

# **The Gospel of Luke**

## **By Dr. R. Wade Paschal Jr.**

Lessons:

Lesson 1 The Mission of Jesus

Lesson 2 The Two Boys-John and Jesus

Lesson 3 Son of God and Lord (Luke 1-5, 10)

Lesson 4 The Teachings of Jesus

Lesson 5 The Lost and The Compassion of God (Luke 10, 15)

Lesson 6 To Follow Jesus

Lesson 7 The Last Supper and Arrest of Jesus

Lesson 8 The Resurrection and Ascension

In this course we will be looking at the unique vision of the gospel that we find in Luke. Of course, much of Luke's material is also found in the other two "Synoptic" gospels (Matthew and Mark—so called because they all share the same overall "look"). Each gospel, however, has its own tone and approach to Jesus. Looking at the special emphases in a gospel helps us to understand what that writer considered especially important about the message of Jesus.

## **Lesson 1:**

### **The Mission of Jesus**

In this lesson we want to look at the Mission of Jesus as set out in Mary's Magnificat of c. 1 and in Jesus' opening sermon in Luke 4. These passages set the mission of Jesus in the context of God's covenant with Israel in the OT and the promises of God to save and to redeem God's people.

- Question: What does Luke tell us his purpose in writing in Luke 1:1-4?

We start looking at the Luke's own explanation of his work:

#### **Luke 1:1-4 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> *Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,*

<sup>2</sup> *just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,*

<sup>3</sup> *it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,*

<sup>4</sup> *that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

Luke tells us at the beginning what the gospel is about: the development of a narrative of “the things that have happened” based on the testimony of eyewitnesses and “ministers of the word”—to make an “orderly account”. For the most part Luke's chronology follows that of Mark: beginning with the ministry of John the Baptist going on to the entrance into Jerusalem, the trial and crucifixion of Jesus and the resurrection. Luke is not adding much to this basic order of Mark's gospel. Instead, Luke is seeking to put together a more thoughtful story of Jesus. Luke adds the longest account of the birth of Jesus along with the story of the Baptist's conception and birth, and sections on the teachings of Jesus. The simple and relatively artless form of Mark's gospel is now filled out with greater content and significance.

At the same time note Luke claims to be operating from firm historical ground—based on “those who were from the beginning eyewitnesses and ministers of the word”. We do not know if “Theophilus” is a specific person or represents an imagined readership for the gospel—the name “Theophilus” means “lover of God.” While Luke could be referring to a specific person with that name, the name could also apply to people everywhere who are truly seeking God (or

both). Either way, Luke assumes that the reader (or readers) have experienced some version of the gospel (whether that includes the written version we call Mark we do not know), and he now wants to add to their previous exposure to the story of Jesus some newer material that he has confirmed from reliable sources. Luke doesn't think that he will change what Theophilus has heard as much as help him to a deeper, more certain faith.

When we say "Luke" we have to recognize that neither the gospel nor its sequel, the Book of Acts, ever explicitly names its writer. The tradition that names "Luke" the companion of Paul in Acts as the author of the gospel is very old. By the end of the second century most writings ascribe the gospel to Luke—and the tradition goes back earlier than that. No one else is credited as the author of the gospel. Scholars have cast doubt on the tradition. Some argue that the tradition of Luke as author comes from the so-called "we narratives" that we find in the book of Acts (Acts 16:10 and 20:6 the action in the book of Acts is narrated as if the author were there among Paul's companions—by this point Luke has been mentioned in the gospel). While it is possible that the tradition of Luke as author comes from reading of Acts itself, the tradition is old enough and universal enough to be taken seriously.

### **The Messiah comes to reverse the order of the world.**

- Questions: Looking at Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) how does she describe the mission of her son? Who will he help? Who will he threaten? How does this fit with the OT expectations of the Messiah?

The purpose of the coming of Jesus is first set up in Mary's Song (called the Magnificat) in Luke 1:

#### **Luke 1:46-55 (ESV)**

<sup>46</sup> *And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord,*

<sup>47</sup> *and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,*

<sup>48</sup> *for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;*

<sup>49</sup> *for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.*

<sup>50</sup> *And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.*

<sup>51</sup> *He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;*

<sup>52</sup> *he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;*

<sup>53</sup> *he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.*

<sup>54</sup> *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,*  
<sup>55</sup> *as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”*

Mary’s song emphasizes that what is about to happen is the story of salvation—and that God is the savior.

She praises God for acting in power and consistently with God’s holy nature.

The song echoes many OT themes and verses, especially the Song of Hannah in I Samuel 2:

**1 Samuel 2:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> *And Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the LORD; my horn is exalted in the LORD. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in your salvation.*

<sup>2</sup> *“There is none holy like the LORD: for there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.*

We also hear echoes of the prophet Isaiah in Mary’s song:

**Isaiah 61:10 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

If you look at the cross-references you will see many links to the prophets and even more to the Psalms. Mary sees the promise of her baby as a fulfillment of the OT promises of God to Israel.

In particular Mary highlights the reversal of status and fortune for many people in the world. Those who are benefitting from the present world order will find themselves in trouble. Those who are oppressed now will find that they are to be blessed.

<sup>51</sup> *He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;*

<sup>52</sup> *he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;*

<sup>53</sup> *he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.*

<sup>54</sup> *He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,*

<sup>55</sup> *as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”*

The “proud” and the “mighty” are humbled, the “rich” sent away empty. But hungry are filled and Israel receives mercy. This is not about human effort or revolt for it is God working God’s plan.

Salvation and redemption will come through the House of David, as prophesied in the OT (Is 9). And this means God will reverse the fortunes of people. God will lift up those who are oppressed. God will humble those who are rich and powerful now.

### **Jesus gives us his own vision from the OT.**

- Questions: What does Jesus quote when he describes his own mission? Why do the people in Nazareth reject him? To whom does Jesus compare himself—and why?

We see these themes continued when Jesus announces the purpose of his own ministry in chapter 4. After his temptation in the desert, Luke tells us that Jesus came back to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit.” This is a mark of empowerment from God in the OT (see Bezalel in Exodus 28, 31; the elders in Numbers 11; Joshua, Dt 34; various judges in the book of Judges like Gideon, Judges 6; Saul, I Sam 11; David, 2 Sam 23:2; Elisha, 2 Kgs 2:15 and prophets). Anointed with the Spirit, Jesus comes back to his home town of Nazareth:

#### **Luke 4:14-30 (ESV)**

***<sup>14</sup> And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and a report about him went out through all the surrounding country.***

***<sup>15</sup> And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.***

***<sup>16</sup> And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read.***

***<sup>17</sup> And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,***

***<sup>18</sup> “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,***

***<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”***

***<sup>20</sup> And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.***

***<sup>21</sup> And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”***

***<sup>22</sup> And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?”***

***<sup>23</sup> And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.”***

- <sup>24</sup> *And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown.*
- <sup>25</sup> *But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land,*
- <sup>26</sup> *and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.*
- <sup>27</sup> *And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”*
- <sup>28</sup> *When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath.*
- <sup>29</sup> *And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff.*
- <sup>30</sup> *But passing through their midst, he went away.*

Why did Jesus go to this passage to describe his ministry? One key reason might be role of the Spirit in Isaiah’s prophecy. Luke frequently emphasizes the role of the Spirit in his commentary in the gospel—note that here Jesus returns to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit.” Here Isaiah promises that the servant will come in the Spirit of the Lord (Is 61:1).

Over and over again in Luke people do what they do because the Spirit leads or empowers them. Luke 1 mentions the Spirit in reference to John’s ministry (1:15), the impregnation of Mary (1:35), Elizabeth’s recognition of the Messiah in Mary’s womb (1:41), and Zechariah’s prophetic words after the birth of John (1:67). Simeon recognizes the promise of God in the Christ child (2:25-27) and prophesies over him in the Spirit. The Spirit descends on Jesus in his baptism (3:22) and he battles the devil in the wilderness in the Spirit (4:1). Luke is above all the Spirit-empowered gospel—the ministry and life of Jesus is Spirit led and filled from start to finish.

Jesus begins to read from Isaiah 61—but note the Lucan version differs somewhat from the Hebrew text:

**Isaiah 61:1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> **The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**

<sup>2</sup> **to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor,** and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

While Isaiah 61 dominates this reading, Luke 4 includes language from two other passages in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 42:7 (ESV)**

<sup>7</sup> ***to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.***

**Isaiah 58:6 (ESV)**

<sup>6</sup> ***“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?”***

Further, Jesus leaves out the reference to a “day of vengeance” that we see in Isaiah 61. In this way Jesus emphasizes the healing and redeeming nature of his mission. He comes not primarily for judgment and wrath, but to save. This is not unlike the emphasis in the gospel of John (see 3:16-17): Jesus’ primary purpose is salvation, not judgment. Judgment comes as a by-product of refusing God’s salvation.

Further, the words lifted up from Isaiah point to the key elements of Jesus’ ministry— healing and redeeming. “Salvation” will come in very concrete ways, making what is broken in human life well and whole.

#### **How Jesus defines his own mission.**

Why does John the Baptist send messengers to Jesus? What question do they ask? How does Jesus answer? How does this answer connect with Jesus’ words in Luke 4?

When John the Baptist is imprisoned, he sends disciples to check with Jesus and verify the purpose of his ministry. Jesus answers John’s questions with words that echo Luke 4 and Isaiah 61:

**Luke 7:18-23 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> ***The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John,***

<sup>19</sup> ***calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”***

<sup>20</sup> ***And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’”***

<sup>21</sup> ***In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight.***

<sup>22</sup> ***And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.***

<sup>23</sup> ***And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”***

The “coming one” seems to be messianic term here. The prophets often speak (cf Isaiah 59:20; Daniel 9:25, Zechariah 9:9, Malachi 3:1,2) of one promised to come to Israel. John asks if Jesus is indeed this expected “Messiah” or “Coming one”—and Jesus answer with words much like the words of Luke 4, “The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news preached to them.”

In other words, Jesus defines his mission not in terms of national liberation, but in terms of healing the brokenness of the world. He reaches out to the wounded and the poor rather than to the rich and powerful. He brings healing and wholeness to those who receive him. He comes first to bless. Those who are offended by him are the ones who miss the blessing.

But, Jesus sees his mission as mission even broader than the one Isaiah envisioned for the Servant of the Lord. Jesus goes on to make connections with two key OT stories: Elijah’s healing of the son of the widow of Zarephath and Elisha’s healing of the Syrian general, Naaman. In both of these stories the prophet heals a non-Jew. Jesus underlines not only his mission to make whole what is broken, but seems to suggest that this mission will extend beyond Israel to the world.

The idea that God would go outside Israel and bring salvation to the Gentiles offends the people of Nazareth, and they try (unsuccessfully) to attack Jesus. This is the first rejection of many that will follow. The temple hierarchy will reject Jesus. They will further reject and attack the new church in Acts. As Mary’s Magnificat suggested, the rich and the powerful and those who consider themselves “in” with God miss the point of Jesus’ coming.

Jesus comes to bless and to heal those who know they are in need and who confess their woundedness (and repent) are those who receive the blessing.

### **Summary:**

- The early chapters of Luke describe the mission of Jesus as a fulfillment of OT prophecies and hope for a Messiah, the Son of David, who would bring salvation and redemption to Israel. Jesus comes in the power of the Spirit bringing the salvation of God to people.
- The passages tend to think of this salvation in terms of healing and the liberation of the oppressed rather than purely nationalistic terms. While Jesus is the Son of David and Messiah, his ministry is not so much about restoring national power as it is creating a people of God. It is not a judgment as much as a coming of God’s redemption—judgment comes to those who refuse God’s blessing.

- The salvation reverses the standing of those who are suffering and oppressed. The broken and wounded are healed—the privileged, the powerful and the wealthy will find their status emptied.
- Luke also links Jesus with OT non-Jewish figures such as Naaman and the widow of Zarephath—indicating that God’s salvation will eventually go out to those outside the Jewish nation.

## Lesson 2

### The Lord and the Baby.

- Questions: What does the angel promise Mary? Who does Elizabeth say that Jesus is? What is the key actor in this passage?

#### Luke 1:35-45 (ESV)

<sup>35</sup> *And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.*

<sup>36</sup> *And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.*

<sup>37</sup> *For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

<sup>38</sup> *And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.*

<sup>39</sup> *In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah,*

<sup>40</sup> *and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.*

<sup>41</sup> *And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit,*

<sup>42</sup> *and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!*

<sup>43</sup> *And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

<sup>44</sup> *For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.*

<sup>45</sup> *And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”*

#### The Two Boys

While all four gospels cover in some ways the relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist, Luke has a unique amount of material covering their birth, early life and ministry. The relationship between the Baptist and the Christ is, if anything, even more significant to Luke than it was to the other gospels.

Only Luke highlights the physical relationship between John and Jesus. Elizabeth, the mother of John, is Mary’s “relative”—the exact relationship is not given.

Normally, Mary as the younger woman would honor her older relative—but the roles are reversed here. Elizabeth (the elder and married woman) calls Mary (younger and unmarried) blessed. And then Elizabeth goes on to recognize the unborn Jesus as “Lord”. Even the Baptist in her womb rejoices over the coming of Jesus. Elizabeth honors Mary’s obedience to the word of the angel—a foretaste of the faith that God seeks among people toward his son. Note that Elizabeth speaks “filled with the Spirit.” Elizabeth’s insight comes not from her own knowledge, but through the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is always the empowering presence of God in the story of Jesus.

### **The Messiah and His Prophet.**

- Questions: Who does Zechariah say his son will be? What will he do? Who is the “horn of salvation” God is sending? What will he do?

Zechariah’s song after the birth of John focuses not just on his son, but also on the Lord for which his son’s prophetic ministry will prepare:

#### **Luke 1:67-79 (ESV)**

*<sup>67</sup> And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,  
<sup>68</sup> “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people  
<sup>69</sup> and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,  
<sup>70</sup> as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
<sup>71</sup> that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;  
<sup>72</sup> to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,  
<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us  
<sup>74</sup> that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,  
<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.  
<sup>76</sup> And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to  
prepare his ways,  
<sup>77</sup> to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,  
<sup>78</sup> because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high  
<sup>79</sup> to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the  
way of peace.”*

Zechariah (again, under the filling of the Spirit) sees the coming of one from David’s house (v69) who will save the nation from its enemies and fulfill the promise to Abraham (v73)—

ultimately to allow the nation to serve God in “holiness and righteousness” as God originally intended.

V76 shifts from this Davidic figure to John who Zechariah claims will be a prophet who will “go before the Lord” to prepare his ways. His son will bring a “knowledge of salvation” through the forgiveness of sins. John’s special call will be to bring people to repentance as preparation for the salvation of God that is coming. Verse 79 echoes Isaiah 9—

**Isaiah 9:2 (ESV)**

*<sup>2</sup> The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.*

John’s ministry will be the dawn of the redemption that God is bringing through Christ.

**The work of the Baptist.**

- Questions: According to John who needs to repent? What does “repentance” look like? What is not enough for John?

**Luke 3:3-18 (ESV)**

*<sup>3</sup> And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

*<sup>4</sup> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

*<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways,*

*<sup>6</sup> and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”*

*<sup>7</sup> He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*

*<sup>8</sup> Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.*

*<sup>9</sup> Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

*<sup>10</sup> And the crowds asked him, “What then shall we do?”*

*<sup>11</sup> And he answered them, “Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise.” (Is 58:7)*

*<sup>12</sup> Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”*

*<sup>13</sup> And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”*

*<sup>14</sup> Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”*

<sup>15</sup> *As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ,*

<sup>16</sup> *John answered them all, saying, “I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

<sup>17</sup> *His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

<sup>18</sup> *So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people.*

Like Matthew and Mark, Luke tells us that John comes preaching a baptism for the repentance of sin. And like Matthew and Mark, Luke sees this is a fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah:

**Isaiah 40:3-5 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> *A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

<sup>4</sup> *Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.*

<sup>5</sup> *And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

But unlike Matthew and Mark, both of whom are content to quote Is 40:3, Luke includes verses 4 and 5 from Isaiah 40. For Matthew and Mark it is enough to note that John’s ministry in the desert was preparation for Jesus’ coming. While all three gospels tell us that the Baptist used water baptism as a sign of repentance, Luke goes further to emphasize that this call to repentance is itself a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of preparation.

Luke quotes the words of John chastising the people—warning them not to trust their birthright as heirs of Abraham. The Princeton Seminary NT professor Bruce Metzger once suggested that it was as if John excommunicated the whole nation of Israel and allowed them back into the covenant of Abraham through repentance.

Luke then goes on to describe what “repentance” looks like. This is a time of decision—the “ax” is ready to cut down any unfruitful tree (cf similar OT images, *Jer 17:8; Is 5*).

Those who have possessions will share with those who have nothing (v11, after Is 58:7)

And those who have power will no longer use that power to oppress those who have no power.

Tax-collectors will only collect their rightful taxes.

Soldiers will not abuse citizens.

John calls people not only to acknowledge their sin, but to real and costly obedience—no longer getting what they can for selfish reasons, but to care for others and to practice righteous living.

### **The Messiah and Lord is Born.**

- Questions: To whom does the angel announce the coming of the Messiah? How does this fit with the “reversal” theme we saw last week? Who is the Messiah according to the angel? What is the result of the coming of the “Savior who is Christ the Lord”?

On the other side of these early chapters, Luke spends extensive time laying out the birth and childhood of Jesus (especially compared to the other gospels. John and Mark tell us nothing about either. Matthew tells the story of Jesus’ birth, but emphasizing a very different set of events).

**Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)**

*<sup>8</sup> And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

*<sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.*

*<sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

*<sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

*<sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”*

*<sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

*<sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

The angels announce the birth of Jesus to the most unlikely of people: shepherds. This illustrates further the theme of God reaching out to the lowly and bypassing the people with power and wealth. King David, of course, had been a shepherd, so the image of shepherd is often connected to God’s working Israel (see Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Zechariah). But, this is not an announcement to the power structure, but to the ordinary people of Israel.

It is, however, “good news” and “Tidings of great joy that will be for all people.” A Savior is coming, the Christ and Lord. “Savior” was a title kings often claimed—they “saved” people by providing security and protection from enemy armies. The Messiah as Son of David will be a “King”—but he is also, “Lord.” While “Lord” can be a title of honor, it is also the title applied to God in Exodus 3. This is not just a political savior, but God’s savior.

But, again he is not found in the palace, but in a manger (probably, not the barn lean-to of most nativity scenes, but the bottom floor of a normal house that served as hold for animals in a typical house, and the guest room when needed).

What follows in v14 is a heavenly celebration—many angels join in praising God. This savior will reveal God’s “glory”—not just God’s honor, but God’s presence. They celebrate God’s “peace.” Peace goes beyond the mere absence of conflict and war—God’s peace will mean that the earth is put right for those who serve God and all is as it should be.

### **The Messiah is Presented in The Temple: the Prophets recognize him.**

- Questions: Why do Jesus’ parents take him to the temple after birth? What is Luke saying about Mary and Joseph? Why is this important? Who meets them in the temple, and what do these two people tell us?

On the eighth day after Jesus’ birth his parents take him to the temple for circumcision in accordance with the law (Genesis 17:10; Lev 12:3), to offer sacrifices for Mary’s purification (Lev 12:8) and to dedicate Jesus as firstborn (Ex 34:19; Lev 27:26). It is important to Luke that the parents of Jesus are obedient to the Law—honorable and righteous people. The offering of two turtledoves also suggests that they are too poor to offer a lamb as a sacrifice (Lev 12:6) and so make the offering of two turtledoves.

In the temple they meet two different but significant people.

### **Luke 2:22-38 (ESV)**

<sup>22</sup> *And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord*

<sup>23</sup> *(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”)*

<sup>24</sup> *and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.”*

<sup>25</sup> *Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous*

*and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.*

<sup>26</sup> *And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

<sup>27</sup> *And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law,*

<sup>28</sup> *he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,*

<sup>29</sup> *"Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word;*

<sup>30</sup> *for my eyes have seen your salvation*

<sup>31</sup> *that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*

<sup>32</sup> *a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."*

<sup>33</sup> *And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him.*

<sup>34</sup> *And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed*

<sup>35</sup> *(and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."*

<sup>36</sup> *And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin,*

<sup>37</sup> *and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day.*

<sup>38</sup> *And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.*

Simeon under the power of the Spirit recognizes the Christ child in the arms of Mary and Joseph (much as Elizabeth in c. 1 recognized Jesus in the womb of Mary). The Spirit had already told Simeon he would see the "consolation" of Israel. The word is "paraklesis" (the same word used in John for the Spirit). Simeon has been guided in the Spirit to expect God's coming salvation for Israel. Again, led by the Spirit (37) Simeon is in the temple when Mary and Joseph bring Jesus for circumcision and to offer the prescribed sacrifices for a first-born son. He immediately sees the baby Jesus as God's answer to the promise he had received. This is God's "salvation", but more than that a "light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6; 52:10; 60:3) as well as for Israel. Just as we have seen in the prophecies before Jesus' birth, Simeon sees the Messiah as more than a national king—the Messiah will bring light and glory to the nations as well as to Israel.

At the same time Simeon further prophesizes that Jesus will be a time of decision for people—people will rise and fall on their reaction to him (Luke 1:51ff). Jesus will reveal the inner heart of people as they encounter him.

We do not learn what Anna, the prophetess, says. We are told generally that Anna puts the birth of the child in the context of God's promises to Israel. One of Luke's special themes is the role of women in the unfolding story of the gospel. We have seen this already in the role given to Mary and Elizabeth and their words. Anna's prophecy is another witness to the significance women will play in the coming story of God's movement. The work of women represents yet another "reversal" of the way of the world. Unlike the male dominated world in which the gospels were written, the gospel recognizes the role and importance of women in the ministry of Jesus and in the salvation that God is bringing to Jesus. Jesus' brings salvation not only to Jewish men, but Gentiles and women.

### **The Son of the Father.**

The last story of Jesus' childhood covers a trip to Jerusalem around his twelfth birthday. This is the typical time of what is now called "Bar Mitzvah"—the time when the Jewish boy transitions into adulthood. It is not clear that this particular trip had anything to do with Jesus' bar mitzvah—the regulations about this in Judaism were not (as far as we know) codified until later. The "custom" referred to in v42 is probably just the custom of going to Jerusalem for the Passover when possible. But, clearly Jesus considers himself capable of taking part in the discussion with the teachers in the temple and in functioning separately from his parents.

- Questions: Why do Jesus' parents go up to the Passover in Jerusalem? How does Jesus defend his presence in the temple? What does this say about Jesus?

#### **Luke 2:41-52 (ESV)**

<sup>41</sup> *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.*

<sup>42</sup> *And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom.*

<sup>43</sup> *And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it,*

<sup>44</sup> *but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances,*

<sup>45</sup> *and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, searching for him.*

<sup>46</sup> *After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.*

<sup>47</sup> *And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.*

<sup>48</sup> *And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."*

<sup>49</sup> *And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"*

<sup>50</sup> *And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them.*

*<sup>51</sup> And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart.*

*<sup>52</sup> And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.*

Again, Luke wants us to know that Jesus' parents faithfully celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem as required in the law (Deut 16:1ff). The key points of the passage seem to be the following:

The unusual wisdom and insight Jesus had to the law.

Jesus' claim that the temple is "my Father's house."

His overall submission and obedience to his parents and his growth in "wisdom and stature". As in his baptism, Jesus is gaining "favor" with God (and people in general).

Luke does not want us to forget that although Jesus was born in a manger, circumcised as a baby and grew up in a family as a normal boy, he is still the "Lord" that Elizabeth recognized in Mary's womb and the "Savior who is Christ the Lord" that the angel proclaimed. The temple is his Father's house and he belongs there as much as he belongs to Joseph and Mary and their house. At age 12 he has already earned a place among the teachers of Israel—and he will soon show himself their superior in understanding and insight.

### **Summary:**

Taken as a whole what do these stories of John and Jesus tell us?

- 1) Luke shows that both John and Jesus come to fulfill OT themes and hopes. They both show the program of God—to raise up those who are low and oppressed and to challenge those in power. John challenges the powerful through his message of repentance. Jesus will take that challenge further.
- 2) John is always seen in his role as the prophetic messenger promised by Isaiah who prepares the way for the Messiah. He calls people to repent and to show real righteousness in their relationships with people. He challenges the status and sense of superiority of the temple hierarchy.
- 3) Jesus is that Messiah: announced by the angels at his birth, by the prophets Simeon and Anna in the temple, and by his own wisdom and maturity at age 12.
- 4) Jesus is the "Son of David" but so much more. Elizabeth and the angels call him, "Lord" and Jesus claims the temple as his "Father's house."

## Luke Lesson 3

### Son of God and Lord

In this lesson we will look at what it means in Luke that Jesus is “Messiah”, “Son of God” and “Lord.”

The titles, “Son of God” and “Lord” have more than one meaning. “Son of God” is a title given to kings in the culture of the day, and to the Messiah. It does not automatically have the idea of divinity—although that is not to be excluded, either. Certainly the title implied a link to divinity for human kings—which elevated their claim to authority. Similarly, the term “Lord” can refer to God, but it also can refer to a human being who has authority and status over another person. Both meanings can be used in the same document and Luke clearly does that.

But as follow Luke’s attitude toward Jesus we see that Luke clearly sees him as much more than just a prophet or an exalted teacher.

#### More than Messiah: Son.

- Questions: What does Gabriel claim for the child to be born in his announcement to Mary? What seems to be different about this child?

We see this beginning in the stories of Jesus birth. When Gabriel comes to announce the birth of Jesus to Mary here is what we read:

#### Luke 1:28-38 (ESV)

<sup>28</sup> *And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!”*

<sup>29</sup> *But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be.*

<sup>30</sup> *And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*

<sup>31</sup> *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.*

<sup>32</sup> *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,*

<sup>33</sup> *and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”*

<sup>34</sup> *And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”*

<sup>35</sup> *And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.*

<sup>36</sup> *And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the*

*sixth month with her who was called barren.*

<sup>37</sup> *For nothing will be impossible with God.”*

<sup>38</sup> *And Mary said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.*

Note what Gabriel claims for this baby:

- He will be called “Son of the Most High”
- He will inherit the throne of David
- He will reign forever and his kingdom will have “no end” \
- He will be called “holy”

To a certain extent this parallels OT promises to David:

### **2 Samuel 7:12-16 (ESV)**

<sup>12</sup> *When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.*

<sup>13</sup> *He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*

<sup>14</sup> *I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men,*

<sup>15</sup> *but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.*

<sup>16</sup> *And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”*

Note that God promises David his family will be on the throne “forever”—but in Luke Gabriel tells Mary her son will reign “forever.” This is a very different fulfillment of God’s promise to David

Gabriel is known from the OT in the book Daniel. There Gabriel brings an answer to Daniel’s prayer seeking understanding about Jeremiah’s prophecy of 70 years of exile (Daniel 9:20). There is no indication in Luke 1 that Mary has been praying about the liberation of Israel—but Daniel 9 contains the prophecy of the end of the “70 weeks of years”

### **Daniel 9:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> *“Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place.*

The use of Gabriel but ties the announcement of Jesus' birth with the prophecies of Daniel. His presence implies that Jesus is the Messiah—"the anointed one" of Daniel 9 that comes as the climax of God's plan for Israel.

### Savior and Messiah and Son

- Question: Looking at Luke 2 and Luke 3 (Jesus' baptism)—how are we to understand the voice that calls Jesus "beloved Son" at the baptism?

We have already looked last week at the words of the angel to the shepherds:

**Luke 2:8-14 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

<sup>9</sup> *And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.*

<sup>10</sup> *And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.*

<sup>11</sup> **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**

<sup>12</sup> *And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."*

<sup>13</sup> *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,*

<sup>14</sup> *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

It is perhaps no accident that the angel of the Lord appears to shepherds watching their flocks. The OT prophets view God as a shepherd stepping into save his flock, Israel, when the appointed human shepherds have failed (Jeremiah especially 31:10; Ezekiel, esp 34:15, 23 and 37:24; Zechariah 11).

Note what the angel (Gabriel again?) says to the shepherds: "unto you this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

The child that is born is Messiah, Savior and "Lord". While this could mean no more than he is a person of authority, I think it means more. The whole scene here is surrounded by the "glory of the Lord." God's glory is being revealed in the announcement of the birth of Jesus—and the Lordship of God will also be revealed in the life and mission of Jesus. God will be pleased and bring peace and God's glory to people

on earth through this baby. This is no small thing. The judgment of God comes when God is displeased (Is 59:15; I Chron 21:7). God's pleasure and God's peace go together.

At his baptism this come to fulfillment:

**Luke 3:21-22 (ESV)**

*<sup>21</sup> Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened,*

*<sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*

Jesus is designated "beloved Son"—and one who pleases God well. The Spirit descends on him. In the OT Saul (I Samuel 10:10) and David (I Samuel 16:13) were both temporarily empowered in the Spirit to affirm their Kingship. So in a sense we could see this scene as simply a royal anointing. But what follow suggests that it is much more than that.

The birth stories together tie the idea of "Christ", "Son of God" and "Lord" together with Jesus—as a coming not just of a baby, but of the glory of God and the completion of God's plan for the world and for Israel.

### **The Spiritual World recognizes the Son**

- Questions: What does it mean when the demons recognize Jesus as "The Holy One of Israel" and "God's Son"?

**Luke 4:31-41 (ESV)**

*<sup>31</sup> And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And he was teaching them on the Sabbath,*

*<sup>32</sup> and they were astonished at his teaching, for his word possessed authority.*

*<sup>33</sup> And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,*

*<sup>34</sup> "Ha! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God."*

*<sup>35</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him down in their midst, he came out of him, having done him no harm.*

*<sup>36</sup> And they were all amazed and said to one another, "What is this word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out!"*

*<sup>37</sup> And reports about him went out into every place in the surrounding region.*

*<sup>40</sup> Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.*

***41 And demons also came out of many, crying, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.***

Luke puts the story of the first exorcism and the summary of his authority over demons next to each other. Mark and Matthew separate these passages. Luke seems to be increasing the significance of these exorcism for understanding Christ. He repeats the theme of “authority”—emphasizing that it is Jesus’ power to cast out demons that is noteworthy. The demons see him for who he is: “The Holy One of God”/”Son of God”. The addition of the words “Holy One” is significant. This is, of course, a frequent title for God in the OT (normally, “Holy One of Israel” in Isaiah, see Is 43:3; 48:17; 54:4,5), but see also Hos 11:12 for “Holy One” as a name for God alone and Hab 3:3).

Luke is saying that Jesus’ power over the demonic is itself the power of God. Jesus is exercising divine power over the realm of Satan and evil. The demons recognize him and obey his word. It is interesting that in the Gerasene demoniac story in Luke 8, the demons beg for mercy and Jesus agrees to send them (“Legion”) into a herd of swine, which are promptly destroyed. The irony in this passage is plain: the demons are cast into unclean animals and then destroyed. The name of the demons, “Legion” can’t help but make people think of Rome. Here is the Messiah at work: overcoming the enemies of the people through a word. Satan is humiliated and defeated.

### **Jesus and Elijah**

- Questions: Why is Jesus connected with Elijah? If Elijah is a prophet, what is Luke saying about Jesus?

The figure of Elijah was of course tremendously important for the question: what will be Messiah be?

Elijah return was prophesized in Malachi as part of the day of the Lord:

**Malachi 4:5-6 (ESV)**

***5 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.***

***6 And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”***

The relationship between the Messiah and the return of Elijah was an open question in the day of Jesus and the subject of much speculation. And it is clear that people wondered how Jesus fit in with the expectation of Elijah's return. When he asks who people think he is, the disciples tell him some say, "Elijah or one of the prophets" (Luke 9:19, also Herod in 9:9). Elijah appears with Moses in the Transfiguration (9:30).

Luke clearly says that Jesus is not Elijah (John is), but Luke makes comparisons between Jesus and Elijah in significant ways. Like Elijah, Luke heals the son of a widow:

#### **Luke 7:11-17 (ESV)**

***<sup>11</sup> Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him.***

***<sup>12</sup> As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her.***

***<sup>13</sup> And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."***

***<sup>14</sup> Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."***

***<sup>15</sup> And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother.***

***<sup>16</sup> Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!"***

***<sup>17</sup> And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.***

Notice the difference between Jesus' action and Elijah's. Elijah lays himself out on the body of the boy and prays for God's intervention:

#### **1 Kings 17:20-22 (ESV)**

***<sup>20</sup> And he cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by killing her son?"***

***<sup>21</sup> Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again."***

***<sup>22</sup> And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived.***

Jesus, however, simply speaks a word and the dead man sits up. The people react in fear, glorifying God and first say, "A great prophet has arisen among us." But the second comment Luke includes is probably more to the point: "God has visited his people."

Jesus goes beyond the ministry of Elijah. He heals with a word on his own authority. This is just a prophet, but God speaking.

And similarly, we are meant to think of Elijah in another little vignette with the disciples:

#### **Luke 9:51-56 (ESV)**

*<sup>51</sup> When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.*

*<sup>52</sup> And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.*

*<sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.*

*<sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”*

*<sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them.*

*<sup>56</sup> And they went on to another village.*

Elijah called fire from heaven on his opponents:

#### **2 Kings 1:9-10 (ESV)**

*<sup>9</sup> Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty men with his fifty. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’”*

*<sup>10</sup> But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.*

Jesus, however, does not do the same. Jesus rebukes the disciples for this suggestion. The word here for “rebuke” is most often used in casting demons (4:35; 41; 9:42) but also in healing a fever (4:39) and in stilling the wind (8:24). Jesus’ divine authority allows him to rebuke whatever stands in the way of his mission.

In short, the comparisons between Jesus and Elijah mainly serve to show how much more Jesus is than even the expectation of Elijah-returned. The title “Prophet” does not do justice to the authority and power of Jesus—he exercises God’s authority himself with a word.

### **The Son/Lord Calls His Disciples**

- Question: What does the great catch of fish say in connection with Jesus’ call of Peter to become a “fisher of men”?

**Luke 5:1-11 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> *On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret,*

<sup>2</sup> *and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.*

<sup>3</sup> *Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat.*

<sup>4</sup> *And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*

<sup>5</sup> *And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets."*

<sup>6</sup> *And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking.*

<sup>7</sup> *They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.*

<sup>8</sup> *But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."*

<sup>9</sup> *For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken,*

<sup>10</sup> *and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."*

<sup>11</sup> *And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.*

All the Synoptics tell the story of Jesus' call of Peter to leave his nets and become a "Fisher of men." Luke, however, put this story in the context of a miraculous catch of fish. Luke's story highlights the response of Peter to this miracle. Peter says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord"—words that remind us of Isaiah's response to the coming of the glory of God in Isaiah 6 at the time of his call. But note that Peter says this to Jesus—calls him, "Lord." The miraculous power of Jesus is for Peter the presence of the power of God. Like Isaiah he is given a task—but whereas Isaiah is promised that people will not understand his message, Peter is told he will catch "men."

The miraculous catch of fish in Luke 5 reminds us of a similar miracle in John 21—which is also a call story. There Jesus restores Peter after his denial before the cross and calls him to "feed my sheep." Whether we are dealing with one or two different stories, both share similar points: a repentant Peter is then called to carry on the mission of Jesus.

### **The Son and the Father**

- Questions: How does Luke 10 picture the relations of Jesus and the Father? What has Jesus received from the Father? What does Jesus give to his disciples?

Lastly, we look a brief passage found both in Matthew and Luke as the disciples return from their Galilean mission:

**Luke 10:21-22 (ESV)**

*<sup>21</sup> In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.*

*<sup>22</sup> All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”*

People have often remarked how these verses sound more like something we would expect to find in the gospel of John. You have the Father and the Son (Jesus) and the disciples are now “children” to whom “These things” are revealed. The mutual relationship between the Son and the Father is not only recognized, but obviously the Son is on a much different plane of relationship with the Father than are the disciples. The Son exclusively reveals the Father to those whom he chooses. The success of the disciples’ ministry is a confirmation that Jesus is the Son giving this revelation of the Father/God to his disciples.

As we read through Luke we have the growing sense that Jesus as Messiah/Christ and Son of God is much more than physical descendent of David. He is much more than the expected Elijah. He moves with the authority of God, having power over evil spirits and even nature. He speaks with authority and reveals the nature of God to those who follow him. He is the Christ, but Peter’s response to fall on his knees in worship is completely appropriate—the glory of God is revealed in Jesus as in the temple with Isaiah (as suggested the night he is born in the angels’ appearance to the Shepherds).

What is implicit in Luke will be made much more explicit in the book of Acts:

**Acts 2:36 (ESV)**

*<sup>36</sup> Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

“Lord and Christ”—not only the promised Messiah of David, but the revelation of the “Lord”—the God of Israel who saved the nation through Moses in the Exodus and is saving them again (and the world) through his death and resurrection.

To accept the Lordship of Christ is to recognize that God has come in Christ—that we are forgiven through his death and we live under his resurrection power and authority. It is a gracious authority. The “fire” Christ brings from heaven will not be the judgment of Elijah, but the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

### **Summary:**

- The gospel of Luke clearly sees Jesus as the fulfillment of the expectation that a Messiah from the House of David would come to save the people.
- But Jesus is also seen as the anointed “Son” of God. Kings were also called, “sons of God”—but Luke sees more than just a royal attribute here. The “Son” will soon show power of the demonic world and the natural world. He will reveal himself as the Lord of all.
- Jesus is not just a prophet. He is like Elisha in the miracles that he does-but he shows a compassion that goes beyond Elisha. What the prophet strains to do, Jesus does easily.
- Jesus’ call of Peter mirrors the Lord’s call of Isaiah in Isaiah 6. Like Isaiah, Peter’s encounter with Jesus leads him to a sense of his own sinfulness. Unlike Isaiah, Peter is promised a fruitful ministry “fishing” for men.
- Jesus is “Son” to his Father, God—and there is a connection between the two that goes beyond a mere royal title. The way we relate to Jesus as Son is our way to relate to God.

## Lessons from Jesus

### Luke Lesson 4

#### Blessings and Woes

- Questions: Who will be “blessed” in the future according to Jesus? Who should worry? What is the difference between these two groups?

All the gospels share the teachings of Jesus. Matthew 5-8 gathers together a large group of these teachings in what is called, “The Sermon on the Mount.” In Luke we find these teachings scattered through the gospel and sometimes in a little different form.

For example, Luke gives the Beatitudes in quite a different way:

#### Luke 6:17-26 (ESV)

*<sup>17</sup> And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon,*

*<sup>18</sup> who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.*

*<sup>19</sup> And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.*

*<sup>20</sup> And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*<sup>21</sup> “Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*

*<sup>22</sup> “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!*

*<sup>23</sup> Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.*

*<sup>24</sup> “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.*

*<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*

*<sup>26</sup> “Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.*

Note, Luke says, “Blessed are the poor” without the qualifier we find in Matthew (“In Spirit”). The two version are not that different since those who are literally “poor” often are by necessity humbler and hungrier for God because they are forced to depend on God. Note, however, Luke also adds a corresponding “woe” or warning to those who are rich, “For you have received your consolation.” That word “consolation” is the same Greek word we saw in Luke

2:25. There Simeon who was promised in the Spirit that he would live to see the “consolation” of Israel. The word, “consolation” (which in Greek is “parakale”, the same word applied to the Spirit in John 14) implies not just encouragement in the face of sorrow, but the real salvation of God. If the rich are looking to their money for redemption rather than to the Christ, then money will provide whatever salvation they find—and they will miss the real salvation of God.

Luke’s emphasis on the danger to the rich that money offers—and the opportunity to the poor is more direct than Matthew’s. Luke encourages believers to embrace their poverty and to watch the power of their wealth carefully.

Similarly, Luke says that the “hungry” will be satisfied (Matthew says those that hunger and thirst for righteousness), while those who are full shall be hungry. And those who weep will laugh while those who laugh now will mourn and weep (this is not found in Matthew—instead there we read, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”)

Luke’s version seems more “literal” than Matthew—but I’m not sure that is true. Does Jesus want us to think that the hungry will be full and the full will feel physical hunger? Or is he saying that those who have plenty now will be hungering in the Kingdom for what they are missing?

The real punch line in these verses comes at the end. Those who are persecuted “on account of the Son of Man” will be blessed—while those who are popular now because they have backed the “false prophets” (who in the OT typically told the king what the king wanted to hear status, see I Kings 22:1-12) will be in trouble. Luke emphasizes the reversal that the Christ brings. Those who are “out” in the present system will find satisfaction and joy in the new world. Those who are satisfied and benefitting from the present, will find they will be missing out.

In a sense this is the old theme of “reversal” we have seen from the beginning of the gospel. Those who have power and ease now will find their world turned upside down. Those who are oppressed will find hope and redemption. Luke emphasizes the particular danger of wealth and money in the world for those who seek to follow Christ—and the real opportunity to see what is truly important in life (faith in Christ) for those who have nothing.

Ultimately, salvation revolves around a commitment to Christ. If you are persecuted on account of the Son of Man, then in the coming Kingdom you will be blessed and rewarded. If you are accepted and honored in his world, you may miss out on the next.

### **Various Teachings**

**Luke 6:27-49 (ESV)**

**<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,**

**<sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.**

**<sup>29</sup> To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.**

**<sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.**

**<sup>31</sup> And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.**

**<sup>32</sup> “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.**

**<sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.**

**<sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.**

**<sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.**

- Questions: What does it look like to “love your enemies”? In loving our enemies what are we doing that is different? Why is this important?

Luke follows these “Blessings and Woes” with a series of teachings that we can also find in Matthew 5-7 although not in the same order.

Vv 27 and 35 begin and end with the command to “love your enemies.” This repetition is what we call an “Inclusio”—everything between the two repeated phrases should be seen as belonging together thematically. Jesus is teaching what it means to “love your enemy.”

We love our enemies by:

27 Doing good for those who hate us

28 Praying for those who abuse us

Blessing those who curse us.

29 Turning the other cheek to those who strike us

Giving our cloak to the one who takes away our tunic

Just as the beatitudes of the earlier verses tell us that rich and poor, powerful and oppressed will be reversed in the Kingdom of God, we see in these verses that those who follow Christ reverse expected behavior. Instead of giving back evil for evil, we are called to return good for evil.

More than that

V30 we give to those who beg from us

We let those who take from us have the material goods they take

V31 We treat others the way we would like to be treated (many other versions of this “Golden Rule” merely say that the we do not treat others the way we would not want to be treated—Jesus goes further and tells us to be proactive and treat everyone as we would wish they treated us).

To underline this positive behavior as a key point to Christian discipleship, Jesus asks three questions (vv32-35):

If we love only those who love us, how is that different from sinners?

If we do good only to those who do good to us, how can that benefit us since sinners do the same?

If we give only to those who give to us, how is that different from sinners?

The followers of Christ are not limited to treating well people who have treated them well or those who can provide benefit in return. Our guide is our heavenly Father who gives generously to all—even the ungrateful and the evil. We leave behind the “tit-for-tat” culture that looks to curry favor with those who can help us—and we help and treat generously even those who misuse us because that is how God treats us.

This begins to anticipate the cross—“God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). As God met our rebellion with the death of Christ for us, we as followers of Christ live according to that standard of love.

### **Being Like the Father**

- Questions: What are the characteristics of the Father we should imitate? What should we avoid?

The following verses continue to lift up a standard of behavior that conforms to God’s love, not ours:

<sup>36</sup> ***Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.***

<sup>37</sup> ***“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;***

<sup>38</sup> ***give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”***

<sup>39</sup> ***He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?”***

***40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.***

***41 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?***

***42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.***

Moving on from a discussion of love, Jesus talks about the character of God as merciful. We are to offer mercy to others as God is merciful to us. This means not judging others (when we could). It means forgiving others instead (as we are forgiven). It means giving to others out of what we have as God has given to us.

The “Blind leading the blind” comment warns us against following cultural standards—only Christ can “see” the true way. His is our master that we want to be like (v40).

Jesus then shows us our major problem in judging others. As we judge others we invariably see clearly their faults while we miss ours and minimize our mistakes (v42f). In truth we are all lousy judges. We would spend our time much better looking for our own faults before we judge the faults of others.

### **Becoming “good trees” that bear “good fruit”**

***43 “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit,***

***44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.***

***45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.***

***46 “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?***

***47 Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:***

***48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.***

***49 But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”***

- Questions: What produces “Good” in our world? How does this apply to us?

Luke concludes with some general comments. Good trees bear “good fruit”—so how does one become a “good tree?” It starts with the heart—what we want and feel. Evil comes from evil desires—“goodness” comes from wanting to follow the Lord.

If we want to hear and follow the words of Jesus, then we are like a house built on a rock foundation that can withstand the onslaught of the storm.

But, if we do not want to hear and obey God, then we are like a house built on the sand—the first storm will knock us down.

As if the beatitudes are not enough, these verses radically challenge our understanding of what it means to follow Christ. If we want to know how faithful we are, we can ask the question: how do I react to those who hurt me, inconvenience me or oppose me? Do I get angry, defensive, vengeful or bitter? Then I am looking to other people to save me. Can I look at those who treat me the worse through the cross and see people who need the same grace I need?

This does not mean giving other people a license to abuse us (or others). But it does challenge us: what we are trusting in life? If life is hard, do we allow God to use it to make us better?

### **An example of reversal in the Kingdom**

***Luke 7:36-50 (ESV)***

***<sup>36</sup> One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.***

***<sup>37</sup> And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment,***

***<sup>38</sup> and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.***

***<sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, 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.”***

***<sup>40</sup> And Jesus answering said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he answered, “Say it, Teacher.”***

***<sup>41</sup> “A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.***

***<sup>42</sup> When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?”***

***<sup>43</sup> Simon answered, “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.” And he said to him, “You have judged rightly.”***

*44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.*

*45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet.*

*46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.*

*47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”*

*48 And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”*

*49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?”*

*50 And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” Luke 8:1-3 (ESV)*

- Questions: Who are the key actors in this story? What is the difference between Simon and the woman who anoints Jesus’ feet? What is the difference in the way each treats Jesus? What is the point of Jesus’ parable?

A Pharisee named Simon invites Jesus to eat with him—but it is a strange invitation. Normally, inviting a person to eat in your home is like welcoming the person into your family. You would welcome them at the door, allow them to refresh themselves (by washing their feet and letting them wash their head and hands). There is a sense in which Jesus is invited into the house on trial—he is not welcomed as a friend, but is expected to prove himself.

And Simon thinks Jesus fails the test. A woman who Luke tells us is known to be a sinner, comes and anoints Jesus’ feet. We are not told what her sin is, but we suspect from the fact that she is compared to a “great debtor” and Simon knows her reputation that whatever she has done is widely known.

Simon expects that a Jewish prophet would not allow just any woman to touch him (and so make him impure), but even more so a prophet should know that a woman like this is a sinner and not to be allowed to come close. Jesus’ failure to stop the woman suggests to Simon that Jesus is no such prophet.

But, Jesus challenges Simon. He tells a quick parable: two people are forgiven their debt. One owes a great deal, the other not as much. Who, he asks, would love the generous creditor more? Simon states the obvious: the one who is forgiven more.

So, Jesus compares the woman and Simon. The woman shows extravagant love to Jesus, anointing his feet and kissing them, while Simon shows very little. And this is understandable

since the woman is forgiven her many sins (and by implication, Simon has much to less to forgive).

Now this parable must have further confused Simon. Is Jesus claiming to forgive sins? All the gospels make this claim in one form or another (see Mark 2:7ff; Matthew 9:6ff; Luke 5:21ff; John 8:31ff).

In this passage Jesus does not attempt to prove himself, but seems to claim to be able to forgive sins—indeed he tells this very sinful woman that “her faith has saved her.” This puts her in the same category as Zacchaeus and the thief on the cross as people in the gospel of Luke that Jesus says have been saved.

### **Jesus emphasizes the warning against trusting in wealth:**

*Luke 12:13-21 (ESV)*

<sup>13</sup> *Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”*

<sup>14</sup> *But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?”*

<sup>15</sup> *And he said to them, “Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.”*

<sup>16</sup> *And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully,*

<sup>17</sup> *and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’*

<sup>18</sup> *And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.*

<sup>19</sup> *And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”*

<sup>20</sup> *But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’*

<sup>21</sup> *So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”*

- Questions: How does the story of the “Rich Fool” answer the problem of the disputed inheritance brought to Jesus in 12:13? Is it important that Jesus talks about “unrighteous wealth” in 16:9,11? What point is he making there? What is the meaning of the parable of the “Rich man and Lazarus”?

Later in Luke, Jesus returns again to the questions of wealth and the power of money. Luke 12 tells the story of a man coming to Jesus to settle a family property dispute. Jesus refuses, and instead warns his following against seeking possessions because “one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possession.”

To make this point further he tells the parable of the rich fool. The successful farmer in the parable has a dream harvest. His barns cannot hold all the produce he owns. He makes what seem a great plan: to build bigger barns and then to enjoy his property.

There is one small problem: the farmer is to die that night and he will never get to enjoy the “security” his wealth brings him.

The last saying underlines the point: it is pointless to lay up treasure for yourself and to miss being “rich” toward God. What “rich” toward God means is not said—but it is certainly not putting an emphasis on person wealth.

A few chapters further Jesus makes a similar point with another parable. After telling the parable of the dishonest manager (who wisely uses his position and access to money to plan for his future), Jesus urges his hearers to see money as a tool for serving God and not for serving self:

**Luke 16:9-13 (ESV)**

***<sup>9</sup> And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.***

***<sup>10</sup> “One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.***

***<sup>11</sup> If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?***

***<sup>12</sup> And if you have not been faithful in that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?***

***<sup>13</sup> No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”***

Wealth, says Jesus, is a very basic test of what we truly value. If we use wealth for others in order to honor God (v9), we pass the test. If we seek “unrighteous wealth”—which probably means money gotten at the expense of others, we fail. If we can’t handle earthly money, he says, how will God entrust us with “true riches”? 16:12 suggests that all wealth is really not ours—money is entrusted to us by God. If we make money our “god” or “master” we cannot serve the true God and Master. We have to make a choice as to which is the center of our life: money or God?

The following parable emphasizes the importance of this choice:

**Luke 16:19-31 (ESV)**

**<sup>19</sup> “There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.**

**<sup>20</sup> And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,**

**<sup>21</sup> who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man’s table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.**

**<sup>22</sup> The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried,**

**<sup>23</sup> and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.**

**<sup>24</sup> And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’**

**<sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.**

**<sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’**

**<sup>27</sup> And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house—**

**<sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’**

**<sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’**

**<sup>30</sup> And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’**

**<sup>31</sup> He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”**

A couple of things to note about this parable. First, contrary to what we would expect, the poor man is given a name, “Lazarus”—and the rich man is not. Normally in a story we learn the name of the higher status person, and the lower status person may or may not be named. The fact that the “rich man” has no name tells us he is not the hero of the story.

The rich man seemingly has it all: expensive clothes (purple was a rare and costly dye) and plenty of food. Lazarus has nothing. He covered with sores in his poverty (think of Job), and would be happy to have the leftovers thrown out of the rich man’s house. The dogs lick his sores—nothing could be more humiliating or suggest the total lack of power and strength that Lazarus enjoys.

Both men die: which is a reminder of the common fate of men. Rich or poor, you can’t avoid death.

Lazarus goes to heaven and joins Abraham at his side.

The rich man is “buried”—and he ends up not in heaven, but in Hades in torment. From his misery he sees Abraham and Lazarus and begs that Lazarus be sent to get him some water and relief. The rich man even in Hades assumes he has the power and status over Lazarus.

But Abraham tells him that his wealth in life was his “consolation” (think back to the beginning of the lesson)—Lazarus now his comfort (again the same Greek word).

There is now a fixed gulf between the two men that cannot be broken.

Hearing this the rich man begs to have Lazarus (still trying to claim power over the poor man) to go back and warn his brothers. When Abraham tells the rich man that they already have the words of the OT to guide them, the rich man tells him that is not enough—but if they saw a man rise from the dead, they would listen.

The OT did indeed guide the rich to take care of the poor: (Exodus 23; Leviticus 25:35; Deut 15:7ff). The rich man should have known to be kind to his poor and suffering neighbor. Instead he neglects his neighbor while feasting in his house. And Abraham tells him not even a man coming back from the dead will convince anyone to be obedient if they are not seeking God now. This may be a hint about the resistance the church will face after the resurrection of Jesus. If not, it is a warning to the hearers to take seriously their call to be generous to the poor.

**Summary:**

- These teachings of Jesus show how different the follower of Christ is called to be.
- The two great markers of faith are love of our enemies and using our wealth to help others.
- The Christian life is not getting what we deserve, but giving what we have been given: hope, mercy and forgiveness.

## Luke Lesson 5

### The Lost and the Compassion of God

In this lesson we will look at some of the most famous of Jesus' parables. Only Luke gives us the Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Each of these parables give us a powerful story about the nature of the salvation that Jesus is bringing to God's people—and what it takes to be ready for that salvation.

#### Who is my neighbor?

- Questions: What motivates the lawyer's question in v25? Why is the definition of the word, "neighbor", important? How does the parable answer the question?

The Good Samaritan answers a simple question ("Who is my neighbor") in a way that is not simple at all.

#### Luke 10:25-37 (ESV)

<sup>25</sup> *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

<sup>26</sup> *He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"*

<sup>27</sup> *And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."*

<sup>28</sup> *And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."*

<sup>29</sup> *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

<sup>30</sup> *Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.*

<sup>31</sup> *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.*

<sup>32</sup> *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.*

<sup>33</sup> *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.*

<sup>34</sup> *He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.*

<sup>35</sup> *And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back."*

<sup>36</sup> *Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"*

<sup>37</sup> *He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

Luke 10 parallels a similar scene in Mark and Matthew (Matt 22:24-30):

**Mark 12:28-34 (ESV)**

*<sup>28</sup> And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?”*

*<sup>29</sup> Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.*

*<sup>30</sup> And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’*

*<sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”*

*<sup>32</sup> And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.*

*<sup>33</sup> And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

*<sup>34</sup> And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.*

In Mark and Matthew the context is an attempt to trip Jesus up and discredit him. In Luke the “lawyer” is similarly testing Jesus—but the context is after the mission of the seventy-two, somewhat earlier in the ministry of Jesus (Mk and Mt have this happen during the last week of Jesus’ life). In Luke rather than answering the question himself, Jesus deflects the question back to the lawyer and affirms his answer: Loving God and loving neighbor are the essence of the law and the most important commandments.

Luke adds that the lawyer, wanting to justify himself, asks a further question: “Who is my neighbor?” In what sense is this a self-justifying question? It may be that the lawyer is still trying to test Jesus—to get him to say something that can be attacked by either making the issue of “love of neighbor” too large or too small. Or, it may be that the lawyer, having been challenged to love God and neighbor, wants to justify the way he is already living—to defend his own lifestyle as truly one of loving God and neighbor.

Either way, Jesus answers the question with a story. The story is remarkable on many levels. The most obvious is the figure of the Samaritan. The Samaritans and Jews distrusted and disdained each other as only two people with close connections can. Jews looked down on Samaritans as half breeds and heretics. Samaritans were descendants of those Jews who stayed in Judea during the exile and who intermarried with non-Jews in the area. Samaritans had their own “Bible” consisting of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible). They criticized the

Jews for adding the Prophets and Psalms to scripture, thus diluting the authority of the Law of Moses. And the Samaritans also had their own temple for worship and sacrifice at Shechem.

It was unusual, to say the least, for a Jew to make a Samaritan the hero of any story—much less an example of one who fulfilled the second greatest commandment.

Moreover, we are given not one, but really two sets of “bad guys.” The first are obvious: the robbers who victimize the travelers are bad. But two other figures are clearly not heroes in this story: the priest and the Levite. Their failure to act, while not as evil as the robbers who almost kill the traveler, still leaves these two figures as less than positive. Neither the priest or the Levite, both of whom obviously know the commandments, act as neighbor for the victim. Jesus does not give the motivations for their failure to act. They might have feared the man was trapped by robbers to their own danger, or that he was dead and therefore might have left them both unclean (by touching a dead body) and therefore unable to do their duty in the temple.

In a sense their motivation doesn’t matter. The key point is what the Samaritan has and what the priest and Levite lack: compassion for the victim. Because the Samaritan has compassion, he helps the man. He does so by binding up his wounds, taking him to the inn to safety, and then offering to pay for his care while he recuperates. This is comprehensive and practical help.

The priest and the Levite who know the law and the call to love neighbor do not even do the least of these actions.

So when the lawyer is asked, “who is the neighbor”—he answers, “the one who showed mercy/compassion.” Note that lawyer cannot bring himself to say, “The Samaritan.” But in a sense that is all right. The point that Jesus is making is not that Samaritans are superior to Jews. Rather, the point he is making is that obedience to God is love of neighbor—and that showing compassion/mercy matters much more than the things that divide Jew and Samaritan. It is much better to be a compassionate Samaritan than a fearful or hard-hearted Jew. And naturally, if you need a neighbor, you will be much better off with a merciful Samaritan than a distant priest.

The parable undermines a self-understanding that would say, “My birth and rank make me acceptable.” It is the attitude of the heart and the actions that flow from that heart that matter.

### **The Parables of the Lost**

- Questions: would the Pharisees and scribes complain about the people Jesus eats with? What is the point of the story of the lost sheep? Of the lost coin? Who is lost and how in

the Parable of the Prodigal Son? What do these parables tell us about the heart of God? What does the story tell us about the nature of human rebellion?

Luke 15 begins again with the critics of Jesus:

**Luke 15:1-10 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> *Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.*

<sup>2</sup> *And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”*

Table fellowship was very important to the Pharisees. The Pharisees not only believed in meticulous observance of the law, they also wanted to avoid any hint of contamination through association with unclean things. They particularly applied this to the question of where they ate, and how and with whom. They avoided eating with non-Jews and “sinners” in order to stay ritually pure (note the fact that the Jews refuse to go into Pilate’s house when they wanted Pilate to condemn Jesus, John 18:28. This is why Peter needs a word from God that no one is to be considered “unclean” before accepting Cornelius’ invitation in Acts 10:28). For Jesus to sit with tax collectors and sinners was a serious sin in their eyes. They see this as a serious failure to heed God’s call for holiness.

Notice how Luke describes their actions:

“the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled.” “Grumbling” reminds one of the Exodus generation who frequently grumbled as they refused to be grateful about their deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 15:4; 16:7f; 17:3; Num 14:2ff; 16:41; 17:5). The Pharisees are getting dangerously close to the attitude of those who turned their backs on God in the wilderness.

To answer their objections Jesus tells three parables that deal with God’s attitude toward the lost. The first two are very similar:

<sup>3</sup> *So he told them this parable:*

<sup>4</sup> *“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?”*

<sup>5</sup> *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.*

<sup>6</sup> *And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’*

<sup>7</sup> *Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

<sup>8</sup> *“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?”*

<sup>9</sup> *And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with*

*me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’*

*<sup>10</sup> Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

Both parables deal with the loss of something valuable—but not necessarily essential. The shepherd has 100 sheep and one gets lost. One hundred sheep would be six or seven times the size of a normal flock—so this is a wealthy man. The loss of one sheep would be noted, but not catastrophic. But shepherd leaves the 99 safe sheep and goes to find the one lost—indicating an extraordinary concern for the one lost sheep. Moreover, when the sheep is found, he physically carries it back and calls neighbors in for a celebration.

In other words despite having 99 other sheep, the one lost sheep is extremely valuable and personally important to the shepherd. Finding it is a matter for celebration, not just for him but for the community that is unaffected by its loss.

Jesus asserts that finding one lost sinner leads to the same joy and celebration in heaven. Sinners and tax collectors are therefore not to be disdained and avoided. God cares about sinners and if they are “found” through repentance, then all of heaven celebrates.

The second parable is similar: a woman with ten silver coins loses one. This is not an image of wealth—presumably the silver coin is a denarius, so the woman has savings that will buy about ten days of food. This is a fairly narrow safeguard against hunger. The loss of one coin is serious and important—and the woman shows her concern by turning her house upside down to find the money.

But, again, when she finds the coin, it is not just a matter for her own relief—it is a time for celebration for the community. Avoiding disaster and hunger is very important—and the saving of one person is even more so. If a person “repents” and so is “found” of God, all of heaven celebrates.

Far from being something to avoided, both parables underline the immense value of people to God—even those who need repentance. The hope is they will repent so that all of heaven will rejoice.

The third parable is different—a more complex and personal story.

**Luke 15:11-32 (ESV)**

*<sup>11</sup> And he said, “There was a man who had two sons.*

*<sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.*

*<sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far*

*country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.*

*<sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.*

*<sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.*

*<sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.*

*<sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!*

*<sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.*

*<sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’”*

*<sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

*<sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’*

*<sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.*

*<sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.*

*<sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.*

*<sup>25</sup> “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.*

*<sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.*

*<sup>27</sup> And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’*

*<sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,*

*<sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.*

*<sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’*

*<sup>31</sup> And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.*

*<sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

The story of the “Prodigal Son” is really the story of a father reaching out to two lost sons.

The first son is conventionally “Lost.” He asks his father for an early inheritance. This was a serious affront to any father—the equivalent of wishing his father dead. A father would be

justified in that culture if he simply threw his son out of the house for making such an ungrateful and arrogant request.

But the father accedes to his son's request. Notice, however, that the father divides his estate between his two sons—the elder son evidently goes along with the younger's selfish desire and gets his share early, too. While the younger son is visibly rebellious, the older son benefits from this rebellion.

The younger son then does what “younger” sons tended to do in the literature of that culture: go away and spend the money on wine and women and good times.

And he ends up where the Proverbs tells us fools end up:

**Proverbs 21:17 (ESV)**

*<sup>17</sup> Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.*

Not only does the younger son spend his money foolishly, but when it is gone, the whole land suffers famine. The son is reduced to working with pigs (the worst job for a Jew) and even having to eat the food of the pigs to stay alive.

At this point the scripture says he “comes to himself.” It doesn't say he repents, but his actions suggest repentance. He is willing to admit that he has sinned before his father and heaven, that he no longer deserves to be called a son, but is willing to work as a hired servant and trust the generosity of his father.

Humbled he returns home. If the father had accepted the son's proposed deal, then he would have done more than the son deserved.

But the parable paints an extraordinarily generous and compassionate picture of the father. The father is obviously looking for the son—he sees him “a great way off.” Totally forgetting the dignity of a leader of the family expected in that culture—the father runs to the son and embraces him and kisses him. These are signs of acceptance and forgiveness even before the son is able to stammer out his words of repentance. Some scholars have suggested this was necessary in that culture—that as a rebellious and ungrateful son the prodigal could have been stoned by the community:

**Deuteronomy 21:18-21 (ESV)**

*<sup>18</sup> “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and, though they discipline him, will not listen to them,*

*<sup>19</sup> then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his*

*city at the gate of the place where he lives,*

<sup>20</sup> *and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.'*

<sup>21</sup> *Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. So you shall purge the evil from your midst, and all Israel shall hear, and fear.*

The father's quick acceptance allows the son to be brought safely back into the family home.

But, the story goes beyond that. The son does repent offers to become a servant, but the father is having none of that. He wants to have a feast to celebrate the return of his lost son. He orders the "fatted calf" to be killed. This would have fed at least 35-100 people. Evidently the father wants to invite not only his close family, but the community around to come in for a celebration. He puts a robe and ring (a sign of authority) on his son's finger. He does not merely forgive, he restores to full status within the family. It is an extravagant gesture of love and forgiveness and salvation.

At this point the elder brother returns. When finds his younger brother has returned and his father's plans for restoration, he is insulted and incensed. He says, ***'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.'***

This is not the whole truth. The elder brother accepted his part (assumedly the double portion of the first born) of the inheritance when the younger brother left. The father rightly points out

***Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.***

The elder brother is refusing to forgive and to receive his brother back.

Still, the father invites the son into the feast. As obedient son he should have come without hesitation. The father had "The right" to order his son—but he makes an invitation. The feast and the blessing is there if the elder brother will accept it.

The parable ends, however, without knowing if the elder son accepts his forgiveness and restoration. In this sense he is the picture of the Pharisees. Do they see that their hard hearts and judgment are as much as "sin" in need of forgiveness as the more obvious sins of the tax-collectors and their friends? Heaven will rejoice when anyone—even those who think they are righteous—repents. But all need to repent. The good news that the Father offers extravagant and generous compassion and mercy to all willing to come to him.

### **Summary:**

Put all these parables together and we have a number of points to consider:

- God's extravagant salvation not only forgives us but restores to a position far beyond what we deserve
- We are called to compassion for those in need. We are called to be careful of valuing lesser things in place of mercy for those who are hurting
- We are called to doubt our own righteousness. The elder brother is as lost as the younger—but does he know it?

## **Luke Lesson 6**

### **Following Jesus**

**Discipleship: following Christ is the key value in life.**

- Questions: How does Jesus challenge those who want to be his disciples? What is he asking of them?

Both Matthew and Luke tell the story of people who come up to Jesus wanting to follow him, but who challenged in their enthusiasm:

**Luke 9:57-62 (ESV)**

*<sup>57</sup> As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”*

*<sup>58</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”*

*<sup>59</sup> To another he said, “Follow me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”*

*<sup>60</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”*

*<sup>61</sup> Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”*

*<sup>62</sup> Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

Matthew narrates the first two instances in Matthew 8:19-22. Luke however adds a third person in verse 61f.

Jesus reminds the first person that if he wants to follow Jesus, he is following a person with no real home. If he thinks is the way to possessions and security, he is mistaken.

The second person is more difficult to understand. Luke’s version is a little different from Matthew’s. In Luke Jesus calls the man to follow, but the disciple wants first to go home and bury his father. Any good Jew would consider the responsibility to see one’s parents rightly buried as paramount for any good son. Yet, Jesus puts the need to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

In other words, no value or priority in life is more important than the call to follow Jesus. Even family, as important as family is, takes less precedent than Jesus. The Kingdom is the key thing.

Luke adds the third disciple in verse 61f. He is willing to follow Jesus, but first he wants to go and say good-bye to his family. That seems reasonable—yet Jesus warns him that he cannot compromise his commitment. The Kingdom of God is the first priority—if family challenges that priority, then you are not ready to follow Christ.

For a culture in which family was absolutely the first priority and loyalty of a person, this is unbelievably hard to hear. Some would consider Jesus' words disrespectful. "Honor your father and mother" was a commandment. Yet, that commandment cannot transcend the first commandment to worship God only. Family cannot be an idol that seduces us away from our commitment to Christ.

If we turn to chapter 18-19 we then see a series of teachings and stories that underline what it means to follow Christ and what discipleship takes.

### **Discipleship takes persistent prayer:**

- Question: What does the parable of the unjust judge tell us about our prayer life?

#### **Luke 18:1-43 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> *And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.*

<sup>2</sup> *He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man.*

<sup>3</sup> *And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.'*

<sup>4</sup> *For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man,*

<sup>5</sup> *yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'"*

<sup>6</sup> *And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says.*

<sup>7</sup> *And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?*

<sup>8</sup> *I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"*

The parable of the unjust judge, along with the parable of the dishonest steward, one of the few times Jesus uses a negative example to make a positive point. Jesus is arguing in a way familiar to people of the time: from a minor point to a major. His idea is: if this true for a bad person, how much true would it be for a good person?

Here the judge has no morality at all. He could care less about this widow and the justice of the case. He says clearly, “I neither fear God nor respect man”—in other words nothing in heaven or earth would influence his decision. He is an arrogant man!

But, he finally relents because the woman badgers him to death and gives her justice.

If that is true of an corrupt judge, how much more should we expect God to do the right thing for God’s people? If we pray and seek God incessantly, won’t God respond all the more if our prayers are just and right?

Note, Jesus is not saying God will answer any prayer if made over and over again. Jesus is saying that surely God who is good wants to answer the just and right prayers of the righteous. We are called to pray incessantly for things that worth praying for. To go back to the Lord’s Prayer, if we are asking for the coming of God’s Kingdom and for God’s will on earth, then we can be sure God hears.

Similarly, if a prayer is not answered, it may be that we are asking for something that is either not God’s will or would not further the Kingdom of God.

We are to pray and believe God wants good for us even more than we want good for ourselves.

### **Discipleship means humility**

- Questions: Why would Pharisee pray like he does? Why is the tax-collector’s prayer more appropriate?

***<sup>9</sup> He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt:***

***<sup>10</sup> “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.***

***<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.***

***<sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’***

***<sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’***

***<sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”***

In another example of reversal, this parable takes two characters and makes the normal villain the hero, and the expected hero, a villain. Most in Jesus' day would have had real respect for a Pharisee. These were people who worked hard at their faith, and typically had high personal standards. They were often the most successful people in the community. Oppositely, the word "tax-collector" was synonymous with the word, "sinner." A tax-collector was at the same time, a traitor to the people and a thief—using their high office to take money from people for their own benefit. In a normal story the tax-collector would represent what not to do—and the Pharisee would be an example of righteousness.

But, not here.

The Pharisee assumes he has it all right. He compares himself favorably to other people he knows have failed—especially the tax-collector. He lists all of his righteous acts.

What is the problem with this? The Pharisee fails to admit his failures. He is wrong to compare others and judge them. He over-values his righteous acts and completely omits his omissions.

The tax-collector is clearly a sinner. But the tax-collector makes no claim for righteousness. He does not compare himself to anyone or trot out deeds to justify himself or excuse his actions.

His posture is humble and his words even more so, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

The tax-collector is "justified"—brought into right relationship with God because he correctly sees himself as a sinner and God as a God who gives mercy and forgives.

The Pharisee gets nothing because he has asked for nothing. He goes home unjustified and in wrong relationship with God because he wrongly assumes he already all right with God.

The disciple then is called to see himself or herself more like the tax-collector than the Pharisee. We cannot earn our way to God's favor and we certainly have done nothing which makes us better than anyone else. We are sinners in need of a merciful God. And we have a God of mercy ready to receive us.

### **We enter the Kingdom like a Child (Discipleship Takes Trust):**

- Questions: Why would Jesus lift up the example of a child? What does it say about the "Kingdom of God" if the Kingdom belongs to children?

*<sup>15</sup> Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.*

*<sup>16</sup> But Jesus called them to him, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.*

*<sup>17</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”*

The scene about Jesus blessing the little children occurs in all three synoptic Gospels right before the scene with the rich young ruler. The two are meant to be seen as contrasts to each other. The ruler thinks to do something that earns recognition in the Kingdom. The children receive a blessing because Jesus wants to give it.

Parents are bringing children/infants to Jesus to touch, presumably for a blessing. The disciples move to stop this, and Jesus instead stop them.

We are not told why the disciples try to interfere—maybe they saw the action as trivial and an interruption into Jesus’ more important work.

But, Jesus claims these children as part of the Kingdom of God. They are not incidental, or superfluous, but integral to God’s purpose.

Indeed, to enter the Kingdom at all we must be “like a child.”

What does that mean? Mark and Matthew use the word, “child” (which Luke uses in the next few verses) to describe the children being brought. Luke changes the word to “infants.” While Luke switches back to the same word used in Matt and Mark in v17, if these are infants, this would emphasize the total dependence and helplessness of the children being brought. It is likely this quality of total trust in the parent and dependence on the parent that Jesus is saying we have to have to enter the Kingdom. This would contrast with the Pharisee in the story below and the young man in the story after who both want to do things that show how good they are. It is the trust in the goodness of God that gets us into the Kingdom.

The Kingdom of God itself “belongs” to people like children. Jesus is saying that people do not earn God’s Kingdom. We receive it through the grace of God. We cannot possess the Kingdom through our success—rather we are like children who inherit from our family.

**Following Christ means surrendering all to him.**

- Questions: What does the ruler ask? What do you think the ruler expects to hear from Jesus? What does Jesus tell him to do? Why can't the ruler do it? What does Jesus expect from his disciples?

<sup>18</sup> *And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*

<sup>19</sup> *And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.*

<sup>20</sup> *You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'"*

<sup>21</sup> *And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth."*

<sup>22</sup> *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."*

<sup>23</sup> *But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.*

<sup>24</sup> *Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!*

<sup>25</sup> *For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."*

<sup>26</sup> *Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"*

<sup>27</sup> *But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God."*

<sup>28</sup> *And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you."*

<sup>29</sup> *And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,*

<sup>30</sup> *who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."*

The story of the rich young ruler is found in all the Synoptics, and is one of the most uncomfortable stories in the gospels. A man comes to Jesus wanting to know what he has to do to inherit eternal life. This is not just a request to go to heaven or live forever. The phrase, "Eternal life" could be translated, "The life of Age to Come." The young man wants to be part of the coming Kingdom of God and no doubt share in its rewards. In a sense Jesus has already talked about this—you have to be like a child. And we will see that this man does not fit the requirements.

Jesus asks about his obedience to the commands—which the young man claims he has done since a youth.

But, that is not enough. Jesus tells him to go and sell all he has, give it to the poor and follow him. The ESV says he became, "very sad"—the word is perhaps even stronger. He is greatly grieved with this idea because he is rich and he cannot do what Jesus says.

Jesus then remarks how hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God. People have tried to suggest that the “eye of the needle” was a small gate in Jerusalem. There is no real evidence of this—the saying is found as proverb in later rabbinic writings to indicate something basically impossible. And the disciples then ask, “Who can be saved?” They assume, as their culture did, that God blessed people with wealth. The best people prosper—so who can be saved (note that “saved”, “enter the Kingdom”, “inherit eternal life” are all basically the same idea)?

We who have wealth will always be tempted to trust wealth about God because we can control it. As the disciples were challenged in c.9 to make the Kingdom the priority of their lives, wealth will always challenge that priority.

Does this mean that the gospels intend to have all Christians give all their money to the poor all the time? While Luke values those who give up everything, including money, to follow Christ, he never makes that an absolute requirement. But he holds up the disciples here as a positive example: they did leave everything to follow Jesus.

And Jesus tells us this only makes sense: we can never sacrifice anything in this life that is not overwhelmingly less important than what we gain through following Jesus. More on this as we see Zacchaeus.

### **Following Christ means repentance and putting him above all**

- Questions: Who is Zacchaeus? Why does the crowd “grumble” when Jesus goes in to eat with Zacchaeus? What happens afterwards? What does Jesus say about this event?

#### **Luke 19:1-27 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> He entered Jericho and was passing through.*

*<sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.*

*<sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.*

*<sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.*

*<sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”*

*<sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.*

*<sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”*

*<sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the*

*poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”*

*<sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

The disciples asked, “Who can be saved?” And now we see who—a tax-collector. And not just a tax-collector, but an “arch-tax collector.” Zacchaeus was a supervisor over many tax-collectors and even more important than most.

Tax-collectors got their job by bidding—promising to return so much money to Rome for the right to collect taxes in a certain area. The Roman army then backed up their collections, and anything they collected over and above their tax promise they got to keep. It was a system ripe for corruption and oppression.

From the Jewish point of view the tax-collector collaborated with the hated Romans and basically stole from their fellow Jews. Zacchaeus was without a doubt a wealthy and powerful man. He was alienated from the general Jewish population, but he no doubt had plenty of friends within the Herodian and Roman power structures.

But, he wants to see Jesus, and against all expectations, Jesus seeks him out and invites himself to dinner.

We are not told what is said at that dinner, but what comes out is a genuinely converted man. Zacchaeus promise to return anything he has stolen four fold (note the requirement in the law was to return any money defrauded plus 20 percent. Zacchaeus restores his wrongs 400% versus the required 120%. And he promises to give half of all he has to the poor. Zacchaeus was rich before he met Jesus—he will not be rich now.

Luke does not say Zacchaeus gave away all his money—but Zacchaeus certainly made repentance a priority and generosity to the poor above all.

For Zacchaeus what he received from Jesus far out-weighed the money he gave away. Jesus makes a rare announcement, “Salvation has come to this house.” Like the thief on the cross, Zacchaeus is one of the few Jesus recognizes as “Saved.” The rich young ruler who followed all the commandments, but valued his money more than following Christ, walks away deeply grieving. But, the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost—the tax-collector, Zacchaeus is certainly that, and his repentance and change life show he is saved.

**There is no place for half-hearted commitment in discipleship**

- Questions: Why does the nobleman go to the far country? What is at stake in this parable? Why does the man give the servants who invest on his half cities to rule? Why does he condemn the man who hides the money? What is Jesus saying about discipleship?

The Parable of the Pounds in Luke is much like the Parable of the Talents in Matthew—but the differences are important:

*<sup>11</sup> As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately.*

*<sup>12</sup> He said therefore, “A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return.*

*<sup>13</sup> Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Engage in business until I come.’*

*<sup>14</sup> But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’*

*<sup>15</sup> When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.*

*<sup>16</sup> The first came before him, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.’*

*<sup>17</sup> And he said to him, ‘Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.’*

*<sup>18</sup> And the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your mina has made five minas.’*

*<sup>19</sup> And he said to him, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’*

*<sup>20</sup> Then another came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief;*

*<sup>21</sup> for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’*

*<sup>22</sup> He said to him, ‘I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?*

*<sup>23</sup> Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?’*

*<sup>24</sup> And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’*

*<sup>25</sup> And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten minas!’*

*<sup>26</sup> ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.*

*<sup>27</sup> But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.’”*

The Parable of the Talents give a much cleaner, simpler version of this story. In the basic narrative of a Master who leaves behind servants with an amount of money to invest, we have the story of a ruler who goes to receive a kingdom and who faces an opposing delegation who try to deny his rule.

This is significant for the time of Jesus because one of the sons of Herod the Great, Archelaus, actually faced this event. Archelaus succeeded his father and ruled as ethnarch of Samaria and Judea. HE was opposed at first by a delegation from the Jews, but Caesar affirmed him in his role. Then in 16 A. D. a group of Samaritan and Judean aristocrats took complaints to Rome against him. He was deposed and sent into exile and never returned to Judea.

In this light the work of the servants on behalf of their master takes on a new light. Those who invested the money he gave them did more than just earn money for master—they represented him and kept alive his name and interests while he away. They faced the very real danger that the opposition might win the day and their master never return. What would happen to his supporters if he went into exile? These men are worthy to rule cities for a ruler for whom they risked their lives and fortunes while his fate was in the balance.

Similarly, this story makes the servant who hid the money look not just lazy, but in fact disloyal. If his master did not return, then he had the money safely hidden where he might get it and start a new life. The anger of his master seems much more deserved!

The parable then does more than tell us to use our talents well. We are either serving our master until his return, or, if we hide our commitment, we are betraying him. The parable warns against hiding our commitment to the Kingdom or trying to blend in—we are in or out.

### **Summary:**

What is discipleship?

- To be a disciple is to follow Christ whole-hearted. All other commitments are less important than our commitment to Christ.
- To be a disciple means disciplined prayer—seeking his will
- It means humility—accepting our need for him like a child
- It means surrendering all to him, repenting where we need to repent
- It means an open and full commitment to serve him until he returns.

## Luke Lesson 7

### The Last Supper, Arrest and Trial of Jesus

#### Preparation for the Passover—and Betrayal

- Questions: What is happening as Judas prepares to betray Jesus? What motivates Judas? What is the link between the Passover and what Jesus is about to do?

Luke 22:1-71 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> *Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.*

<sup>2</sup> *And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.*

<sup>3</sup> *Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.*

<sup>4</sup> *He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them.*

<sup>5</sup> *And they were glad, and agreed to give him money.*

<sup>6</sup> *So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.*

<sup>7</sup> *Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.*

<sup>8</sup> *So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.”*

<sup>9</sup> *They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?”*

<sup>10</sup> *He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters*

<sup>11</sup> *and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’*

<sup>12</sup> *And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.”*

<sup>13</sup> *And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.*

For the most part Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the same story about the lead up to the Last Supper and Jesus betrayal. Mark and Luke agree that as the Passover drew near the chief priests and scribes were plotting how to get Jesus put to death, but they feared the reaction of the people. Matthew (like John) specifically names Caiaphas as one of the key plotters (Matt 26:3; John 11:49ff). All the Synoptic gospels affirm that Judas initiated the plot to betray Jesus in return for money (John however does not say this specifically, see John 13:2, 27). John and Luke affirm that Satan’s influence guided Judas: Luke says Satan entered Judas before he sought out the priests (22:3). John puts Satan’s entrance into Judas at the point the betrayer leaves the Last Supper (John 13:27).

In all the gospels we see a confluence of evil influences: the malice of the temple hierarchy, the opposition of Satan and the betrayal of Judas all come together to set up the cross.

Against this Jesus prepares to celebrate the Passover with his disciples. Luke tells us that Jesus sends Peter and John to find the guest room where they could celebrate the feast together (v8).

What is the implication of this setting? The original Passover took place to destroy the firstborn of Egypt and force Pharaoh to free the Hebrew. The blood of the Passover lamb protects Israel from the angel of Death and leaves them untouched.

Now, in place of the Pharaoh we see Satan and the high priests and Judas working together against the Son of Man. Behind the malice of the political authorities we see spiritual opposition and inner human greed working together. The new Passover lamb will be not an animal, but God's son. His blood will deliver believers from the slavery of sin and death.

### **The Institution of the Lord's Supper**

- Questions: What does Jesus say about his future? About his body? About his blood? What is the significance of this "Lord's Supper"?

*<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.*

*<sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*

*<sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

*<sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves.*

*<sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

*<sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*<sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*

Matthew, Mark and Luke all give the story of the institution of the Lord's Supper. All three have these elements:

- The statement that Jesus will not drink of the fruit of the vine until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.
- The distribution of the bread and the words, "This is my body"
- The passing of the cup and the words, "This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many"

Luke offers some subtle changes to this story. In Luke Jesus prefaces everything with the comment that he has looked forward to this Passover meal with the disciples before his time of suffering, and that he will not eat of the Passover meal again before it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. We do not find these words in Matthew or Mark. Luke makes it even more clear that Jesus knows exactly what is about to happen and that Jesus approaches his death as key part of his mission for the Kingdom of God.

Luke also seems to have two cups of wine between Jesus and the disciples. The first comes in v17 and prefaces the statement that Jesus will no longer drink wine until the Kingdom arrives, and the second is the familiar statement of the cup of his blood. Here Jesus as one word—this is “the new covenant”—making explicit what is implied in Matthew and Mark.

The bread and the wine cover two key parts of the Passover meal. The unleavened bread of the Passover meal represented the fast departure of the people from Egypt. During the meal the people drank four cups of wine celebrating the redemption of the people.

Now Jesus tells the disciples that his body is the bread given for them. That phrase not only connects with the bread of the Passover, but also with the manna/bread of the Exodus:

**Exodus 16:14-18 (ESV)**

*<sup>14</sup> And when the dew had gone up, there was on the face of the wilderness a fine, flake-like thing, fine as frost on the ground.*

*<sup>15</sup> When the people of Israel saw it, they said to one another, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, “It is the bread that the LORD has given you to eat.*

*<sup>16</sup> This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’”*

*<sup>17</sup> And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less.*

*<sup>18</sup> But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.*

“To give your body” was a phrase used in Greek to refer to the sacrifice of the soldier in battle who gives his life for his people. Jesus’ is equating his death on the cross with the bread that God gave to sustain the people in the wilderness and the redemption that God effected in the Exodus.

Similarly, he connects his blood with the drinking of the wine. The cup represents the pouring out of Jesus blood. In the OT the blood of the bull was poured out on the altar as a sacrifice for sin (Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4). Now the wine represents Jesus' blood poured out "for many" as a "new covenant."

The additional word, "new", in Luke makes clear what is implied in Mathew and Mark—a fulfillment of Jeremiah's words:

**Jeremiah 31:31-33 (ESV)**

<sup>31</sup> *"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,*

<sup>32</sup> *not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.*

<sup>33</sup> *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

The essence of the "new" covenant in Jeremiah is the creation of a people who have the law of God written on their hearts. Matthew has the words, "for the forgiveness of sins"—an idea clearly suggested in the connection between the blood and the sacrifice for sins in the OT.

The disciples are commanded to do this as a means of "remembering" him. The Passover meal itself was established as a means of remembering the Exodus (Exodus 13:3; Deut 16:3). The idea of "remembering" is not just acknowledge something mentally, but to make something in the past a living and vital guide in the presence. The book of Deuteronomy harps on the people of Israel "remembering" the gift of the Exodus as a means of obeying the law in the presence.

But, now the disciples are commanded to take the meal in order to "remember" Jesus and his death for them. The Lord's Supper in the future does not simply reflect back upon the death of Jesus—it is a means of experiencing again the meaning of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the lives of the believers. The Passover lamb itself is not mentioned in the initiation of the Lord's Supper—probably because the church knew that Jesus himself was the Passover/Paschal Lamb (see John 1:29, 36; I Corinthians 5:7; I Peter 1:19; Rev 5:6ff).

### **The Betrayal and The Prediction of Peter's Denial**

- Questions: Why is it important that Jesus knows who will betray him? What does the argument about "who is the greatest" have to do with the Last Supper? What does Jesus

say about Peter and his denial in Luke? How do you think the prediction of the betrayal and the denial of Peter connect with one another?

<sup>21</sup> *But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.*

<sup>22</sup> *For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”*

<sup>23</sup> *And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.*

<sup>24</sup> *A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.*

<sup>25</sup> *And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.*

<sup>26</sup> *But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.*

<sup>27</sup> *For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.*

<sup>28</sup> *“You are those who have stayed with me in my trials,*

<sup>29</sup> *and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,*

<sup>30</sup> *that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

<sup>31</sup> *“Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,*

<sup>32</sup> *but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”*

<sup>33</sup> *Peter said to him, “Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death.”*

<sup>34</sup> *Jesus said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.”*

Luke presents the announcement of Judas’ betrayal (vv21-23) and the prediction of Peter’s denial (vv21-23) sandwiched around two very different sayings about status.

Luke has the position of Jesus’ announcement of betrayer at the table in a different position: after the Lord’s Supper rather than before (Mark 14:18-21 and 22-25; Matthew 26:21-25; 26-29). In addition Luke has the dispute over who is the greatest in this location (vv24-7). In doing this he puts both the prediction of Peter’s denial and the prediction of the betrayal as events after the Lord’s Supper—perhaps intentionally contrasting the failure of the disciples with the faithfulness of Jesus who gives his body and blood for us.

In between these two predictions of failure we find two sayings about status. The first saying arises around a dispute about who is greatest among the disciples. This dispute is also found in Mark 10:42-45; Matthew 20:20-28 in a different context (it arises out of James and John’s request for seats at Jesus’ left and right). This could be a question that arose several times

in the ministry of Jesus among the disciples. The point of the saying is that in God's Kingdom it is the servant, not the served who is the greatest. This is completely at odds with the way things work in the world where the great are served and the lesser do the serving. As Jesus comes to serve (especially as his death will show), his disciples are called to serve.

The next saying, however, puts that service in the context of the long-range promise of the Kingdom. Jesus recognizes that the disciples have stayed with him during his trials (v28) and as a result will sit at Jesus' table in the coming Kingdom (v30) and will even sit on thrones of judgement in that Kingdom. Their service and sacrifice will not go unrecognized or unrewarded.

Which is not to say that Jesus doesn't know their weaknesses and the trials that are still before them. Peter in particular will be "sifted" by Satan (v31). As the betrayal acts under the power of Satan, Luke sees Peter's denial as further influence from Satan. Peter is not "filled with Satan" but sifted. Peter is tested by Satan, but Jesus is praying for him, so that he will "return" and eventually strengthen the others. The implication is clear that Jesus expects Peter to waver in his faith.

Peter rejects the idea that he would fail Jesus (v33), but Jesus predicts that Peter will within the day deny him three times (v34).

While Judas' betrayal is an act of Satan, the truth is that all the disciples will fail Jesus in the time of the cross. Without the prayers of Jesus their faith would fail. While Judas may represent the worst of human failure, none of the disciples in the Synoptics have perfect faith. They all fall away to one extent or the other. But Jesus restores them, beginning with Peter whose failure is very significant.

Is it an accident that the two great leaders of the early church both have huge failures in the lives? Peter the great leader after Easter is also the one who denied Jesus three times. Paul, the great apostle to the world persecuted the church. The fact that the church openly embraced the weaknesses of their leaders shows the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is his body and blood that saves us, not our works.

### **Jesus looks to the future past the cross**

- Questions: When did Jesus "send out" the disciples before? What is happening now? What does the reference to a "sword" mean?

<sup>35</sup> *And he said to them, "When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing."*

<sup>36</sup> *He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.*

<sup>37</sup> *For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors.’ For what is written about me has its fulfillment.”*

<sup>38</sup> *And they said, “Look, Lord, here are two swords.” And he said to them, “It is enough.”*

<sup>39</sup> *And he came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him.*

These are puzzling verses, both to the disciples and to us. Jesus looks back to the ministry of the 12 in Luke 9:1-5 where he sent them out without money or knapsack to minister in his name. Now, he tells them to take money and a knapsack and even to sell their cloak for a sword. Whereas before they could expect rejection, now Jesus anticipates a time of persecution based on his own death. This fulfills the promise of Isaiah 53 (quoted in part in 37):

#### **Isaiah 53:10-12 (ESV)**

<sup>10</sup> *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

<sup>11</sup> *Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

I include the fuller quote because Luke’s quote of the portion of Isaiah 53:12 probably implies the fuller context. Jesus has already said he would make intercession for Peter—the initiation of the Lord’s Supper implies that his death will bear the sins “of many.” As they move into a time of even more difficult persecution as they minister for Jesus they must both take preparations for the journey and remember the promise: they are going to at table of Jesus in the Kingdom.

What about the reference to buying a sword? Is this a real suggestion that Christians should go armed? This is probably a typical misunderstanding of the disciples who constantly miss the deeper significance of Jesus’ words (cf Luke 8:52ff). When the disciples show him two swords that they already have, he says, “It is enough.” He is clearly not saying that they need to go out fully armed but using the sword as a symbol of preparation. Indeed later when “one of them” (in John 18, we are told this is Peter) tries to protect Jesus with a sword from arrest, Jesus stops him (v50).

## The Arrest of Jesus

- Questions: What is Jesus praying for in the garden? What ‘temptation’ does he imply in vv40, 46? How does Jesus treat his arrest?

*<sup>40</sup> And when he came to the place, he said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*

*<sup>41</sup> And he withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed,*

*<sup>42</sup> saying, “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.”*

*<sup>43</sup> And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him.*

*<sup>44</sup> And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

*<sup>45</sup> And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow,*

*<sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”*

*<sup>47</sup> While he was still speaking, there came a crowd, and the man called Judas, one of the twelve, was leading them. He drew near to Jesus to kiss him,*

*<sup>48</sup> but Jesus said to him, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”*

*<sup>49</sup> And when those who were around him saw what would follow, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”*

*<sup>50</sup> And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.*

*<sup>51</sup> But Jesus said, “No more of this!” And he touched his ear and healed him.*

*<sup>52</sup> Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders, who had come out against him, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs?*

*<sup>53</sup> When I was with you day after day in the temple, you did not lay hands on me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.”*

*<sup>54</sup> Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest’s house, and Peter was following at a distance.*

Luke opens and closes the story of Jesus praying before his arrest with a warning about “temptation”—a probably reference to the persecution that the disciples are about to face (especially in the book of Acts). From the Last Supper Jesus goes to the Garden in Gethsemane. Luke’s version of Jesus in the garden is shorter than Mark or Matthew. In Luke he simply goes and asks for the cup to be removed from him—though Luke adds the details about his agony in prayer and the drops of blood that he sweated as he prayed. Luke clearly wants to portray the stress of Jesus and his faithfulness amid the stress. The disciples by contrast fall asleep—oblivious to what is happening to the Lord.

Judas betrays Jesus—with a kiss, the ultimate sign of hypocrisy. The disciples offer—indeed do attack one of those who came to arrest Jesus. Instead of fighting, Jesus heals the man who had his ear cut off. Jesus stands up to attackers—challenging their cowardice in trying to arrest him now when they could have arrested him any day in the temple. But as he says, “this is your hour and the hour of darkness.” (cf John 13 where John notes at Judas’ departure, “It was night” and John 14:30, “The ruler of this world is coming.”)

These last stories contrast the disciples and Jesus. Jesus knows what is to happen, but even though he knows how terrible the cross will be, fully commits himself to following the will of the Father.

The disciples do not understand what is about to happen. They sleep in the garden, they want to fight the arrest. Judas has betrayed Jesus and Peter will deny Jesus as he said.

But all that happens because his body is about to be given for us and his blood spilt for us. The disciples are about to learn what all that means.

### **Summary**

- Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper as a celebration of a new covenant. In place of the old Passover meal that “remembered” the Exodus, this meal will help Christians remember the meaning of the death of Jesus. His death fulfills the promise of Is 53—the servant who died for the sins of the nation. And his death initiates the “new covenant” of Jer 31 that will create a new people who follow the Lord from their heart.
- In contrast we see the two great failures of the disciples: Judas who betrays Jesus (as Satan fills him) and Peter who denies Jesus.
- The two failures suggest that Jesus’ sacrifice is needed. We do not save ourselves.
- At the same time Jesus calls us into discipleship: to serve as he served, looking forward to the day when we join him at the feast in the Kingdom.

## Luke Lesson 8

### The Death and Resurrection of Jesus in Luke

The arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is among the longest sections in each of the gospels, and Luke is no different. For the most part Luke follows Mark's presentation though he adds significant material in some places while in other places he gives a more succinct presentation of the material.

#### The Trial of Jesus

- Questions: What is the key charge for Luke brought against Jesus? What condemns him—and why?

As an example of the latter, Luke narrates the hearing before the high priest and temple council like this:

#### Luke 22:66-71 (ESV)

<sup>66</sup> *When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said,*

<sup>67</sup> *“If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe,*

<sup>68</sup> *and if I ask you, you will not answer.*

<sup>69</sup> *But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”*

<sup>70</sup> *So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.”*

<sup>71</sup> *Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”*

In Matthew 26 and Mark 14 we find false testimony that sought to indict Jesus for blaspheming the temple. Luke does not narrate that. His version on the trial before the chief priest and elders goes right to the main point that convicts Jesus in their eyes. They ask Jesus if he were Christ. Again differs slightly from Mark and Matthew, both of whom have Jesus say, “you say so” (which is a polite way of saying, “yes”). In Luke Jesus challenges the willingness of his accusers to accept what he says (“If I tell you, you will not believe.”) Compare the similar words in John 8:45f; John 5: 42ff and in the Synoptic gospels where Jesus rebukes those who seek a sign from him (Matthew 12:38ff/Mark 8:11f). In Luke Jesus is even more defiant—turning tables on those who would judge him.

The claim to be Messiah would probably not be enough in itself to earn condemnation. After all, many people did expect a Messiah to come at some point. It is his next statement that especially riles his hearers:

***69 But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”***

Again Luke’s story differs slightly from Matthew and Mark:

**Mark 14:61-62 (ESV)**

***61 But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?”***

***62 And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”***

Jesus’ words in Matthew and Mark link back to Daniel 7 and the picture of the Son of Man there:

**Daniel 7:13-14 (ESV)**

***13 “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.***

***14 And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.***

In Matt and Mark Jesus sees to be linking his role as Messiah with the exaltation of the Son of Man.

The words of Jesus also suggest a connection with Psalm 110:

**Psalm 110:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>

***The LORD says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.”***

The “Messiah”/”Son of God” will be called to the right hand of God—which Jesus claims as his destiny.

While Luke lacks the language that evokes Daniel 7, he presents in a simpler form the same idea: that Jesus affirms that as Messiah he will be seated at the right hand of God—exalted and justified by God in his Messiahship.

It is that exaltation that the priests find offensive—it suggests an exalted and even divine status that no man can claim. When Jesus now accepts that he is “the Son of God”—it is not just a presumptuous claim to be the Messiah, but blasphemy. Luke does not use that term (though Matthew and Mark do), but it is implied in the condemnation that follows.

Jesus is condemned because he believes that he is about to be exalted and confirmed as Messiah and Son of God—the cross and the resurrection will justify his claims.

### The Trial of Jesus

- Questions: With what do the priests accuse Jesus before Pilate? What is Pilate’s response—why does he hesitate? Why is Jesus crucified?

**Luke 23:1-16 (ESV)**

*<sup>1</sup> Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate.*

*<sup>2</sup> And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.”*

*<sup>3</sup> And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.”*

*<sup>4</sup> Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.”*

*<sup>5</sup> But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”*

*<sup>6</sup> When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.*

*<sup>7</sup> And when he learned that he belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.*

*<sup>8</sup> When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.*

*<sup>9</sup> So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer.*

*<sup>10</sup> The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.*

*<sup>11</sup> And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate.*

*<sup>12</sup> And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.*

*<sup>13</sup> Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,*

*<sup>14</sup> and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him.*

*<sup>15</sup> Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him.*

*<sup>16</sup> I will therefore punish and release him.”*

**Luke 23:18-25 (ESV)**

***<sup>18</sup> But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—***

***<sup>19</sup> a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.***

***<sup>20</sup> Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus,***

***<sup>21</sup> but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!”***

***<sup>22</sup> A third time he said to them, “Why, what evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.”***

***<sup>23</sup> But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed.***

***<sup>24</sup> So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.***

***<sup>25</sup> He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.***

Luke’s version of Jesus’ trial before Pilate is similar to Mark and Matthew, but in most cases shorter and simpler. Matthew includes events like Pilate’s attempt to get the crowd to choose Jesus’ freedom over Barabbas (Luke mentions Barabbas but without explanation unless you include v17 which is not in the best manuscripts of Luke). Matthew has further material about Pilate’s reluctance to condemn Jesus (including his wife’s dream) which Luke does not, and more detail about the mocking of Jesus. Mark includes more information than Luke and less than Matthew.

Luke does add the brief sending of Jesus over to Herod and the new-found friendship of Pilate and Herod in their agreement about Jesus. This is the Herod, son of Herod the Great of the infancy stories, and ruler over Galilee. This Herod reappears as a chief persecutor of the church in Acts (Acts 12).

The key point Luke makes (with the other gospel writers) is that while Jesus is executed as a rebel against Rome (crucifixion was reserved for traitors and rebels in the Roman empire), there was no real evidence that Jesus serious intended to rebel against Rome. Rather, the real charge against him was that he “mislead the people.” (vv2,5,8). This is a serious charge that relies on Deut 13:

**Deuteronomy 13:5-10 (ESV)**

***<sup>5</sup> But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has taught rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of slavery, to make you leave the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.***

***<sup>6</sup> “If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace***

*or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known,*

*<sup>7</sup> some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other,*

*<sup>8</sup> you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him.*

*<sup>9</sup> But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people.*

*<sup>10</sup> You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*

Of course, they do not stone Jesus to death (as they will Stephen in Acts). Luke 22:6 shows that the priests were eager to find Jesus away from the crowds and similarly the trial shows that they wanted Rome to execute him because they feared his popularity.

Jesus' claim to be Messiah on the face of it would seem to challenge Rome's power—and in the end that was enough for Pilate to go along with the execution. V25 tells us that he (ironically) released the real insurrectionist in order to crucify Jesus.

### **The Death of Jesus**

- Questions: What does Luke add to our knowledge of the crucifixion? What does Jesus pray from the cross—why is that important? What is the significance of the two criminals who die with Jesus?

**Luke 23:26-49 (ESV)**

*<sup>26</sup> And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus.*

*<sup>27</sup> And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him.*

*<sup>28</sup> But turning to them Jesus said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.*

*<sup>29</sup> For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'*

*<sup>30</sup> Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.'*

*<sup>31</sup> For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*

*<sup>32</sup> Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.*

*<sup>33</sup> And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.*

*<sup>34</sup> And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to*

*divide his garments.*

<sup>35</sup> *And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"*

<sup>36</sup> *The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine*

<sup>37</sup> *and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"*

<sup>38</sup> *There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."*

<sup>39</sup> *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!"*

<sup>40</sup> *But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?"*

<sup>41</sup> *And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong."*

<sup>42</sup> *And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."*

<sup>43</sup> *And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."*

<sup>44</sup> *It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,*

<sup>45</sup> *while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.*

<sup>46</sup> *Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.*

<sup>47</sup> *Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!"*

<sup>48</sup> *And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.*

<sup>49</sup> *And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.*

Again Luke follows Matthew and Mark in the main. The unique things he adds to the story of Jesus' crucifixion are:

Vv28-31 A warning to Jerusalem. Luke more than the other gospels shows Jesus in sorrow over his rejection in Jerusalem (see Luke 13:31ff; 19:41)

V34 His cry to the Father to forgive those who crucify him in their ignorance

V42f The faith of the second criminal and Jesus' promise to him

V46 He commends his Spirit to God's hands

The key here is the cry to the Father (vv28ff) to forgive those who in their ignorance crucify him. Sins of ignorance can receive a sacrifice for sins according to Numbers 15:

**Numbers 15:22-25 (ESV)**

***22 “But if you sin unintentionally, and do not observe all these commandments that the LORD has spoken to Moses,***

***23 all that the LORD has commanded you by Moses, from the day that the LORD gave commandment, and onward throughout your generations,***

***24 then if it was done unintentionally without the knowledge of the congregation, all the congregation shall offer one bull from the herd for a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma to the LORD, with its grain offering and its drink offering, according to the rule, and one male goat for a sin offering.***

***25 And the priest shall make atonement for all the congregation of the people of Israel, and they shall be forgiven, because it was a mistake, and they have brought their offering, a food offering to the LORD, and their sin offering before the LORD for their mistake.***

In pleading for the ignorance of his opponents Jesus leaves open the possibility of forgiveness through his sacrifice for them. Jesus faithfully follows the law even in the midst of his opponents' sin. On the other hand Jerusalem's rejection of him opens the city up to terrible judgment. The call for mountains to fall on them echoes Hosea 10:8 and Isaiah 2:19, other times when Israel's idolatry leads to judgment. Note Jesus speaks here to the crowds who mourn his death—not the ones following who mock him. It is the criminal on the cross who believes in him who is promised a place in paradise (v42, 43), not the one who curses him.

What is this “paradise” that Jesus offers? The term refers to “God's Garden” and implies a new creation—a return to a renewed Eden. The Kingdom of God will be what God originally intended for creation.

Then Jesus commits himself to God (v46) in words from Psalm 31:5—the righteous sufferer of the Psalms trusts in God's final deliverance—and dies. In Luke according to the ESV the centurion proclaims, “Surely this man is innocent!” The word in Greek is “dikaios” which means “righteous” or “Justified.”

**Isaiah 53:11-12 (ESV)**

***11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.***

***12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.***

In Matthew and Mark he proclaims, “Surely this man was the Son of God.” This is Messianic language for Mark and Matthew. Luke ties the death of Jesus on the cross more with the righteous servant of Isaiah—a matter of emphasis more than difference since the Servant image was important to Matthew and Mark.

The irony is that those who should know the Christ reject him and even mock him—while the one true “sinner” on the mountain owns his sin and believes in Jesus and is promised salvation. The pagan centurion recognizes Jesus more clearly than the priests. Yet in spite of this rejection, Jesus prays for his persecutors and asks to God to forgive them, accepting his sacrifice because they sinned in ignorance.

### **The Resurrection**

- Question: What does Luke tell us about the resurrection?

#### The Road to Emmaus

A good deal could be said about Luke’s presentation of the resurrection. Like John, he has Peter go to the tomb and see the first evidence of the resurrection (John 20:6-7). Like all the gospels it is women who are the first witnesses to the resurrection, and who find their initial report greeted with skepticism (Mark 16:11; Matthew 28:17).

The great resurrection story for Luke is the story of the two disciples whom Jesus meets as they walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Luke tells us “two of them”—assumedly two of the apostles with whom the women shared the story of the empty tomb and the angels—are walking. Jesus joins them unrecognized by the men. We are told the name of one of the men, Cleopas, but not the other. When their unknown companion asks them what they are talking about, Cleopas responds with the surprise that the man is unaware of the events of the previous days.

What does Cleopas say about Jesus?

- He calls him, “Jesus of Nazareth”
- “A prophet” who was “mighty in word and deed”
- How the chief priests and rulers condemned him to death by crucifixion.

As a summary of Jesus’ life this is not as strong a description of Jesus as we might expect from an apostle.

However he goes on to state: ***But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.***

While Cleopas does not call Jesus, “Messiah” clearly that is what he had hoped he was—and these hopes seem now dashed by the crucifixion.

This is his idea although he knows of the report of the women:

***Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning,***

***<sup>23</sup> and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.***

***<sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”***

Notice again the words: “alive” but not resurrected. The women had seen a “vision” but not him. Clearly the disciples do not understand what they are hearing—the fact of the crucifixion overwhelms the report of the empty tomb.

Jesus however moves to correct their misunderstanding:

***<sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!***

***<sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”***

***<sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.***

Jesus shows them in scripture that the cross was necessary for the resurrection to happen—only through the cross could the Son “Enter into his glory.” We are not told which scriptures Jesus uses to make his point—only that he starts with Moses (the first five books of the Bible) and goes on to the prophets. For Jesus all the Scripture points to the truth of Messiahship.

Encouraged by this, the men ask the man to stay with them. Finally, they recognize that this is Jesus:

**Luke 24:30-35 (ESV)**

***<sup>30</sup> When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them.***

***<sup>31</sup> And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight.***

***<sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”***

<sup>33</sup> *And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together,*

<sup>34</sup> *saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”*

<sup>35</sup> *Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

Note the two things that the disciples note about this experience:

First, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” Looking back they recognized that as Jesus spoke and opened the scriptures to them, their hearts instinctively were receiving this as God’s word.

Then, “he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.” This is almost certainly a reference not only to the event at Emmaus, but even more to the Lord’s Supper and the breaking of the eucharistic bread.

These then become the two key ways the church will continue to experience the resurrection of Jesus: in the teaching of the Scripture and in the Lord’s Supper. Note it is not one or the other, but both. Without Scripture we cannot understand the plan of God. And without the breaking of the bread we cannot fully experience the presence and truth of Jesus. When the disciples return, they find out that Jesus has also appeared to Peter. But, the story of Emmaus suggests that the resurrected Lord is available not just to the leadership of the church but to others, even unnamed, who are open to the Word and to the Sacraments of Jesus.

### **Summary:**

- In the main Luke follows the general outline of Mark and Matthew—sometimes simplifying their narrative and sometimes adding to it.
- In particular Luke emphasizes that Jesus is the “righteous” one who is exalted to the right hand of God, and the Righteous sufferer who commits his spirit to the Lord. He is the righteous one of Is 53 who suffers for our sins.
- In claiming this exalted status the priests feel justified in seeking Jesus’ death as a misleading prophet. They want Pilate to crucify him to deflect blame from the people.
- Jesus on the cross asks forgiveness for his killers as ignorant sinners. He becomes the sacrifice for the sins.
- The disciples are slow to accept the resurrection. The crucifixion has destroyed their idea that Jesus as the Christ. Only when Jesus opens up the Word and breaks the bread do the disciples on the Road to Emmaus recognize the truth. The church continues to meet the resurrected Jesus in the word of the Scriptures and the elements of the sacrament.