

Jesus is relational, the Church is doctrinal

Week of September 12, 2021

Welcome to week one of Jesus vs. Christianity! In this series we will look at some of the ways the Church has gotten it wrong by drifting from the teachings of Jesus. Each week we will explore a teaching of Jesus that the Church today has failed to live out. Our discussion guides will include a story from the Gospel of Luke where this same pattern plays out between Jesus and those around him throughout his earthly ministry.

Series Scripture Reading Plan:

As we explore the teachings and work of Jesus during this 5 week sermon series, we invite you to spend time reading through the Gospel of Luke. Maybe you have never read a Gospel all the way through before. Or, maybe you have but it's been a long time. No matter your background, we believe there is opportunity for fresh perspective on Jesus when we take time to read scripture. Follow the plan outlined to connect directly with the text and, through it, with Jesus himself.

Luke is a book characterized by careful attention to detail and an underlying tone of joy. While Luke likely did not know Jesus personally, he was a dedicated convert in the early church who accompanied Paul on mission trips. Luke recognized the need for a carefully researched account of the life of Christ. The book includes many familiar stories found in the other Gospels. However, it uniquely focuses on relationships and character descriptions making it a very approachable book.

Week 1: 1-6

Week 2: 7-11

Week 3: 12-16

Week 4: 17-20

Week 5: 21-24

Opening Prayer:

God, we know that there is much that the church has done, and left undone, that is in direct opposition to the vision and teachings of Jesus. We ask that you would open our hearts and minds to the example Jesus gives through his way of welcoming those he encountered during his earthly ministry. Lead us to a deeper understanding of you and the importance you place on relationship as you invite us to fully grasp that we belong, both to you, and to each other. In Jesus' name, amen.

Historical Context:

This section explains where the passage we are about to read lives in the Bible and how it fits into the overall story of God working in our world.

Luke's vignettes on Jesus and the Sabbath (see also 13:10-17) demonstrate the legalism Jesus opposed. Jews of his day observed very strict rules governing what could be done on the

Sabbath. Religious leaders became furious at Jesus for “breaking” the traditions. His crime? Healing people on the Sabbath. Jesus refused to let traditions interfere with compassion for needy people.

Read Aloud:

Luke 6:1-19 (CEB)

Activities on the Sabbath

6 One Sabbath, as Jesus was going through the wheat fields, his disciples were picking the heads of wheat, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. 2 Some Pharisees said, “Why are you breaking the Sabbath law?”

3 Jesus replied, “Haven’t you read what David and his companions did when they were hungry? 4 He broke the Law by going into God’s house and eating the bread of the presence, which only the priests can eat. He also gave some of the bread to his companions.” 5 Then he said to them, “The Human One is Lord of the Sabbath.”

6 On another Sabbath, Jesus entered a synagogue to teach. A man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 The legal experts and the Pharisees were watching him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. They were looking for a reason to bring charges against him. 8 Jesus knew their thoughts, so he said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” He got up and stood there. 9 Jesus said to the legal experts and Pharisees, “Here’s a question for you: Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” 10 Looking around at them all, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he did and his hand was made healthy. 11 They were furious and began talking with each other about what to do to Jesus.

Jesus chooses apostles

12 During that time, Jesus went out to the mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night long. 13 At daybreak, he called together his disciples. He chose twelve of them whom he called apostles: 14 Simon, whom he named Peter; his brother Andrew; James; John; Philip; Bartholomew; 15 Matthew; Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus; Simon, who was called a zealot; 16 Judas the son of James; and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Jesus’ popularity increases

17 Jesus came down from the mountain with them and stood on a large area of level ground. A great company of his disciples and a huge crowd of people from all around Judea and Jerusalem and the area around Tyre and Sidon joined him there. 18 They came to hear him and to be healed from their diseases, and those bothered by unclean spirits were healed. 19 The whole crowd wanted to touch him, because power was going out from him and he was healing everyone.

Engaging Scripture:

Let's pause before we think about how this passage makes us feel or how it applies to our context. This section can help ground your group in talking about what is written and consider its impact on the original audience.

1. In verses 1-5, the disciples of Jesus were accused of violating Sabbath law by picking grain and eating it. This act was viewed by Pharisees as forbidden work. What powerful truth does Jesus share about the Sabbath in verse 5?
2. The next section of verses highlights a different Sabbath when Jesus chose to heal a man with a "withered hand" instead of following the traditional Jewish law that forbade it. The Pharisees were enraged and Jesus spoke with wisdom and authority but, in the background, the man had been miraculously healed! What range of emotions do you think the healed man might have experienced because Jesus chose relationship over doctrine? In what ways was his life instantly changed?

Application Questions:

In the sermon this week, Pastor Miofsky preached that Jesus is relational, while the Church universal, is doctrinal. Many churches use "what we believe" statements as a litmus test for those who may visit or join. These statements of belief often feel like the setup for a "believe, behave, belong" model of fellowship. In essence, some churches reward "right" belief and behavior with belonging. In the Gospels we see that Jesus ordered his ministry in the opposite direction (belong, behave, believe). The Gathering purposes to be a church that follows this model. We are first welcomed wholeheartedly (no asterisk), then invited to orient our lives around the transforming power of Jesus, and lastly we are each encouraged to wrestle with and discover our beliefs over time.

1. The magnitude of Jesus coming down from the mountain to be with the people from near and far should not be missed. The scene must have been amazing; people with hope, Jesus with eager love. Jesus *still* meets us right where we are, no matter what, and chooses a relationship with us. How does this physical example of Jesus' choice to be with his people make you feel? Do you pattern your relationships from the model of belonging we find with Jesus?
2. In the reading, we see Jesus meeting, healing, and teaching. He uses his gifts to build relationships despite the Sabbath. Talk about a time where you felt comfortable breaking with tradition to use your gifts, build relationships, and/or meet the needs of others.
3. The author, Luke, takes time to note the naming of the disciples. Name and share your key relationships? How do you prioritize these relationships in your life? Say more about them if you would like.
4. We see the Pharisees questioning, testing, and attempting to pass judgement on Jesus in the scripture above. How do you work through situations where you are using your gifts or behaving as Jesus had while others disagree or discourage you?

Closing Prayer:

God, we often get so focused on "right" belief and "right" behavior that we forget to pursue relationships with the grace and radical kindness of Jesus. Our hearts can lose focus and we

miss opportunities. Forgive us, oh Lord! Help us to be people who welcome others with your unwavering message of belonging. Show us specific ways to love the people you surround us with. Grant us the calling to inspire your hope at times when it is needed most. In your name we pray, Lord, amen.

Taking it Further:

Check these out to take the heart of the sermon and our discussion further this week.

- The Gospel of Luke, by Bible Project, 2016 September
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIb_dClxzo
- Participation is the Only Way, by Fr. Richard Rohr, 2021 September
<https://cac.org/participation-is-the-only-way-2021-09-10/>
- Making Sense of Belonging, by Dr. Kelly-Ann Allen, 2019 June
<https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2019/june/making-sense-of-belonging>

THE GOSPEL OF

Luke

supplemental, guided readings
through Jesus vs Christianity

week 1 Luke chapters 1-6

week 2 Luke chapters 7- 11

week 3 Luke chapters 12-14

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A guided reading

“Here’s a question for you: Is it legal on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” Looking around at them all, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” So he did and his hand was made healthy.

Luke 6: 9-11

relational

How can you do good and create life this week?

Are you willing to do good at any cost?

Where can you build relationships ? Perhaps with people who may be needing Christ-like love.

