deserts were thought of as being devoid of the blessing of God that came with rainfall and abundant crops (cf. Isaiah 13:19-22; 34:13-14; Jeremiah 17:6, 22:6; 50:12; 51:43; Zephaniah 2:13; Malachi 1:3) (ESV Study Bible note, p. 1846)

124 STUDY TWENTY

There is an obvious and very important lesson for the Christian in this short story. As Leon Morris says, *When anyone gets rid of an evil spirit but puts nothing in its place, he is in grave moral danger. No-one can live for long in a moral vacuum.* (Morris, p. 217)

There is a tendency for Christians to *clean house*, live moral lives, and avoid sin. As good as that may be there is spiritual danger if that is all we do. What happens when we don't then fill our lives? What is the danger that Jesus is pointing out?

It is one thing to point out that an empty house is a danger to the Christian, but it is another thing to say we must fill this house. With what should the believer fill his or her life?

Apply this story of Jesus to *your* life. Is your house swept clean? What is filling it?

Sermon Notes