

DEEP ROOTS BEARING FRUIT



2021 FEB.-MAR. LESSONS ADULT STUDENTS

ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

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Lesson 6

RAISING THE WIDOW'S SON

Feb
7
2021

Lesson Story: Luke 7:1-17 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 119:105-107

Luke 7:1-17 (NRSV)

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

¹ After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ² A Centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death. ³ When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to come and heal his slave. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy of having you do this for him, ⁵ for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us." ⁶ And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷ therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it." ⁹ When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Jesus Raises the Widow's Son at Nain

¹¹ Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. ¹² As he approached the gate of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, rise!" ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. ¹⁶ Fear seized all of them; and

Luke 7:1-17 (NKJV)

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

¹ Now when He concluded all His sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. ² And a certain Centurion's servant, who was dear to him, was sick and ready to die. ³ So when he heard about Jesus, he sent elders of the Jews to Him, pleading with Him to come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they begged Him earnestly, saying that the one for whom He should do this was deserving, ⁵ "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue."

⁶ Then Jesus went with them. And when He was already not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. ⁷ Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

⁹ When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" ¹⁰ And those who were sent, returning to the house, found the servant well who had been sick.

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain

¹¹ Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. ¹² And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her. ¹³ When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ Then He came and touched the open

they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen among us!” and “God has looked favorably on his people!”¹⁷ This word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country.

coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”¹⁵ So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

¹⁶ Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us”; and, “God has visited His people.”¹⁷ And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

Watch the Dramatization of Luke 7:1–17: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OAn5lec0R4>

Reflect upon how this dramatization impacts your view on the lesson story.

EXAMINING THE STORY

The lesson story gives two examples of Jesus performing miracles for those who believe in His miracle working power. Verses 1–10 start with the example of the Centurion’s servant who fell gravely ill. Jesus healed the servant from afar. Verses 11–17 depict Jesus raising a widow’s son from the dead while they were carrying the son in the coffin. These examples are examined more closely below.

JESUS HEALS A CENTURION’S SERVANT

In the story, the Centurion appears as a devout, kind, humble man—yet, all the same he was a Centurion—not only a Gentile, but a Roman soldier, and an instrument of Israel’s oppression. Under Roman law, a master had the right to kill his slave, and it was expected that he would do so if the slave became ill or injured to the point where he could not work. Jesus did not hesitate to go to the Centurion’s house. However, would Jesus have entered a Gentile’s house? It was completely against Jewish custom, but not against God’s law.

The Centurion also knew about the military chain of command, and how the orders of one in authority were unquestioningly obeyed. The Centurion’s understanding of Jesus’ spiritual authority made Jesus marvel. His simple confidence in the ability of Jesus’ mere word to heal showed a faith that was free of superstitious reliance on merely external things.

JESUS RAISES THE WIDOW’S SON AT NAIN

A dead man was being carried out: Any funeral is a tragedy, but this was a special loss. The deceased was

the only son of his mother, and the mother herself was a widow. The loss of her only son meant a miserable future for the widow. A large crowd from the city was with her.

We are specifically told of the compassion of Jesus on this occasion. He instantly understood the situation and had sympathy upon the widow, giving her hope despite the tragedy of the situation.

The stories of the healing of the Centurion’s servant and the raising of the widow’s son have been told to encourage believers to have faith in God for miracles and healing. While the miraculous healing of the dead prompts awe of the dominion and authority of Jesus, these stories also can prompt one to consider how we can have this same faith and stir God’s compassion in our situations. First, consider the Centurion—(1) a man of great authority; (2) a man with awareness of his ability to direct others (verses 3, 8); and (3) a man of demonstrated authority who could send elders of the Jews and his friends to plead to Jesus on his behalf (verses 3, 6). He demonstrates how reverence for Jesus as well as faith in Jesus’ divine authority to heal by only His word can result in healing if only we seek Him (verse 7). Then, there is the widow, who is noted to have received healing of her only son by coming close to Jesus (verse 12). Finally, there is the Centurion’s servant and the widow’s son, both of whom had limited ability due to sickness or inability due to death, to advocate for themselves. Yet, they received healing by connection to those who could obtain compassion from Jesus on their behalf (verses 10, 14). The Lord’s compassion is unchanged, and we are challenged to examine our reverent and faithful pursuit of Jesus while also having gratitude for the compassion granted to us through grace, by drawing close to Him, or resulting from being connected to those who are connected to Him.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder which character in the story you have been or find most relatable in your life and why.
2. I wonder why Jesus departed from Jewish law to heal the servant of a Roman soldier who was oppressing His people. I wonder who or what

groups are some examples of “Roman soldiers” that you believe Jesus would show compassion today.

3. I wonder how we can exercise our faith in this present age to facilitate the healing power of Jesus.

LIFE APPLICATION

List three things, situations, plans or goals in your life or in society that appear ‘dead’. What can be done to resuscitate these things and bring them back to life? How would they impact you, the community, and the church?

CONCLUSION

The passage depicts the unorthodox healing of a Centurion’s servant because of the strong faith and humility of the Roman soldier. It was stated that Jesus marveled at the faith of the Centurion and abandoned Jewish law to help him. When God sees our faith in action, Jesus moves to work on our behalf. Similarly, Jesus had compassion for the widow who was mourning her only son. Because of His empathy for her situation, He resurrected her only son, giving her hope for a brighter future. As believers, we can be encouraged in knowing that Jesus is with us. Therefore, this week, consider how we can use our faith to pursue Jesus to move in our situations.

PRAYER

Lord God, help us to be mindful that You are as present today as You were in these passages. We thank You for giving us the opportunity to exercise our faith in each and every area of our lives. We know that our faith brings healing, restoration, and resuscitates situations that seemed dead to the naked eye only through the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank You for the assurance that in all things, we remain victorious! In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Feb
14
2021

Lesson 7:

TRANSFIGURATION

Lesson Story: Luke 9:28-45 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 36:5-10

Luke 9:28-45 (KJV)

²⁸ And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray.

²⁹ And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.

³⁰ And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:

³¹ Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.

³² But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him.

³³ And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.

³⁴ While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud.

³⁵ And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.

³⁶ And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

³⁷ And it came to pass, that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met him.

³⁸ And, behold, a man of the company cried out, saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son: for he is mine only child.

³⁹ And, lo, a spirit taketh him, and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again, and bruising him hardly departeth from him.

Luke 9:28-45 (NIV)

The Transfiguration

²⁸ About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.²⁹ As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.³⁰ Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus.³¹ They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.³² Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.³³ As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

³⁴ While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.³⁵ A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”³⁶ When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy

³⁷ The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.³⁸ A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child.³⁹ A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him.⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”

⁴¹ “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”

⁴² Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus

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Luke 3:1-22 (KJV) - continued

⁴⁰ And I besought thy disciples to cast him out; and they could not.

⁴¹ And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, and suffer you? Bring thy son hither.

⁴² And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father.

⁴³ And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples,

⁴⁴ Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men.

⁴⁵ But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask him of that saying.

Luke 3:1-22 (NKJV) - continued

rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴ "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men." ⁴⁵ But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

Reflecting on Mark 4:37–40, have you ever felt that God was sleeping during your time of trouble?

Consider what you might be missing when you are ‘sleeping’ in God’s presence.

EXAMINING THE STORY

The lesson story begins by letting us know it is prayer time. Our Lord was without question a man of prayer, and the scriptures no doubt entreat us to pray well beyond what most of us are inclined. Pray that you enter not into temptation (Matthew 26:41). Man ought always pray and not faint (Luke 18:1). Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Jesus did not go alone to pray, taking with Him Peter, James, and John. They were blessed to have the opportunity to experience what happened when Jesus went into God’s throne room of prayer. As a result, it is unsurprising that these would go on to become pillars of truth and faith in the infant fellowship of believers testifying to His resurrection.

This trip to the mountain to pray truly revealed what happens when prayer is what it should be. If you can be honest about it, when we pray, it is most often tied to some need, crisis, anxiety, fear, etc., where we are almost invariably seeking intervention by God that will be to our liking. If that is true, does it then follow that the greater portion of our praying is asking God to intervene in life and bring about changes that are external to our personal essence and very being? Yet, the text reads, “...as he was praying the appearance of his face changed”. The experience of heavenly glory is in fact possible in the midst of our worst circumstances or beyond our wildest imagined fears.

Everything about this mountain top retreat speaks to the transforming power of communion with heaven. To truly pray is to find the escape hatch, thereby gaining release from the temporal things that seek to cloud out the glory of God. Have you ever pondered how Moses could be on the mount of God for forty days with apparently nothing to eat or drink, while not losing strength, perspective, or hope but gaining more of each? Although we often say prayer changes things, we are nonetheless more inclined to miss what is set before us. The thing that needs changing the most is likely the thing we are thinking

about the least—ourselves! When Moses came down from the mountain, the Bible tells us his face was shining with the glory of God (Exodus 34:29–35).

All the while, the chosen three slept. It seems like every time Jesus is engaging in serious prayers, the gang is dozing off. That’s ironic, because when the storm was about to tear the boat apart, the disciples woke Jesus asking whether He cared if they perished at sea (Mark 4:38). Jesus however, was sleeping during the storm because He enjoyed the peace of God which comes from effectual prayer (Philippians 4:6, 7). How much more might the three have gotten from being there if they had simply stayed awake and vigilant? Numerous blessings we may never know because we are not tuned in to Him who is full of grace and truth.

However, the text tells us that the three disciples did see Jesus’ glory as well as the two men that stood with Him. We are given no clues on how they came to identify Moses and Elijah as the persons in conversation with Jesus. Nor do we have any hints about how much time was lost sleeping versus the amount of time they were able to witness the encounter. It may well be that God spares us the heartache of disclosing anything that might suggest we miss many, if not most, blessings while in a trance dealing with life affairs and sleeping.

If we can wrest ourselves from sleep, we might discover a considerable blessing in this passage. An attentive look at the text tells us that the glory manifested on this mount retreat is attributed to Christ, not to Moses nor Elijah (Luke 9:29). The transcendent radiance and splendor of the experience belongs to none other than the Son of God and Him alone. Moses and Elijah are merely the beneficiaries and this is no small matter. After Peter has hardly gathered himself from his recently disturbed sleep, he dives into what appears to be the tail end of a miraculous encounter and generously suggests building three booths or tabernacles. These would be of the type familiar to the Jewish people as part of their regular festival which began on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:34).

This is problematic on a number of levels. First, the provision of booths might be indicative of some notion that this will be a permanent resort or location to which they might retreat with some measure of frequency. Second, could he be thinking they can indefinitely escape the call of service to the world by lingering there on the mountain in the midst of eternal glory, apart from the daily grind and hardships of life? Finally, and of grave import, the

suggestion to provide three booths gives a false equivalency between the three men engaged in divine communion. Peter shows no evidence of having discerned that the glory engulfing them on the mountain belonged only to Jesus.

The text tells us that Peter was apparently still talking when heaven interrupted him. Look carefully at the three things which occur in sequence of his being abruptly cut off from speaking. First there is the escalating manifestation of Jesus' eternal glory. Second, as they were engulfed by the cloud there is the verbal response from heaven itself. Third and finally, when the voice had spoken and the cloud was dispersed, their eyes fell on Jesus who was standing alone, thereby leaving no potential for an erroneous false equivalence to be drawn. While it may be obvious that Moses represents the Law and Elijah the Prophets, both in concert point ultimately to one thing – God's Christ. It is Christ Jesus who fulfills all of that to which the law and the prophets testify.

Verses 37 to 45 bring us to the next day after the mountain top experience of those who were witnesses to Jesus in His eternal glory. It was not an extended stay but a foretaste of glory. The next day is a return to ministry as usual, where once again the crowds are pressing and competing for the attention of Jesus. It was an occasion where in Jesus' absence, a man had taken his only son and brought him to the disciples seeking deliverance from the unclean spirit that afflicted him. With Jesus on the mountain, accompanied by Peter, James and John, the disciples had done all they could in what proved to be a futile endeavor leaving them both frustrated and humiliated. The boy's father was not only disappointed but likely at the point of despair the next day when he was obliged by Jesus who compassionately requested that he bring his son. Every anxiety and cause for despair dissipated at the presence of Christ who offered a much desired word which rebuked the unclean spirit and restored to the father a healthy son.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder why the disciples did not tell anyone what they had seen and what would have been

your response if you were in their position.

2. I wonder what are some examples of God's glory and supremacy being revealed to humanity.
3. I wonder how you can deepen in your awareness of being in the presence of God and avoid 'sleeping' when God is revealing things to you or around you.

LIFE APPLICATION

As we discussed in our lesson, prayer changes things. Yet, we are more inclined to miss what is set before us, and sometimes the thing that needs changing the most is likely the thing we are thinking about the least—ourselves.

After listening to the selection for this exercise, how do these lyrics help you to be more focused in prayer and communion with God? What would you add or take away?

CONCLUSION

The first commandment tells us we should not have anything in God's place or that we elevate it to a status of that which is equivalent with God. This lesson gives us the occasion to examine how in very subtle ways, that command can be violated even if only innocently. Most fittingly, the apostle Peter ends his second letter with these words:

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever

(2 Peter 3:18).

Peter provides an example of how we can grow from an underdeveloped embryonic grasp of Jesus, to one with the depth and appreciation of a seasoned and mature sanctified man or woman of God. May we each also continue, as did Peter, to find a deepening awareness of the awesome supremacy of Christ over all things.

PRAYER

Heavenly God, we thank You that You are sovereign and supreme over all things in heaven and earth. Give us a deepening understanding and appreciation of who Jesus is and what He is able to do. We ask that You save us from any inclination to diminish the immeasurable greatness of Your glory and power displayed on the mount and to exalt You only. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Lesson 8:

GOOD SAMARITAN

Feb
21
2021

Lesson Story: Luke 10:25-42 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 15

Luke 10:25-42 (NIV)

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

²⁵ On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶ “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷ He answered, “‘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, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

²⁸ “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹ But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

At the Home of Martha and Mary

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he

Luke 10:25-42 (The Message)

Defining “Neighbor”

²⁵ Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”

²⁶ He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”

²⁷ He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.”

²⁸ “Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live.”

²⁹ Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor’?”

³⁰⁻³² Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw him he angled across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

³³⁻³⁵ “A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’

³⁶ “What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?”

³⁷ “The one who treated him kindly,” the religion scholar responded.

Jesus said, “Go and do the same.”

Mary and Martha

³⁸⁻⁴⁰ As they continued their travel, Jesus entered a village. A woman by the name of Martha welcomed him and made him feel quite at home. She had a sister, Mary, who sat before the Master, hanging on every word he said. But Martha was pulled away by all she had to do in the kitchen. Later, she

came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹ "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

stepped in, interrupting them. "Master, don't you care that my sister has abandoned the kitchen to me? Tell her to lend me a hand."

⁴¹⁻⁴² The Master said, "Martha, dear Martha, you're fussing far too much and getting yourself worked up over nothing. One thing only is essential, and Mary has chosen it—it's the main course, and won't be taken from her."

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

Watch the video on “The Parable of the Good Samaritan”.

Reflecting on this video and other experiences, how are you reminded that the grace of God and the Holy Spirit are still speaking and actively guiding the actions of people today?

EXAMINING THE STORY

The burning animosity between the Jewish community and the Samaritan community is the key historical note in this story. According to Professor Lawrence Schiffman of New York University, the origin of the conflict started around the 6th century B.C., where Assyrian conquest led to the creation of hybrid practices of the Jewish faith. The Samaritans practiced one of these hybrid versions of Judaism, to the complete rejection of the mainstream Jewish community. This conflict was evident in the 520 B.C. rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, where the Jewish community rejected the help of the Samaritans on the basis of the perceived “impurity” of their faith. In retaliation, the Samaritans constantly appealed to the Persian government to block the rebuilding of the temple. The resulting conflict was a constant in the lives of these communities to the point where the idea of one helping the other was nearly unfathomable, incapable of being fully understood. Jesus’ story of a Samaritan helping a Jewish person would be a huge “plot twist” or a surprise ending for His audience.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a well-known illustration of the expectation Jesus has for us to love one another. Seeking to test Jesus, a lawyer asks Jesus what shall he do to inherit eternal life, and Jesus responds with a question: What is written in the law? Demonstrating awareness of the law, the man correctly cited Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He further questions Jesus, regarding who is one’s neighbor, prompting the telling of the parable with a concluding question. Jesus asks the man which person was the neighbor, resulting in another correct response: “The one who had mercy on him.” (Luke 10:37, NIV).

Upon examination of the passage, the lawyer seems to already have the correct answers, just as many of us do today. Yet, a quick evaluation of our society reveals the problem may not be lack of knowledge of how we should treat our neighbors, but rather how we explicitly or implicitly try to narrow the scope of application by limiting those we define as our ‘neighbor’. Consider how this parable would be told today. In thinking about groups in American society, who have been some of the ‘Samaritans’? Who has been cast as ‘mainstream Americans’ and at the expense of what other groups? How can we see these ‘insider vs outsider’ themes in American politics today? What has been the effect of an ‘us vs them’ political agenda? This parable serves as a reminder that the social justice message of radically imagining a different society, where distribution of respect, status, wealth, and dignity are not dependent on labels groups give one another. It is the requirement for every Christian.

This story has traditionally been told to remind believers to practice compassion and care for the ‘least of these’ and interpreted as a call to action for Christians to help others who are marginalized in society. Yet, the conclusion of our lesson provides the story of Martha and Mary. Martha adhered to the hospitality expectations and was busy meeting the needs of her guests by working in the kitchen. Then, there was Mary, who sat before and listened intently to the Master. Upon Martha’s request for Jesus to implore Mary to help her with the work, Jesus admonished Martha that Mary had chosen the better in prioritizing time in His presence and listening to Him. This story reminds us to pursue service to, promote the well-being of, and seek justice for our neighbors, but we should not neglect our purpose as disciples to spend time with and listen to God. Out of our love for and relationship with God, we are driven to and enlightened on how to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matthew 22:36–40).

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder what are the best reasons the priest and Levite could provide for not stopping to assist the injured man.
2. I wonder who are the ‘injured people’ of your

community and American society, and how you have seen their condition addressed.

3. I wonder what are some opportunities you could look for this week to help an 'injured person'.

LIFE APPLICATION

Many of our current economic safety net programs such as Social Security and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, are the result of re-imagining American society to help those most in need. If you could create three programs to add to our safety net, what would they be, who would they include, and why? Try drawing your anti-poverty

safety net, with each thread labelled for clarity.

CONCLUSION

In addition to the parable of the Good Samaritan, we are explicitly instructed to love God and our neighbors (Matthew 22:36–40). Dr. Cornel West once stated, 'Justice is what love looks like in public.' Evaluating public life, consider areas where society misses the mark of showing love to our neighbors and what solutions you can provide. This week, ask God how you can apply your knowledge of the right thing to do to meet the need(s) of your neighbors.

PRAYER

Eternal God, thank You for being the lover of my soul. Thank You for being the father and mother of my heavenly family. Thank You for the gift of Your son, Jesus. I ask forgiveness for my sins, Lord, because You love me, even though I fall short daily. Help me to see Your image in the people I meet and help me Lord to reflect Your nature to them in my words and deeds. Like the Good Samaritan, Lord, help me to give without expectation. In Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Feb
28
2021

Lesson 9:

LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM

Lesson Story: Luke 13:1-9, 31-35 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 122

Luke 13:1-9 (NIV)

¹ Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. ⁷ So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’ ⁸ “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’”

Luke 13:31-35 (NIV)

³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.” ³² He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ ³³ In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

³⁴ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Luke 13:1-9 (NKJV)

¹ There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? ³ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

⁶ He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ ⁸ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’

Luke 13:31-35 (NKJV)

³¹ On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, “Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.” ³² And He said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.’ ³³ Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.

³⁴ “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵ See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

Fix your Plate: Reflecting over this past week, add any actions you committed to your plate below for which you have sought or should seek repentance.

Looking at your plate, which one of these sins have you seen most stigmatized, and why do you think this is the case?



EXAMINING THE STORY

This week's story continues in Luke, with Jesus proclaiming in Chapter 13 that repentance was necessary. Without repentance, the outcome is clear – the people will perish. While the exact locale of these teachings is not documented, Luke 13:22 notes Jesus was moving through the towns and villages en route to Jerusalem. While Jesus taught, He had a familiar group in the crowd – the Pharisees – who challenged His teachings and warned Him to leave the area. However, Jesus articulated and maintained a commitment to His purpose.

At the onset of the story, Jesus is met with reports of Galileans being sought and killed in the temple by Pilate and Roman authorities while the Galileans were offering sacrifices. Responding to these reports, Jesus did not react with bias regarding the affliction of His fellow Galileans. Rather, Jesus asks a rhetorical question regarding whether these public executions were a sign of the executed Galileans being worse sinners than others, repeating a commonplace belief

that earthly suffering correlated with one's sins (Deuteronomy 28–30; Job 4:7). Jesus rejects this notion and outlines that one must repent of sins or perish, continuing the message of repentance from John the Baptist (Matthew 21:18–19; Mark 11:12–14; Luke 3:1–17). Further, Jesus rejects a hierarchy of sins in citing the demise of those killed by the tower of Siloam. While Luke 13:4–5 does not detail the circumstances regarding the fall of the tower, Jesus again poses a rhetorical question to challenge the perceived correlation between offense (sin) and tragic death (earthly suffering). In asking whether the death of eighteen people in the collapse of this tower indicated these individuals were worse sinners – thus deserving of this tragic death – Jesus unequivocally clarifies that all will perish without repentance. Thus, Christians have a shared purpose to repent of sins and fail to meet that purpose without repentance.

The prevalence of fig trees in the Bible dates back to Genesis 3:7, where Adam and Eve sewed fig tree leaves together to make loincloths, with continued

reference throughout the Bible (Judges 9:11, Jeremiah 24:3; Matthew 21:19–21). In evoking the fig tree in this parable metaphorically, Jesus first notes a man expectantly went to look for fruit on a fig tree in his vineyard for three years. Upon seeing no fruit, the man issues judgment for the tree to be cut down and questions the use of resources to maintain an unproductive tree; we see a similar judgment issued by Jesus, in Matthew 21:18–22 when he cursed a fig tree bearing no fruit. Yet, the parable documents an intercession by the caretaker of the vineyard, who successfully advocated for the tree to be allowed one more year to bear fruit. Like the owner of the vineyard, God shows His people patience and mercy when they fall short. Further, Jesus as an Intercessor not only serves as an advocate in Heaven, but also cares for and supports Christian growth so that people can have new life. Moreover, there are intercessors on earth, as seen in ministries like Intercessory Prayer, who stand in the gap for those in need of repentance. These persistent efforts of intercession can move God to mercy, yet, the call remains for the tree (and we God's people) to bear fruit (repent) or perish.

In Luke 13:31, it is questionable as to why the Pharisees warned Jesus regarding Herod's pursuit. At this point, it is clear the Pharisees were at odds with Jesus as they took issue with Jesus allowing a sinner to touch and defile Him (Luke 7:39) and failing to ritualistically wash before dinner (Luke 11:38). In the latter account, Jesus publicly rebuked the Pharisees and they began to be hostile and question Jesus with intent to use His words against Him (Luke 11:39–54). Yet, the Pharisees, who were strict adherents to the law and purity practices, also did not consort with Herod; rather, these two factions maintained tolerance due to the governmental authority of Herod and influential authority of the Pharisees.

While the Pharisees speculatively warned Jesus to use Herod's pursuit to drive Jesus out of the area and remove His threat to their influence, Jesus remains steadfast in His teaching. Jesus references Herod as a fox, which contradicts prior teachings to not curse the leader of the people (Exodus 22:28; Acts 23:5). However, He follows in the line of prophets, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, to rebuke an unjust ruler (Isaiah 1:23; Ezekiel 22:27; Hosea 7:3–7). Also, Jesus aligns Himself with the rejection of prior

prophets in verse 34, but not without foreshadowing His own death in verse 33. In outlining He would reach His goal and fulfill His earthly purpose on the third day, Jesus details His death and resurrection; He depicts His purpose as not only alleviating the temporal needs of people on earth through driving out demons and healing while providing everlasting life through His work in His death and resurrection. Jesus shows signs of humanity in His longing for Jerusalem's salvation, without it coming to fruition due to the people's unwillingness. The depth of Jesus' desire for Jerusalem to be saved is magnified in His weeping over the city upon His last return before death (Luke 19:41–44). Jesus concluded by conditioning His return to the people once they welcomed Him with the royal greeting quoted from Psalm 118:26, or acknowledge Him upon judgment.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder whether the orchestration of the hierarchy of sins is grounded in nature vs. nurture.
2. I wonder how the parable of the fig tree comports with your viewpoint of being a part of the legacy of benefiting from an intercessor and/or acting as an intercessor.
3. I wonder what Jesus' revelation about His purpose, not only involving healing and casting out demons, but also His death and resurrection reveals about the purpose of those who follow Him.

LIFE APPLICATION

Count Me In...

Consider the requests below and your likely response.

- 1) A good friend calls you this afternoon and states her son became ill and needs a life-saving heart transplant. She asks you to join her in intercessory prayer each day after work this week. What is your response?
- 2) A good friend calls you this afternoon and states her son became ill and needs a kidney transplant.

She asks you to join her in intercessory prayer each day after work this week. What is your response?

- 3) A good friend calls you this afternoon and states her son became ill and needs a kidney transplant. She asks you to join her in intercessory prayer each day after work this month. What is your response?
- 4) A good friend calls you this afternoon and states her adult son has quit his job and booked a one-way ticket to become a missionary in a dangerous part of the world. She asks you to join her in intercessory prayer each day after work this week. What is your response?
- 5) A good friend calls you this afternoon and states her adult son has quit his job and booked a one-way ticket to become a missionary in a dangerous

part of the world. She asks you to join her in intercessory prayer each day until his unknown return. What is your response?

Evaluating your responses, what impacted your decision, and why?

CONCLUSION

In today's story, Jesus outlined there was no hierarchy of sin, but all stand in need of repentance. In using the metaphor of the fig tree, He reveals the consequences of unrepentance – people perish. However, this outcome is not purely formulaic as He also intercedes for His people and makes continual efforts to grow His people. Moreover, His work on our behalf was not relegated to promoting the temporal well-being of people on earth but resulted in the knowing and willing sacrifice of His life.

PRAYER

Lord God, help us to repent and turn to You as You require of us. Thank you for the continued intercessions on our behalf. Help us to pursue You and mirror as intercessors and walk in purpose for You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Lesson 10:

LOST SHEEP,
COIN, SONMar
7
2021

Lesson Story: Luke 15:1-32 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 119:167-176

Luke 15:1-32 (NIV)

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³ Then Jesus told them this parable: ⁴ “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵ And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶ and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins[a] and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ ¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe

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Luke 15:1-32 (NKJV)

The Parable of the Lost Sheep

¹ Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” ³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’ ⁷ I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

The Parable of the Lost Coin

⁸ “Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’ ¹⁰ Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he

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famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.”’

²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. ²³ And bring the fattened calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. ²⁷ And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fattened calf.’

²⁸ “But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. ³⁰ But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fattened calf for him.’

³¹ “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. ³² It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

The story of the Prodigal Son is often focused on the wayward younger son who spends all of his inheritance on “riotous living,” and having run out of money, is finally reduced to feeding pigs and yet starving himself. The older son speculates that the younger son must have wasted his money on prostitutes, but the older son has no way of knowing how his brother lost all his money. He simply assumes his brother must have spent his money in this way. Is it possible that the younger son’s problem was not his only, but rather a problem that began with a toxic relationship between the two brothers?

The elder brother has issues of his own. Although he received his inheritance and opted to stay home with his father, the elder brother resents the fact that his younger brother could be welcomed home in spite of his brother’s wasteful behavior and, therefore, refused to celebrate his sibling’s homecoming.

The author John Bradshaw, in his best-selling book *On the Family*, writes, “An addiction is a pathological relationship to any mood-altering experience that has life-damaging consequences.” Reimagining this parable as a story of overcoming addictions to “mood-altering experiences,” whether it is alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, gambling, work, religion etc., what steps may need to be taken before the lost son can recover and be welcomed home?

EXAMINING THE STORY

It is important to note that Jesus tells these parables to people outside the temple (tax collectors and

other sinners) who have gathered to hear Him because they have heard that He has healed the sick and performed other amazing miracles. This is interesting because the scribes and Pharisees, the traditionally religious people inside the temple, are more interested in maligning Jesus than they are in listening to Him; in Luke 15:2b, the religious elite grumble, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Jesus then proceeds to tell not one, but three stories, presumably heard by all who remained in earshot of His voice. There are three groups represented as Jesus tells the stories: Jesus represents God; the common people, who gather to hear Jesus, represent people who seek relationship with God; and the religious elite, who complain about Jesus’ meeting with “sinners,” represent the hypocritical nature of the religious people who prioritize public piety over personal relationship.

In the story of the lost sheep, the shepherd represents God or the “good shepherd,” while the 99 sheep represent the religious elite, and the one lost sheep represents the sinner. Heaven rejoices at finding even one lost sheep and, thus, is certainly cause for celebration.

In the story of the lost coin, the woman represents the owner of a dowry used to show that she is married by sewing the coins into a dress or tiara. To lose even one coin is to mar the symbolism of her marriage and thus break the bond between her and her groom. Therefore, finding the single coin restores the right relationship with her groom and calls for a celebration.

In the parable of the lost son(s), the father represents God who always stands ready to forgive those who humbly confess and repent of their sinful ways. The younger son represents the lost children of God outside the church, while the older son represents the lost children of God inside the church. The heart of God grieves the lost both inside and outside the church but rejoices when even one sinner repents and returns to the fold. Here again, there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. The problem often overlooked in this story is that we do not know if the elder son ever repents of his unrighteous anger or joins the celebration.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. Of the so-called seven deadly sins (pride, greed, anger, envy, lust, sloth, gluttony), I wonder which ones are most evident in the story of the lost son.
2. Given the elder son's attitude, I wonder how certain are you that the elder brother will be found.
3. I wonder how much of these stories are more about God seeking us, than they are about us seeking God.

LIFE APPLICATION

Who are you in this story? Are you a prodigal, a Pharisee, or a servant? Are you the rebellious son or daughter, lost and far from God? Are you the self-righteous Pharisee, no longer capable of rejoicing when a sinner returns to God?

Are you a lost sinner seeking salvation and finding the Father's love? Are you standing to the side, watching and wondering how the Father could ever forgive you?

Have you perhaps hit rock bottom, come to your senses, and decided to run to God's open arms of compassion and mercy? Or are you one of the servants in the household, rejoicing with the father when a lost son finds his way home?

Consider if you are or the time when you were 'lost' or someone who you believe is lost. Write a note of encouragement of the joy that you know or believe awaits one in being found.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the parable of the lost son, the father (who represents God) declares to his older son, "But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." Note that he does not say, "This brother of yours was bad and is now good." This is significant because it reminds us that God loves us not because of what we have done (or not done). On the contrary, God loves us because of who God is. In spite of what we have done or not done, "If we confess our sins, [God] is faithful and just to remove our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). This week, reflect on the diligence of God to seek out the lost and how this impacts or impacted your life.

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank You for Your unconditional love for us, Your children. Thank You that even when we abandon You, You are ever faithful to Your promise never to leave us or forsake us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Lesson 11:

RICH MAN AND LAZARUS

Mar
14
2021

Lesson Story: Luke 16:19-31 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 41:1-3

Luke 16:19-31 (KJV)

¹⁹ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: ²⁰ And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, ²¹ And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; ²³ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. ²⁵ But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. ²⁶ And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. ²⁷ Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: ²⁸ For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. ²⁹ Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. ³⁰ And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. ³¹ And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

Luke 16:19-31 (NIV)

¹⁹ "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. ²⁰ At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores ²¹ and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²² "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³ In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' ²⁵ "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. ²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

²⁷ "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, ²⁸ for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

²⁹ "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'³⁰ "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'³¹ "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

Watch the Video: [Saints in 60 Seconds: Dorothy Day](#)

As the Vietnam War raged on, the pacifist Catholic Peace Movement participated in peaceful protests around the country. In November of 1965, Dorothy Day gave a speech at a protest that took place in Union Square in New York City. Here is a portion of what she said regarding those who are less fortunate and those who are well off:

“It is not just Vietnam, it is South Africa, it is Nigeria, the Congo, Indonesia, all of Latin America. It is not just the pictures of all the women and children who have been burnt alive in Vietnam, or the men who have been tortured, and died. It is the fact that whether we like it or not, we are Americans. We are warm and fed and secure. We are the most powerful nation. We are eating while there is famine in the world. Scripture tells us that the picture of judgment presented to us by Jesus is of Dives sitting and feasting with his friends while Lazarus sat hungry at the gate, the dogs, the scavengers of the East, licking his sores. We are the Dives. Woe to the rich! We are the rich. The works of mercy are the opposite of the works of war, feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, nursing the sick, visiting the prisoner...”

(The Catholic Worker, 1967)

Reflecting upon this video, how do you feel inclined to respond to those who are less fortunate and more well off?

EXAMINING THE STORY

Today’s story encompasses a parable where there was an unnamed rich man who lived in luxury every day, but there was a beggar named Lazarus at his gate. After both succumbed to death, the rich man went to Hades and the beggar was taken to Abraham’s side. The rich man requested Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool his tongue—a request that was denied. Further, the rich man requested Lazarus be sent to his family to warn them to repent. Again, the rich man’s request is denied because if his brothers did not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone is risen from the dead.

This parable contrasts a life of luxury on earth followed by misery after death (the rich man) with a life of misery on earth followed by comfort after death (Lazarus). Notably, the rich man had great resources: dressed in purple and fine linen, lived in luxury, and had overflow of crumbs to fall from his table (v. 19–21). While the story does not tell whether the rich man knew of Lazarus’s dire state, he did seem to know who Lazarus was in being able to call him by name in requesting relief in Hades (v. 23). After the rich man failed to show compassion to the beggar, he then became the beggar after death.

Our lesson story reveals the rich man had the means to care for Lazarus, but did not. Often times, this story can prompt a comparison to wealth inequality that exists in America. Consider a 2018 Brookings Institution report that states American households held over \$113 trillion in assets. If this figure was divided evenly by the population, each person would be allocated \$343,000 (<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/06/25/six-facts-about-wealth-in-the-united-states/>). This allocation could address many poverty-associated issues. However, our wealth is not solely tied to our financial resources.

Similar to the rich man, we all have something or some way to care for others. Perhaps, you have time to volunteer, technical knowledge to share, wisdom to impart, and prayers to lift up. Further, consider how many Lazarus’ lie at your gate asking for crumbs from your table. While the rich man “had it going on”, there is a warning to us today that there are consequences for our actions on earth. If our hearts and works do not reflect God’s love, the indwelling of God’s Holy Spirit, and a servant’s heart for our neighbors, we won’t make it into the kingdom.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder how treatment of the poor impacts your relationship with God here on earth.
2. I wonder if storing up resources for yourself or family can be counter to the call to take care of the ‘Lazaruses’ of the world.
3. I wonder how you can make a positive impact on a ‘Lazarus’ at your gate.

LIFE APPLICATION

There is an obvious weight to our service to the poor as this parable results in eternity in Hades for the rich man and eternity in heaven for Lazarus (Proverbs 28:27). Brainstorm within your groups how we can involve ourselves in servicing those less fortunate. Once you have established a list of at least 5 ways, select 3 ways that can realistically be an option for our class.

The Borgen Project is an organization that calls attention to the world's poverty. Here is a list of suggestions on how to get involved to end poverty:

<https://www.borgenmagazine.com/community-service-ideas-end-poverty/>.

CONCLUSION

War, pestilence, and famine is inevitable. The World Bank estimates that 1 billion of the world's population live on just \$1.90 per day (Poverty Around the World). So, service to those who are less fortunate is pervasive (Mark 14:7). This week, reflect on the state of the world and how it impacts the collective Christian witness. How can you make an impact?

PRAYER

Lord God, thank You for always seeing us, even when we do not see others. Lord, open our eyes that we might see, and incline our heart to care for those at our 'gates'. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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Lesson 12:

ZACCHAEUS

Lesson Story: Luke 18:31-19:10 | Old Testament Reading: Psalm 84:1-4, 10-12

Luke 18:31-43 (NRSV)

A Third Time Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³¹ Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. ³³ After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.” ³⁴ But they understood nothing about all these things; in fact, what he said was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

Jesus Heals a Blind Beggar Near Jericho

³⁵ As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth[a] is passing by.” ³⁸ Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” ³⁹ Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” ⁴⁰ Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me see again.” ⁴² Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” ⁴³ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Luke 19:1-10 (NRSV)

Jesus and Zacchaeus

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and

Luke 18:31-43 (NIV)

Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time

³¹ Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³² He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; ³³ they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”

³⁴ The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

A Blind Beggar Receives His Sight

³⁵ As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

³⁸ He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

³⁹ Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁰ Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, ⁴¹ “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.

⁴² Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” ⁴³ Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

Luke 19:1-10 (NIV)

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since

said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.”⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.”⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.”⁹ Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

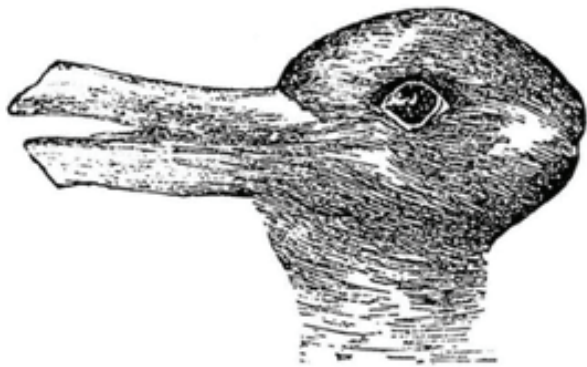
Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

Look at this picture and tell us what you see; your answer can say a lot about you.



EXAMINING THE STORY

At the onset of today's lesson, for the third time, Jesus foretells of his death and resurrection. However, His disciples did not understand or refused to comprehend what they were being told. If the latter, from a psychological standpoint, denial of truth or a refusal to accept truth can be a defense mechanism to reduce anxiety about disturbing events. Yet, Jesus continued to express and demonstrate His earthly mission in His encounters with a blind beggar and a tax collector.

While traveling through Jericho, Jesus gives sight to the blind: physical sight to a beggar and spiritual sight to Zacchaeus. According to 2016 statistics from the National Foundation for the Blind, visual disability impacts 7,675,600 Americans over the age of 16, or 2.4% of this population (<https://www.nfb.org/resources/blindness-statistics>). Globally, the World Health Organization reported in 2010 that there were approximately 285 million individuals who were visually impaired, while 39 million people meet the criteria for blindness (<https://www.who.int/blindness/publications/globaldata/en/>). While we can enumerate the statistics of physical blindness, imagine how many of us are spiritually blind and in need of our eyes to be opened.

At the onset, Jesus enters Jericho and encounters a man who calls out to Him using the Messianic title, "Son of David". Despite the crowds trying to silence him, the beggar continued to call out, "Jesus, Son of David – have mercy on me," until Jesus inquired

what He could do for the beggar. Making his request known in the presence of the Healer, the beggar stated clearly, "Lord, let me see again." By faith, the beggar received his sight and responded by following Jesus and praising God.

Our story continues as Jesus passes through Jericho and encounters a chief tax collector. Despite his wealth, Zacchaeus's limitation, being of short stature, kept him from Jesus in the crowd. Persistent like the beggar, Zacchaeus climbed into that sycamore tree. Looking up into the tree, Jesus bids Zacchaeus to come down as He would stay at Zacchaeus's home, much to the chagrin of the crowd. After spending time with Jesus, Zacchaeus' spiritual eyes were opened and he declared he would give away half of his possessions and repay fourfold those he defrauded.

Zacchaeus's response is notable upon consideration of Exodus 22:1, which outlines: Whoever steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep (NIV). Seeing his actions of cheating people as stealing, he vows to make amends according to the law while also giving away half of his possessions. Leaving no doubt regarding His acceptance of Zacchaeus regardless of his past, Jesus declares salvation on Zacchaeus' home and that Zacchaeus too was a "Son of Abraham."

There are many themes from the story outlined below:

1. Seeing and Being Seen: Jesus saw His life as the fulfillment of prophecy – that which was foresaw. Jesus saw His destiny – that He would suffer, die, and rise again. Yet, Jesus' disciples failed to see what He was doing. The blind man "saw" Jesus, was actually seen by Jesus and received his sight from Jesus. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, overcame obstacles to see Jesus, and was seen by Jesus. From the crowd's perspective (view), Zacchaeus was seen as a short, rich sinner; but Jesus saw Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham.
2. Overcoming Obstacles: Jesus overcame anguish, disappointments, and personal attacks to accomplish God's will. The disciples were not able to overcome their own preconceived misconceptions of the Messiah to see the real

Jesus. The blind man overcame the voices of naysayers to see Jesus. Zacchaeus overcame his personal handicap and crowds to see Jesus. Jesus overcame the wants and wishes of the crowd to heal a poor man (beggar) and to save a rich man.

3. Usefulness: As with other passages from the Bible, God uses the outcast and the downtrodden to further the kingdom. The blind man went from begging the people for alms to leading them in praising God. Zacchaeus, the tax collector (sinner), went from taking advantage of people to helping the poor.

Further, the story affirms scripture and provides a source of encouragement for believers today. First, the passage is a continuation of the ideals expressed in the following parables: Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1–7); Lost Coin (Luke 15:8–10); Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32); and the Pharisee & the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14). Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10) and will save those who seek Him repentantly without distinction (Luke 18:26, 19:1–10). Second, we can find reassurance that when we draw closer to God, He will come closer to His people (James 4:8). Both the blind man and Zacchaeus desired to see Jesus and were blessed with a personal encounter with the Savior. Third, Luke 19: 1–10 and other passages (Acts 9:10–17) confirm that God knows all; God knows our names, activity, location, needs, etc. Finally, this text reaffirms Ephesians 3:20, “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” Jesus exceeded the expectations of both the blind man and Zacchaeus. The blind man simply asked for mercy, but Jesus offers him a blank check. Zacchaeus simply wanted to see Jesus, but Jesus had bigger plans for him. Upon consideration of these few affirmations outlined from our story today, perhaps you are encouraged.

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder what norms are you willing to defy to see Jesus. I wonder what would be your response to Jesus’ question, “What do you want me to do for you?”
2. I wonder what ways have we personally or as a society prevented others from seeing Jesus.
3. I wonder what are some ways we can be one with the blind and the poor, literally and spiritually.

LIFE APPLICATION

Zacchaeus goes beyond the requirements of the law to make amends for his prior misdeeds. Consider what opportunities exist to reconcile with those who have hurt us and those who we have hurt. Write a note to yourself on how you can respond to this situation like Zacchaeus. Share with your group as you feel comfortable.

CONCLUSION

Today, our lesson allowed us to reflect on the impact of an encounter with Jesus. Because of his encounter with Jesus, the blind man went from begging to glorifying God. A wealthy tax collector encountered Jesus and became an exemplary philanthropist, committed to use his resources to address poverty. Over this week, give yourself a visual self-examination:

- Do you see those that cannot or refuse to see?
- Do you see the needs of the poor, the lost, and the rejected?
- Do you see the value in all of God’s children?
- Do you see that Christ died for us all?

Consider your examination results and ask God to ‘open your eyes’ to see more clearly.

PRAYER

God, we thank You for seeing us – even when we did not see You. We thank You for giving us more than we had hoped to receive from You. Help us to remain faithful to Your call – even in the face of anguish, disappointments, and personal attacks. Lord, help us to be as vocal as the blind man and as persistent as Zacchaeus in our quest to see You. Lord, help us to recognize the value in each of Your children and to see that we are all sons and daughters of Abraham. All of this in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Lesson 13:

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Luke 19:29-44 (KJV)

²⁹ And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called the mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

³⁰ Saying, Go ye into the village over against you; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring him hither.

³¹ And if any man ask you, Why do ye loose him? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him.

³² And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them.

³³ And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?

³⁴ And they said, The Lord hath need of him.

³⁵ And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon.

³⁶ And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way.

³⁷ And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

³⁸ Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

³⁹ And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

⁴⁰ And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

Luke 19:29-44 (NRSV)

²⁹ When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, ³⁰ saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” ³² So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. ³³ As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” ³⁴ They said, “The Lord needs it.” ³⁵ Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. ³⁶ As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, ³⁸ saying,

“Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest heaven!”

³⁹ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

Jesus Weeps over Jerusalem

⁴¹ As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, ⁴² saying, “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. ⁴⁴ They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.”

⁴¹ And when he was come near, he beheld the city,
and wept over it,

⁴² Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least
in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy
peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

⁴³ For the days shall come upon thee, that thine
enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass
thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

⁴⁴ And shall lay thee even with the ground, and
thy children within thee; and they shall not leave
in thee one stone upon another; because thou
knewest not the time of thy visitation.

What is your physical response to the story?

What is your emotional response to the story?

What are the key terms, phrases, and numbers?

Re-create the story through an outline, image, poem, lyrics, or any other medium inspired.

How do you imagine or how has the story actually been told among different groups?

How did you read or how have you traditionally read, interpreted, and been presented the story?

OPENING

In April of 2020, people in New York City began a nightly citywide clap to show support for the essential workers on the front lines of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a two-minute round of applause in which they would go outside of their homes or open their doors/ windows to applaud the thousands of frontline healthcare workers in this pandemic. The clap would take place at 7pm to coincide with shift change. Other cities had similar celebrations and the goal of all was to show their appreciation, gratitude and support for the thousands of women and men who worked to sustain the city, take care of the sick and risked their lives to help others. This small gesture went a long way to helping the morale of many of the workers.

If you are an essential worker, how did people show appreciation to you for your work?

How do you think you can show Jesus gratitude and praise?

EXAMINING THE STORY

It was roughly A.D. 33 and it was Passover season. Many Israelites had traveled to Jerusalem to remember what God had done when He rescued His people from slavery in Egypt. Likewise, Jesus returns to Jerusalem knowing what awaited Him: knowing that He must endure the cross, Jesus decided to go to Jerusalem. It was the week before the crucifixion, and so He sent His disciples to make arrangements for His arrival into Jerusalem. He told them where to find a colt/donkey that He would use to ride into Jerusalem on. A relatively humble animal to ride into Jerusalem rather than coming on a horse as a conquering soldier (Prince of Peace).

The crowd honored Jesus and praised God for sending this King into Jerusalem. When He entered, songs were sung in praise and the crowd's praise

made Jesus' enemies uncomfortable. Jesus responded that the idea of creation itself praising God may seem strange, but the Bible speaks about it in a few places – trees, hills, oceans, rivers, mountains, valleys, cattle and creeping things, birds and fields all give praise to God.

Their praise was filled with remembrance. They remembered all the mighty works they saw Jesus do.

Jesus reflected on what would happen to the city. As He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it. His tears were not for His own fate in Jerusalem, but for the fate of the city itself. The spiritual blindness of the rulers and people was palpable and Jesus prophesied the Roman attack on the city.

Three themes are highlighted from the lesson story: choice, celebration, and compassion and condemnation.

CHOICE

1. Jesus chose to go to Jerusalem knowing he would die.
2. Jesus chose to ride in on a donkey. This signifies his humility and that He came in peace and also royalty. That He, as the King of Kings, was choosing to lay down His life for us.
3. The colt had never been ridden—it was a seat just for Jesus, the chosen one, the true Messiah. A seat that only Jesus could take just as the seat of Savior to the world.
4. The people could choose to follow Jesus or their leaders and the city choose their leaders and rejected Jesus.

CELEBRATION

1. The lesson outlines a celebration mirroring a king's entry.
2. Celebration resulted as a response to Jesus. When you remember all that Christ has done for you, how can you not celebrate?
3. Celebration coincided with the scripture, which outlines the Lord will be praised.

- a. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner (Psalm 118:22a).

COMPASSION AND CONDEMNATION

1. Jesus wept because he had compassion and love. It was a frustrated cry.
2. Jesus prophesied what would happen to Jerusalem and their fate had been sealed.
3. The city would be surrounded and under siege.
4. There would be destruction of the city.
5. The city's inhabitants would be killed.
6. There would be complete leveling of the city.

Through the themes of choice, celebration, and compassion and condemnation, we are challenged to examine our choices in response to Jesus. We can celebrate Jesus in response to His work in our lives and in obedience to scripture. Finally, we can consider the presence of both compassion and condemnation with hope and reassurance that compassion endures while condemnation does not have the same guarantee (Romans 8:18–39).

WONDERING QUESTIONS

1. I wonder what might have been part of the “back story” not revealed in Scripture that influenced

the people to not choose Christ after they were just praising Him and remembering all that He had done.

2. I wonder what experiences or traditions are a part of your back story that have or could influence you to respond like the crowd in not choosing Christ after praising Him and remembering all He has done.
3. I wonder what are some moments in your life that you would cite to support choosing Jesus.

LIFE APPLICATION

Make your own “palms”. Make a list of all of the things God has done for you and write them on your own palm. Share as you feel comfortable.

CONCLUSION

To have a triumphal ending, we have to choose Jesus over the crowd and sometimes tradition. God deserves all of our praise. Reflect this week on the choice, celebration, compassion and condemnation of the lesson story. Consider how these themes present in your life and remembrance of the Triumphal Entry.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for sacrificing for us and thank You for saving us. Help us to make the right decisions and to choose You over all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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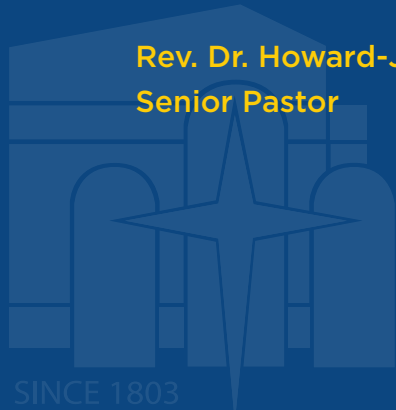
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Street
BAPTIST CHURCH

parents went to Jerusalem every year at the
five years old, they went up to Jerusalem accord
shed the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus
mother did not know it; ⁴⁴ but supposing Him
ery, and sought Him among their relatives and
, returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. ^{4b} Now so
the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers
And all who heard Him were astonished at His
, they were amazed; and His mother said to He
father and I have sought You anxiously." His
st of the Passover. ⁴² And when He was twelve
the custom of the feast. ⁴³ When they had finish