NOW IS THE TIME: Luke
A TWENTY-FIVE DAY JOURNEY
Now is the Time: Luke is a 25-day journey through the book of Luke that calls participants to transform the world by unleashing God’s Word in their city.

Note to Ministry Leaders: This suite of resources includes tracks for adults, youth, and children. Companion materials include discussion guides and sermon outlines.

To access these materials, go to NowLuke.com.
Check out the Luke 4.18-19 Assignment and live out Scripture everywhere, every day.
KEY THOUGHT
Loving our neighbor sometimes means that we love people who aren’t like us.

OVERVIEW
Our communities are more multicultural than ever. There are people in our neighborhoods with different backgrounds and experiences, people from various parts of the world. In many cases our neighbors were born thousands of miles away with completely dissimilar cultural and religious backgrounds. It’s easy for us to be cordial, but more of a challenge to engage with people that are so different.

How does Jesus want us to treat our neighbors from other cultures? What’s one step we can take this week?

SERMON OUTLINE
1. The people in the parable provide characters with whom we can identify:
   a. The “expert in the Law” who came to Jesus with two questions (verses 25b, 29) and two statements (verses 27, 37).
   b. The other characters in the parable: the traveler, the thieves, the priest, the Levite, the Samaritan, and the innkeeper.
   c. With which of these people do you most identify?

2. Seeing the Neighbor and Being the Neighbor
   a. Apparently, the expert knew that loving God included loving his neighbor, but Jesus knew that he needed a broader view of who his neighbor is.
   b. Jesus’ story forced the expert in the Law to declare exactly who his neighbor is.

3. What Shall We Do for Our Neighbor?
   a. Mercy isn’t free. It cost the Samaritan to help his neighbor. Loving our neighbor will include a cost.
   b. Mercy received and applied is at the heart of what it means to love God.
CHALLENGE

Initiate a conversation with someone you don’t know and who is from a completely different background. It may be someone you pass at work or in your neighborhood. Ask them to share their story. Here are some potential questions to begin the conversation:

• Where did you grow up?
• Do you still have family members there?
• How often do you visit?
• What’s a recent experience you really enjoyed?

Authentically affirm what you can about your neighbor during the conversation.

Are there any natural next steps to take as a result of your conversation?
KEY THOUGHT
God wants believers to know that the Holy Spirit is available to lead, guide, and instruct us in the way we are to live for God.

OVERVIEW
As we read the birth narratives recorded in the beginning chapters of the book of Luke, we find that the Holy Spirit plays a major role in the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist concerning the birth of their children. Then, we see the Holy Spirit coming also to Zechariah, John’s father, and to Simeon, a good man who loved and served God. Each was given a revelation of God through the Holy Spirit. Later, Luke records that the Holy Spirit affirms and leads Jesus into the desert just before he officially begins his ministry. And, at the end of Luke’s gospel, the resurrected Jesus, referring to the Holy Spirit, tells his disciples, “I will send you the one my Father has promised, but you must stay in the city until you are given power from heaven” (24.49).

SERMON OUTLINE
The Holy Spirit Can Change Our Circumstances
a. The angel Gabriel tells Mary that the Holy Spirit would come down to her (1.35)
b. The Holy Spirit comes upon Elizabeth when Mary greets her (1.41)
c. The Holy Spirit comes upon Zechariah (1.67)

The Holy Spirit Empowers Us
a. John the Baptist teaches that Jesus will baptize people with the Holy Spirit (3.16)
b. The Holy Spirit was with Jesus (4.1)

The Holy Spirit Reveals the Unknown to Us
a. The Holy Spirit reveals to Simeon that he would see Christ (2.25, 26)
b. Jesus teaches that in tough situations the Holy Spirit will reveal how we are to respond (12.11, 12)

CHALLENGE
God has given us the Holy Spirit to guide, direct, and teach us how to operate in the kingdom of God. We are challenged to rely on God’s Spirit to see us through every difficulty that comes into our lives. We know that we are always connected to the divine because God dwells within us. Are we listening to the Holy Spirit when we need to make decisions? Are we seeking the Holy Spirit’s wise counsel? Our God tells us that through the Holy Spirit we can live boldly for Christ.
KEY THOUGHT
When Jesus prayed on the Mount of Olives, it was a necessary step in preparation for his passion at Calvary. The Mount of Olives was a place of crisis where prayer was the key Jesus used to surrender to the will of God.

OVERVIEW
A crisis is defined as "a stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, especially for better or for worse, is determined." Jesus, the Son of God, was in agony the night before he was arrested and sentenced to die on a cross at Calvary. Through fervent prayer, he was victorious in surrendering to God the Father’s will.

SERMON OUTLINE
Consider the challenges Jesus faced at this critical place of prayer:
1. The Mount of Olives was a place of loneliness.
   a. Jesus’ disciples were worn out from being sad, and had fallen asleep (22.45)
2. The Mount of Olives was a place of revelation.
   a. Jesus’ humanity and his total trust in his Father were fully exposed (22.42)
3. The Mount of Olives was a place of agony.
   a. Jesus’ sweat fell like “drops of blood” and was evidence of the horrendous pain he endured (22.44)

Consider the blessings of praying during a time of crisis:
1. Praying in a time of crisis deepens intimacy.
   a. Jesus’ fellowship with the Father was solidly reaffirmed (22.42)
2. Praying in a time of crisis strengthens faith.
   a. A ministering angel encouraged Jesus in prayer (22.43)
3. Praying in a time of crisis prepares one to face trials.
   a. After he prayed, Jesus was ready to face his assignment at Calvary (Matthew 26.46)

CHALLENGE
How do you handle a crisis? Begin by praying. When you reach a critical point in your life, take the time to humble yourself and stay before God in prayer until you move from imposing your will upon God to accepting God’s will for you.
KEY THOUGHT
It’s so easy to live for today and avoid thinking about death and eternity. This passage is a wake up call. Jesus reminds us of the reality and finality of heaven and hell. He reminds us of the gift that God has given us and the need to share it with others.

OVERVIEW
This is a sobering story. Jesus is trying to get the attention of his listeners. This is really important for them to hear and equally important for us. The rich man didn’t help the poor man named Lazarus who was right at his door. But when Lazarus and the rich man die, there is a significant, eternal role reversal. God saves Lazarus. In fact, the name Lazarus means “God helps.” The rich man received many blessings from God while on earth, but he didn’t acknowledge the giver of the gifts or honor God with those gifts. As a result, the rich man is in hell for eternity. Now he’s asking Lazarus to help him! Meanwhile, Lazarus is in heaven with God – the perfect place to be for eternity.

SERMON OUTLINE
1. What captivates our hearts? Does God get in our way or does he direct our way?
   a. Considering what God has done for us, how could anyone resist him? God reaches out to us in so many ways and invites us to respond, to believe in Jesus and what he has done for us (John 3.16).
   b. Jesus wants us to come to him and give our lives to him because Jesus is the only way to heaven. Some don’t respond to him and this parable. Other passages tell us what will happen to those who reject Jesus.

2. Hell is a place of endless agony and torment. It’s worse than we can imagine.
   a. Jesus’ parable in Luke 16 gives us a picture of what hell is like. Jesus wants his audience to draw important conclusions from this. But it’s important to keep in mind that it’s a parable. As British, New Testament Scholar, David Wenham wrote, “the parable was not intended as a map for the after-life… but was meant to make some very clear points about the dangers of not getting in [heaven]” and about the finality of judgment.1
   b. Based on this parable, hell is a place of extreme pain. The rich man is conscious in the midst of this pain. It’s an eternal destination. Once you’re there no one can save you. It’s so bad you won’t want anyone you care about to join you. The rich man urges Abraham to warn his five brothers.

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3. **Heaven is a place of endless comfort. It's more amazing than we can imagine.**
   a. Heaven is going to be an amazing place. No more pain and no more disease or sickness. It’s like nothing we’ve ever experienced before in all the best ways.
   b. We get to see Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith; the One who died for us, the One who loves us and is praying for us. We get to see the Father, the One who is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

4. **Are you prepared and preparing? How are you preparing?**
   a. We are prepared for heaven by turning to Jesus. New Testament Scholar Craig Blomberg writes, “Luke 16.29 makes it clear that more than wealth plagued the rich man and his family; repentance was the key ingredient lacking in his life (though the clear implication is that true repentance would have transformed his attitude toward Lazarus).” Have you turned your life over to Jesus? Have you asked him to forgive your sin and take control of your life (Romans 10.9)?
   b. We prepare for heaven by cultivating our relationship with Jesus and living our lives for him (Romans 12.1, 2). We prepare for heaven by encouraging others to join us in heaven (1 Peter 3.15).

**CHALLENGE**

Thank God for heaven! Thank God that we can be assured that we will spend eternity in an amazing place with our perfectly loving God. Ask God to guide you as you invite others to join you.

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KEY THOUGHT
Living by faith is choosing to live an adventure with Jesus. Belief in Jesus is the starting point of living the Jesus-life, a life committed to serving God’s purposes in bringing God’s kingdom to the world.

OVERVIEW
Faith is far more than a belief system. It is an act of trust where we choose to commit ourselves to a faithful God and his purposes for our life. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus, God’s Son, “who is truly God and is closest to the Father, has shown us what God is like” (John 1.18). To know Jesus is to know the Father. To put your trust in Jesus is to put your trust in God.

Men and women who encountered Jesus, as recorded in the book of Luke, were radically changed as they trusted him. They were launched into a new life; a life characterized by forgiveness, a reorientation of purpose, healing, compassion, and obedience…a journey of faith.

SERMON OUTLINE
1. **You Gain New Life through Faith**
   a. Forgiveness of sin (7.48-50)
   b. A new direction (19.1-10)

2. **You Experience God’s Power through Faith**
   a. Power for your brokenness (18.35-42)
   b. Power to advance God’s purposes (17.6)

3. **You Work to Bring in God’s Harvest through Faith**
   a. You fully invest in God’s kingdom purposes (10.1-12, 17-20)

CHALLENGE
Faith is more than a mental activity…it’s action. Placing your trust in Jesus Christ unhooks you from the guilt of sin and frees you to live boldly and courageously in advancing God’s kingdom on earth. Live the adventure!
LESSONS FROM THE DINNER TABLE: ADOPTING A HUMBLE SPIRIT
SCRIPTURE REFERENCES: LUKE 14.1-14; PHILIPPIANS 2.6-8; JAMES 1.17; 1 PETER 5.5, 6

KEY THOUGHT
Jesus calls his followers to be humble.

OVERVIEW
Jesus’ teachings turn the world on its head. In his lesson to some Pharisees and others gathered at a dinner event, Jesus observes the guests scrambling for the best seats and challenges them not so much on their dining etiquette, but more pointedly on the pride that lurks in their hearts.

Humility is a challenge for most of us. In a society that rewards high achievers, we often push ourselves to the limit and then, having achieved a measure of success, we exalt ourselves, often at the expense of tearing others down. Jesus teaches that true humility brings honor, while pride brings shame and humiliation. Pride stems from selfishness—from thinking more highly of ourselves than we should.

Humility is a choice we make to put others first, especially when there is opportunity for us to be in the limelight or to gain the world’s applause. The truly humble acknowledges God’s lordship and submits to Jesus Christ, God’s Son, who is the perfect model of humility (Philippians 2.6-8).

SERMON OUTLINE
Weeding Out Pride
Jesus points out the dangers of being self-absorbed.

a. Pride is self-serving, self-gratifying (14.7)
b. Pride leads to shame and humiliation (14.9)

Sowing Seeds of Humility
Jesus teaches that honor comes as a result of humbling ourselves.

a. Humility- puts the needs of others above our needs (14.11)
b. Humility- invests in those who cannot reciprocate (14.13, 14)
c. Humility- recognizes that all that we are and all that we have come from God (James 1.17)

Reaping a Harvest of Blessings
Jesus teaches that humility is its own reward.

a. Jesus promises that those who are humble and bless the poor will themselves be blessed (14.14)
b. God will honor those who are humble (1 Peter 5.5, 6)
CHALLENGE

Do you often find yourself rankled if you don’t get praised for work you have done? Do you toot your own horn when that happens? God sometimes teaches us harsh lessons of humility when we forget about God’s rightful place in our lives. Don’t wait for that to happen. Let’s check ourselves. Jesus asks us to choose the path that he chose, one of humility and service.
KEY THOUGHT
Following Jesus requires more than going to church or adopting the name “Christian.” Jesus tells us that self-sacrifice is at the heart of Christian discipleship.

OVERVIEW
Christians are challenged to follow Christ wherever he leads. However, much of the road is paved with sacrifice. Just as Christ gave up his heavenly glory to come to earth for us, we must relinquish our close affection with the world and its glitter to follow Christ. It is by no means an easy path and we will often suffer persecution, rejection, and pain, but the earthly and heavenly blessings we receive far outweigh the troubles we endure.

SERMON OUTLINE
1. Self-Denial – Jesus becomes the focus of our lives. We acknowledge the lordship of Jesus, as we follow him (9.23)
2. Self-Sacrifice – becomes a daily activity. We may have to endure hardships and forego creature comforts to serve God and others (9.23)
3. Self-Preservation – clouds our vision of what is really important. We need to let go of things that have temporary value. Jesus needs to be our treasure (9.24)
4. Preoccupation with worldly goods negates faith in Jesus and ultimately leads to destruction (9.25)
5. The message of salvation through Jesus Christ is not popular, but disciples have to sacrifice being popular and take God’s message to the world (9.26)
6. We must boldly share the gospel because we are not ashamed of Christ and the message of salvation (9.26)
7. Jesus promises to reward our faithfulness not just in the future, but he will give us blessings here on earth (18.29, 30)

CHALLENGE
Jesus challenges us to sacrifice our lives as we follow him. What sacrifices are you making on your Christian journey? Do you find it difficult, and if so, what makes you press on? Can you honestly declare that you are not ashamed of the message of Christ? If you have doubts, ask God to strengthen your resolve.
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