

LUKE 6: THE WAY OF LOVE AS THE HEART OF OUR OBEDIENCE

1. Two Incidents Showing Opposition to Jesus Over Perceived Violations of Sabbath Regulations

A. Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-5):

What did the Pharisees think was unlawful about what Jesus' disciples were doing?

- (1) The principle goes back to **Lev. 19:9-11a, 18; Deut. 23:24-25**. We see in these verses God's concern for social justice, for the vulnerable (i.e., the poor, widows, orphans, aliens, etc.).
- (2) As for the disciples in our passage, the Pharisees would say that what they're doing constitutes harvesting – and worse, harvesting (working!) on the Sabbath.
- (3) It seems silly to us that they would consider the disciples' eating in this way "harvesting," and we might conclude that Jesus is intending to show us that the Sabbath, and Sabbath observance, doesn't really matter all that much. But that's not the case at all.
 - (a) We are called to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy per the fourth commandment (**Ex. 20:8-11**). The moral law, summarily contained in the Ten Commandments, is still binding on Christians today.
 - (b) The Sabbath, **first**, is the one day each week when it is our duty and privilege to acknowledge, worship, and glorify God as our Creator and Redeemer; **second**, is God's gift of mandated rest, for us, for our spiritual recharge and renewal – a beautiful and beneficial pattern built into the fabric of creation itself; and **third**, is the foundation of a just social order, as we consider that the fourth commandment is the pivot commandment, i.e., the last one expressing our duty to God, and at the same time the first one expressing our duty to one another. The first principle of God's people for how they are to love one another is that they are to *not* treat one another like they were treated in Egypt, as slaves who were given no rest, but rather, that everyone without exception (even the cattle!) will be given a day of rest for rest, recharge, renewal, and worship of the Living and True God. This still matters!
- (4) So Jesus is not abolishing the principle of Sabbath observance, but rather is directing us to the wise and God-glorifying way of Sabbath observance, which attends to **the weightier matters of the law**, and which shifts us away from scrupulosity in observance of rules and regulations, toward adherence to the principles of the thing.
- (5) In his answer to the Pharisees' complaint, Jesus cites biblical precedent for his disciples' actions. (See **1 Sam. 21:1-6**).
- (6) The Pharisees understood that it is lawful to override Sabbath regulations in order to save and preserve life (see **Luke 14:5-6**; surgery, the Yom Kippur War, etc.). These are works of necessity. But was it really *necessary* that the disciples eat? And Jesus' answer: Is it not the weightier matter that they should eat and be restored? Thus, Jesus' words in **Mark 2:27**: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (See also **John 7:22-24**.)
- (7) Thus, it is not just **works of necessity**, but also **works of mercy**, that are permitted on the Sabbath – indeed, not just permitted, but specially called for and encouraged as a way of glorifying God by loving one's neighbor. Right Sabbath observance consists less in scrupulosity in resting for myself, and still less in devising legalistic workarounds to get a lot of stuff done while claiming to rest; but rather *in bringing that rest to others* as we are able, and then resting, together, in the presence of Almighty God.
- (8) There remains one still deeper principle here. In raising the example of David and his men, this wasn't just some ordinary person, but the anointed king of Israel. So too with Jesus, and far more so! Jesus is the King, the anointed one, the Christ, and he is traveling with his warband, his disciples, who will give their lives in the service of the Kingdom.

(9) He is the King whose very life and example reveals the deep and right observance of the law!
Thus, **Luke 6:5**: “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

B. A Man with a Withered Hand (Luke 6:6-11):

- (1) The Pharisees’ objection was simple: the man’s hand would still be withered tomorrow! You could have waited one day, Jesus, without breaking any rules. Then we’d be just fine. Strictly speaking, healing him today wasn’t necessary, and therefore doesn’t qualify as a work of necessity.
- (2) But Jesus demonstrates that on the Sabbath it IS lawful to do good, to save life, to restore and bring wholeness and healing.
- (3) Thus, we are to conform ourselves to the principles of the law and to attend carefully to the weightier matters of the law. As we’ve seen, in the case of the Sabbath, this means that we are called to bring rest to others where and when we are able to do so, and to then share that rest, in joyful fellowship with God and one another.
- (4) The Pharisees’ response to this healing – this restoration of a man’s life – is not joy, but fury. Jesus here shows us how rightly to love our neighbor; the Pharisees definitively do not. (See **Rom. 13:8-10**.)

2. Jesus Calls the Twelve Apostles (Luke 6:12-16):

- (1) Jesus going out to the mountain all night to pray. God the Son praying to God the Father!
- (2) The Twelve (symbolizing Israel, ALL Israel, all the children of Abraham, the Israel of God).

3. Jesus Ministers to a Great Multitude (Luke 6:17-19):

Note where the crowds are coming from: among other places, from Tyre and Sidon. Jesus’ power and message is being received by Jews and Gentiles alike.

4. The Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49):

When we speak of living by principles rather than by rules, what’s to keep us from going off the rails? What is the guiding principle, if you will, to guide us in our conforming to the principles of God’s word? Jesus gives us the answer to that question in the Sermon on the Plain.

My view: this is a different occasion from the Sermon on the Mount (**Matt. 5-7**) – although very similar in content, like a stump speech, and delivered during the same period of early ministry in Galilee, nevertheless with significantly different emphases. In other words, the Sermon on the Plain is important in its own right. It’s not just the short, incomplete version of the Sermon on the Mount!

A. Blessings and Woes (Luke 6:20-26):

This serves as the introduction, teaching us that God’s evaluation of our circumstances are definitively different than that of the world. It is a jolting reorientation of our perspective, calling us to consider things not from the vantage of worldliness, which equates wealth and well-fed-ness with blessing, but from that of God, in which suffering in a fallen world is in fact sometimes a powerful mark of faithfulness and blessing! (See **James 1:3-4**; **Rev. 2:9**; and **Rev. 3:17**.)

B. Love Your Enemies (Luke 6:27-36):

OR: How to be like God the Father: Love your enemies – that is his work, and ours!

We are called to be like our heavenly Father, who is gracious to send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous alike, who is merciful, whose kindness is a patience that leads to repentance. Christian ethics consist in imaging the love and character of the Father. (See **Matt. 5:14, 16**).

In the same manner that Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, revealed the deeper implications of full obedience to the sixth and seventh commandments (i.e., the linkage of anger with murder and of lust with adultery), so in this passage, Jesus reveals the deeper implications of full obedience to the Greatest Commandment. We know that are to love the LORD our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves. But how? What does that mean? Answer: we are to love like God the Father.

This is not a matter of warm and fuzzy feelings. Nor are we called to be unwise as to the sinful motives of sinful people. Nor is it a call to pacifism, or passivity in the face of abuse or injustice. It is love as a verb not a noun, a thing that is done, rooted in the will. It is an intentional determination to respond to life in this fallen world as Christ did, not as the world does, with wise love, HOLY love, gracious, merciful love, rooted in the fact of our being loved BY God the Father and called to love LIKE God the Father. (See **1 Pet. 2:21-24; 3:9; 4:19.**)

C. Judging Others, and a Tree and Its Fruit (Luke 6:37-45):

OR: How NOT to be like God the Father: Do not judge others – that’s his work, *not ours!*

One of the most misapplied passages in Scripture. Used against Christians for showing any discernment with regard to sin at all. Of course, we must still be on guard against the ever-present threat of legalism – the sin of adding to God’s word what God himself didn’t add, and in this way, presuming to be more holy than God – holiness without love. But I would argue that the greatest crisis of our era, both within and without the church, is the threat of license – the sin of subtracting from God’s word, of presuming to be more loving than God himself – of love without holiness.

We are to judge within the church, and we are clearly to distinguish between what is sin and what is not sin. BUT! We are not to presume to act as God and exclude anyone from the hope of salvation in Christ while they have life and breath.

We are people who attend to our own logs before addressing the specks in the eyes of others. That is, we are to be people cognizant of our own sinfulness and need. And be warned: “out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks.” We are sinners. But we are saved by a mighty Savior, faithful to save. Look to him, and rest in him alone for your salvation. And remembering our own need of grace keeps us humble as we consider the sinful unworthiness of others.

D. Build Your House on the Rock (Luke 6:46-49):

OR: We are to be like God the Father by being like God the Son!

We are to image God the Father by imaging God the Son, conforming our lives to the pattern of his Word and way, looking to what he did and said, and striving to do likewise. As we become more like the Master, we more and more faithfully reflect the love of the Father, for glory and blessing.

We are called to trust in the Word of God, even more than our own feelings. We are called to found our very life and hope in it, trusting that God who created us and redeemed us, who daily equips and restores us, knows our needs and loves us even more than we ourselves do.

Amen!

LUKE 7: ALL THIS GRACE IS GREAT, BUT... WHERE'S THE JUDGMENT?

INTRODUCTION:

To properly set the context for today's passage, we should go back to the scene in Nazareth, which consisted of two parts:

1. Jesus explains his ministry mission by quoting **Isaiah 61:1-2**. His is to be a ministry of grace; he has come to bring deliverance, restoration, and release to all his people – with a special emphasis on those most in need of it.
2. When his words generate opposition, he cites two stories from the time of the prophets, one involving Elijah's raising of a widow's son from the dead and another involving Elisha's interaction with and healing of a well-respected foreign military commander. (See **Luke 4:24-27**.) Why did he mention these? Because he was showing that God's will would not be thwarted by Israel's disobedience, and that God's blessing would be extended beyond the boundaries of the Promised Land, to those prepared to receive the word of his prophets. (See **John 1:11-14**.) Even if his own would not receive him, there were those even beyond the boundaries of Israel who gladly would. The good news of God was for all the world and would go forth to all the world! (Consider this fact when we think about our call to evangelism – that there are those out there waiting for the call of God's word. Ours is not to overthink it, but to simply extend the invitation to grace and fellowship with the Living and True God through the Lord Jesus Christ. See **John 10:3-4, 16; 1 Peter 3:14-16**.)

Chapter 7 begins with a pair of accounts of showing Jesus' interactions with people in need and the working of his mighty power. Three things to note:

1. The first of these accounts involves an interaction with and healing involving a well-respected foreign military commander, and the second involves the raising of a widow's son from the dead. Sound familiar? Interesting, isn't it?
2. Both these accounts point to Jesus' ministry of grace, bringing deliverance, restoration, and release to all his people – with a special emphasis on those most in need of it. Again, doesn't this sound oddly familiar? What we are seeing here is that the plan for his ministry that he set forth in Nazareth is now being fulfilled in earnest.
3. Finally, both accounts are notable in that, whereas Jesus' mighty power heals a dying servant and raises a dead son, the main characters in each account are not those who were healed, but those with whom Jesus interacted – in the one instance, the centurion and the other the widow. In each of these stories, we see love drawing forth Jesus' restorative, healing power.

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT (Luke 7:1-10)

As for the character of the centurion, we see his

1. **Kindness:** connected w/ the word "kin." His kindness is seen both in his concern for his servant (i.e., the servant is "precious" to him; and in the Jewish elders witness concerning him, (a) that "he loves our nation" and (b, backing this word up with deed) that he'd built (financed the construction of) their synagogue. Remarkable! (Note: with regard to some scholars who raise questions as to the motives for the centurion's kindness – e.g., that the servant is simply a valuable asset, or that it makes good political sense to buy off the locals – let's beware of overthinking motives in good works! Introspection is like salt: a little bit is good and necessary; but too much is definitely not good! So too, a healthy introspection is the very engine of our repentance, which is a saving grace; but too much introspection drives us to despair. None of our motives is entirely pure. But the gospel calls us to stop looking inward for some nonexistent

purity of motive, but rather to look outward, to Christ, who is pure, who is worthy, and then, resting in him alone for our righteous standing before God, to move along!)

2. **Humility:** the elders speaking on his behalf say that he is worthy; he himself says he is not worthy. Note the deference and respect he shows to Jesus, which is all the more remarkable in that he is a Roman military commander.
3. **Faith:** the demonstration of which causing Jesus – Jesus! – to marvel, one of only two times this happens, the other one being for unbelief in Nazareth (see **Mark 6:6**). As for the nature of the centurion’s faith: it consisted in a simple but sure recognition of and trust in Jesus’ authority and power – he can do it and if he says it, it will be so; or put otherwise: what he says is true, and what he says he’ll do he’ll do! How different from the Pharisees, who were always demanding a sign. According to the light he’d been given, he came to Christ and trusted in him, aware of his own unworthiness. We ought do no less than this!

And what do we see of Jesus in this passage? We see:

1. **His compassion**, and his willingness to bring healing to the one for whom the centurion in his concern for his servant called him.
2. **His willingness**, in bringing this healing, deliverance, restoration, and release to those in need, and especially to those at the margins or even outside the bounds of Jewish society, **to upset the sensibilities of the self-appointed gatekeepers** of the religious rules and regulations. (There he was, ready to enter the home of a gentile and open himself to uncleanness – and not just some run-of-the-mill gentile’s home, but that of a Roman military commander.)
3. **His power!** He heals with a single word, at a distance. This is the very power of creation in our midst, the reality-generating Word of God, brought to bear in our lives. (And consider the remarkable fact it is this powerful word that Christ has given to his church with the commission that we preach it. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes!)
4. **His wonder:** Jesus marvels at the faith of the centurion, and also at the unbelief of those in Nazareth. This is a beautiful thing to consider: that Jesus, as a man among us – “God with us,” experiencing the world from as it were from our perspective – felt our sorrow as well as our joy. Jesus our Savior doesn’t simply know about the pain we experience living in this fallen world – the awful pervasiveness of the falling short of God’s glory, the heartache and hurt of our sin and its effects; he *knows* it, having endured the injustice and sorrows. Jesus wept. Our Lord knows our darkness and shame, and he is not ashamed to draw alongside us. “I am with you always.” Praise God! But he also felt the wonder of joy in this world. And again, what a stunning thought, that the one through whom the world was made might, in entering the world and experiencing it as one of us, be moved to wonder. Well, so ought we!

THE WIDOW OF NAIN (Luke 11-17)

What do we learn about the widow of Nain? Not that much, except only this: **Jesus saw her need**. She is the very embodiment of the most vulnerable class of people in Israel, and for such as her the Torah over and over calls for mindfulness and intentionality to provide help and comfort in her need.

And what do we see of Jesus here? Very similar to what we saw with the centurion:

1. **His compassion:** In this case, he doesn’t even wait for her call! Immediately, he brings his power to bear for her deliverance and restoration.
2. **His willingness to upset the sensibilities of the gatekeepers:** There he goes again! We can easily imagine the Pharisee who is less moved to joy and wonder at the raising of young man to life from death than vexed by the fact that Jesus touched the bier. You didn’t have to do that! We’ve just seen that you could have done this with a word, at a distance! It seems almost

calculated to annoy those who would be most concerned about these things. Why, Jesus? Why?!? And the answer is...

3. **His power!** As we saw with his touching the leper and healing the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, so here as well – the coming of God’s Christ with Kingdom power – creation power, Pentecost power! – changes everything, reverses the very polarity of covenant dynamics from a defensive posture to one that henceforth surges forward to all the ends of the earth! He touches the dead, the diseased, and those suffering from discharge (the three D’s of Old Covenant uncleanness), and rather than him becoming unclean, they become clean! And now the mercy of this power to bring deliverance, restoration, release – today! – calls for an attention to the weightier matters of the law, i.e., for mercy, and not sacrifice.

In summary, for both accounts, we see Jesus’ ministry of grace – of deliverance, restoration, and release – whose blueprint was outlined in Isaiah 61, being performed and fulfilled before the eyes of those who were witnessing these things. And we see that this restorative, healing, life-bringing power of God is going forth not just to the religious insiders of Israel, but to all God’s sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd, even beyond the bounds of Israel itself.

Indeed, this universal mission had been God’s plan from the beginning!

See **Gen. 12:1-3; Isa. 2:2-5; 52:7-10; 66:18-19; and Rev. 22:1-2.**

THIS is what the ministry of Jesus is about!

ALL THIS GRACE IS GREAT, BUT ... WHAT ABOUT HOLINESS? WHAT ABOUT THE COMING JUDGMENT...? JESUS AND THE DISCIPLES OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (Luke 7:18-35)

1. **John’s moment of weakness (vs. 18-23).** He who had declared “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world,” whose entire ministry had prepared for the coming of the Christ and who boldly declared Jesus as that Christ, has a moment of doubt. Why? In prison, facing his imminent execution at the hands of an unjust and unstable king, he must have looked at Jesus’ ministry and seen various violations of rules and regulations, mounting opposition among the very ones you’d expect would be most supportive, not fasting, calling tax collectors, visiting with Romans?!? And he must have wondered, Jesus, where’s the judgment? Where’s the fire? (See **Luke 3:16-17.**)

Jesus’ answer: Look and consider. What do you see? These things you are seeing, these extraordinary manifestations of God’s power, are the very fulfillment of God’s promises and purposes before your eyes. These are the very signs that attest to the coming of the King. Rest, and believe.

As for the judgment, it was indeed drawing nigh. The time for God’s judgment on Israel for its covenant failure had come. Even more, the time had come at last for the execution of God’s sentence spoken to Adam at the very beginning of the long cascade of human events following from the fall: “You shall surely die.” The judgment promised by the prophets, and most latterly by John, would come upon Jesus, and be borne by him, in our place. (See **Isaiah 53:5; Galatians 3:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:21.**)

Here then is the astonishing grace of God’s plan revealed. “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.” “Blessed are those not offended (lit. scandalized, caused to stumble) by me.” Blessed are all who take refuge in him, who draw up under the blood of Christ

our Passover lamb, brought from sin and death to life and blessing by the great, great love of God. (See **John 3:16**; **1 John 3:1**.)

2. **Jesus exalts John but declares that least in the Kingdom of God is more exalted still (vs. 24-30).** Jesus now addresses the crowd: don't you dare look down on John for his moment of weakness! Among those born of women, there has never been one greater than he.

But ... so great are the blessings and privileges of the Kingdom of God as to make even the least in that kingdom greater than John! This calls us to consider:

- (a) The greatness of the blessings and privileges we enjoy as Christians (e.g., our worship).
- (b) The radical incompleteness of the Old Testament without its fulfilment in Christ Jesus.
- (c) The radical imperfection of even the greatest of saints. ALL have fallen short of God's glory.

3. **Jesus speaks of the hardheartedness of those who refuse to believe (vs. 31-35).** Nothing is good enough for nonbelief. They will complain that your holiness is too stringent and rigid, or else will complain that your gracious approach is too lax. This simply reveals the bad faith of those who grumble and the hatred of God and godliness that is the mark of natural man.

But let it be known that judgment is coming, and that for those in Christ, gathered under the blood of our Passover Lamb, the judgment that was ours to bear has been borne already by him on our behalf. Ours is but to look to him as to our Redeemer, Deliverer, Savior, and Lord, and to receive and rest in him alone for our salvation. Amen.

THE JOY AND GRATITUDE OF FAITH:

THE ANOINTING OF JESUS BY THE SINFUL WOMAN (Luke 7:36-50)

1. A beautiful scene of Jesus' anointing by a sinful woman. (Note: this is not the same incident as Jesus' anointing by Mary at Bethany, which happened later, almost certainly as an intentional echo of this event.)
2. The woman here may well have been responding to Jesus' invitation issued at the same time (see **Matt. 11:28-30**). Somehow, it is clear that Jesus had given her hope, had restored her very desire for God, and had persuaded her to draw near to him for deliverance.
3. In gratitude she did so, showing her love and gratitude in the way she knew how. It is a scene of breathtaking tenderness and intimacy. Her tears – were they tears of repentance or tears of gratitude? I think, Yes! As with so many of us who have experienced the amazing grace of God to us in Christ our Savior, who brings deliverance, restoration, release, hope, life!
4. Once again, the Pharisees are not moved to praise, but are offended by this unseemly display. Jesus addresses them with a short parable whose lesson is that "those who have been forgiven much, love much" and that "those who have been forgiven little, love little."

In conclusion, we see that Jesus ministry is unfolding. It is about bringing of the blessings of God – deliverance, restoration, healing, release, redemption, life! – to ALL God's people, including many whom the religious authorities in every age are all too happy to overlook. The gospel is for the widow, the foreign military officer, the sinful woman ... and even for John the Baptist, who shows us with perfect clarity the fact that we are all in need of God's grace.

Galatians 3:13-14: Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us – for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree" – so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Amen!

LUKE 8: HEARING THE WORD, HOLDING IT FAST, AND DOING IT

Structure of the Chapter

Jesus anointed by a sinful woman (7:36-50)

Women who had been healed following Jesus (8:1-3)

Why Jesus' speaks in parables (8:9-10)

The parable of the sower explained (w/ the lamp on the stand) (8:4-8, 11-18)

Jesus' mother and brothers come for Jesus (8:19-21)

Jesus calms the storm

Jesus restores the demon possessed Gerasene, w/ the herd of pigs driven off the cliff

Jesus heals a woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years

Jesus raises a 12-year-old girl from the dead

Jesus' Mother and Brothers (Luke 8:19-21):

1. "Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, 'Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.'" **Mark 3:21** gives us even more insight into this scene: "And when his family heard it [i.e., that the crowd was so large that Jesus was unable even to eat], they went out to seize him, for they were saying, 'He is out of his mind.'" So there they are, sending for him and calling him to stop what he was doing forthwith and come to them. We see here the protective anxiety of Jesus' mother for Jesus' well-being. (Mary here as a true Jewish mother!) This behavior may be approved in the society all around them, but it is not good from Jesus' perspective (see his rebuke of Peter, **Matt. 16:23**).
2. The real problem is that they are presuming special status, special privileges, special access to Jesus as his natural family, and the authoritative claims on his time and attention and on his own use of time that come with that privileged status and access. But Jesus isn't here to affirm the traditional bonds of family, tribe, or nation. For Jesus, these ties of blood do not buy special status, privileges, or access. (See **Luke 3:8**.) This seems ... somehow wrong to us!
3. But keep in mind: it is not that Jesus is anti-"blood family." Rather, it's that Jesus has come to redeem the whole family of God by *his* blood, from *every* family, tribe, tongue, and nation. There is no special access apart from "the faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ" (**2 Pet. 1:1**).
4. Jesus has come to make clear the true requirements for membership in the family of God and for being children of Abraham, which is that one be born again of the Spirit and have faith in the promises and purposes of God that find their focus in Christ (see **John 1:11-13; 3:3; Gal. 3:26-29; Rom. 4:9-13; 9:8**).
5. Thus, "my mother and my brothers are **those who hear the word of God and do it.**"

Women Accompanying Jesus (Luke 8:1-3):

1. Luke frames the chapter with accounts about women who've been delivered by the loving compassion and mighty power of Christ.
2. "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news [the *euangelion*, the gospel] of the kingdom of God." And we are given the names of three women "who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," who then accompanied Jesus and the twelve:
3. First listed is **Mary Magdalene** (i.e., Mary of Magdala), one of four Mary's mentioned in the New Testament, all these having been named for Miriam, Moses' sister – the others being (1) Mary

the mother of Jesus, (2) the “other” Mary, Jesus’ “mother’s sister, the “mother of James the Younger and Joseph,” and Mary the mother of John Mark. Mary Magdalene is listed as the one “from whom seven demons had gone out” – a massive and intense possession from which she had been delivered.

4. Note that the placement of this passage immediately following the anointing of Jesus by the sinful woman has led many through the course of the history of the church to identify Mary Magdalene as the woman of Luke 7; thus the idea that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute in the popular and cultural imagination. But this is wholly speculative.
5. What we do know is that she had been in the grip of a terrible bondage, but had been delivered by Christ; and that on account of that deliverance, she followed him with faith and fervor. Indeed, she was the first to encounter the risen Lord Jesus on that first Easter morning.
6. Second listed is **Joanna**, “the wife of Chuza, Herod’s household manager.” Some have speculated that Chuza was the official whose son Jesus had healed in John 4. Interesting! Possible. But wholly uncertain.
7. Third in the list was **Susanna**. There are no other references to her in the New Testament.
8. But concerning these “women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities”: they had been delivered by the compassion and power of Jesus, and now their lives were devoted to him. They followed and learned from him and served him, providing for him out of their own means and as they were able. In short, they were disciples. They were sinners ingrafted into the family of God by the grace and delivering power of Christ, who heard his call and were wise to heed it. In this regard, they were those who heard the word through the voice of Jesus, then were wise to do it – in the most fundamental sense, to repent and draw near to Christ in faith, trusting in him, walking with him, following him, and learning from him. Amen.

The Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-8):

1. “And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, ‘A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold.’ As he said these things, he called out, ‘He who has ears to hear, let him hear.’”
2. Ἐξῆλθεν ὁ σπείρων τοῦ σπείραι τὸν σπόρον αὐτοῦ.
Exelthen ho spayron too spayrai ton sporon autoo.
A sower went out to sow his seed.
Catchy!! Memorable!
3. For now, let’s only note that this was ALL that Jesus said to the crowd. That’s it! Some words about seeds falling in different types of soil, then “he who has ears to hear, let him hear!” And off he goes! What would you have done upon hearing these words from this teacher through whom the mighty power of God was working so greatly, this “great prophet” that had come to your very village? Hold that thought!

The Purpose of the Parables (Luke 8:9-10):

1. “And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that “seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.”’”
2. To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God... To whom? To the disciples. To those who’ve heard in Jesus’ words a call to follow him and learn from him!

3. What are these secrets of the kingdom? They are the things Jesus has come to reveal and teach concerning the nature of the kingdom – things we learn from heeding his explanation of the parables and thinking deeply about them – e.g., that the kingdom is not a thing that will drop upon Jerusalem and impose itself over the people in worldly pomp and splendor, but is a living thing sown through the word proclaimed, living growing reality that takes root in the heart and grows. Like the mustard seed. Like the stone that grows to become a mountain that fills the earth (**Daniel 2:34-35**)! The kingdom is here and now, living, growing, and we are brought into the kingdom by taking it into ourselves. And the *way* we take it into ourselves is the point of this parable of the sower. More on that in a second.
4. This is a message that will be made clear to Jesus' disciples, i.e., to those who have determined to follow him and learn from him. But for others, these "secrets of the kingdom" come veiled in the form of parables, so that "seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand." Indeed, "he said nothing to them [to the crowds] without a parable" (**Matt. 13:34**). Why?
5. First, Jesus spoke in this veiled way during his earthly ministry so as to reveal his identity and mission in a controlled manner, clearly enough so as to prepare his apostles for the great work of evangelism that was before them, but not so clearly as to trigger his own death before the appointed time and place, whether through the lethal rage of those opposing him, offended by his words and works (see **Luke 4:29; John 10:31**), or the disastrously misguided zeal of those supporting him, who would force him to be their king (see **John 6:15**).
6. Second, Jesus spoke in parables precisely in order that some might be drawn closer to him and that others would remain indifferent and unmoved.
7. He is quoting **Isaiah 6:9-10**, where Isaiah's commission from God had been made clear to him: Isaiah was to preach a message of imminent judgment coming upon the nation for its grievous sin and breach of covenant, for its idolatry and immorality and injustice, and for its refusal to repent when confronted and called to do so by God's prophets; but at the same time, Isaiah was given to see an astoundingly beautiful vision of a future salvation beyond that awful judgment – a glorious future which would be for the faithful remnant that heard God's word with ears to hear it. But Isaiah's ministry would not have the effect of saving Israel from that coming judgment; they would hear and not listen. His was a ministry of looming judgment that would fall, for the most part, on deaf ears. Yet for those who did hear with hearing, who repented and trusted God, these would be the faithful remnant for whom and to whom God's promises were directed.
8. Thus, we see that Jesus *spoke in parables to the crowds*, but *explained the parables to his disciples*, to those who drew near for further explanation. As for those who had come out for the excitement of seeing the healings, to see this wonder worker and to evaluate him, to be entertained and sit in judgment concerning his worth, they would hear the parables and learn nothing. They would seem obvious. Not really deep at all. Meh. But for others, in whom the Spirit of God was working to call them to life, they would hear Jesus' words and be drawn closer to learn more.
9. One last thing on this: we might reasonably point out that Jesus had just delivered the Sermon on the Plain in Luke 6. So... it would seem that he didn't exactly "say nothing to them without a parable." But if we look closely, we see that both the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain were spoken to *his disciples* – that is, to those who'd drawn near enough to hear.
10. We might put it this way: parables were for the crowds; explanation of the parables – and sermons – were for the disciples.
11. In sum, through the agency of his parables, the sheep will hear the Lord's call, and will be interested to learn more, and will draw near to learn. The rest of the crowd, not being so

moved, either through indifference or a sense of their not needing further explanation, will not draw near and will not follow.

12. Now then, what are “the secrets of the kingdom of God” revealed in the Parable of the Sower...?

The Parable of the Sower Explained (Luke 8:11-15):

1. The seed is the word of God. How so? The word comes to us in digestible packets, seed form-like, that, taken in, give rise to new life. The word generates new life. It is by the word that we are born again and made part of God’s family. See **John 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:3-5, 23;** and **James 1:18.**
2. The sower is the Son of Man, Christ himself, the preacher, and by extension those who preach in the name and power of Christ, sowing that life-generating seed, the word of life! (Note that the sower sows lavishly, we might even think wastefully! It is sown — preached, offered — to all!)
3. How and whether it is received? Well, that is dependent on the soil! And the soil can be likened to the state of our hearts to receive the word.
4. First, there is the seed that falls along the path: it doesn’t sink into the earth (the heart), and is quickly taken away by the Satan, in such manner that the word has not been received at all. In one ear and out the other! The word heard, but not heeded.
5. Second, there is the seed that falls on the rocky ground, where the soil is too shallow for the seed to take root. Here, the word goes in the ear and this time sticks around for a while. It is heard, but it doesn’t go deep; it sprouts up and may look promising, but when the trials of life come — and they will come — there is no depth to sustain it and it withers away. Stony soil is the stuff of shallow faith.
6. Third, there is the seed that falls among the thorns and ends up being choked by them. Here, the problem isn’t shallowness, but competition! The word of life is crowded out and finally choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of the world. Here is a faith that has not remained merely a matter of knowledge in the head, but has worked its way to the heart, where it’s been applied and understood — this is for me! Knowledge with understanding! Knowledge with assent. But it can be so choked out by the competition as to remain fruitless and barren.
7. Fourth, there is the seed that falls on the good soil. “They are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.” Here is knowledge with understanding and trust. Knowledge and understanding joined by wisdom, where the light of God’s word, not only known but understood, issues in the wisdom that would walk in the light of that word.
8. Obviously, therefore, Jesus is saying that the condition of our heart is important for determining whether our life as a disciple of Christ will be fruitful or not. And our goal ought to be that we should be good soil — neither shallow nor allowing too many other things to crowd out the word of life.
9. And it leads us to the question that all disciples should ask themselves: what kind of soil am I?
10. Here’s an important point to keep in mind! Your soil is NOT fixed. If you look within your heart and determine that the cares of the world seem to be crowding out the fruitfulness of the living word and the joy of the gospel, it’s not like you can’t do anything about it. Rather, Jesus’ words are a call for you to examine your soil — i.e., your heart, your life of faith. How’s your receptivity to the word of life? To the gospel? And to repent if necessary. To correct course. To draw nearer to him.
11. I was for a long time the hard path. The word just bounced off! But God kept offering it, and one day, gulp, the word of life took root! And the message for us is simple and yet profoundly important: let the word of life go deep so as to establish firm rootage in your heart, and don’t let it be crowded out by everything else. Be changed by the word! Hear and do!

12. And remember the most important thing here: which is that the most important thing that faith “does” is to draw near to Christ who is sufficient for all our needs. What does faith do? It hears the Good Shepherd’s call to us as his own, calling us back when we’ve been straying into danger, and we turn back to him, repenting of our tendencies to worldliness and self-reliance and trusting in him anew, today, and every day, all the way to glory. Amen!

A Lamp Under a Jar (Luke 8:17-18):

1. “No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.”
2. Let the light of your new life shine in order that others may see the light. (See **Matthew 5:14-16**.) So hear the word, hold fast to it, and be wise to do it! In this way, you will have the good soil of a faithful disciple, and will bear fruit with patience.
3. Conversely, there is a warning concerning those who hear and fail to do – for those who would indulge in delusions of Christian identity with lives still conformed to the pattern of the world. To hear Jesus’ call to repentance and deeper commitment but to then ignore it and remain resolutely shallow or distracted by cares, riches, and pleasures, is dangerous for the soul. “For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.”

Jesus Calms a Storm (Luke 8:22-25):

1. “Let us go to the other side of the lake...” To Gentile territory!
2. Then, the storm. And Jesus is sleeping! “Master, Master, we are perishing!”
3. “Where is your faith?” His words as recorded in **Matt. 8:26** are rather stronger: “Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?” Literally, “why are you being so cowardly?” (See **Rev. 21:8** for another instance of this word.)
4. “And they were afraid, and they marveled, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that he commands even winds and water, and they obey him?” Now their fear of the circumstances in which they had found themselves has been replaced by a far greater fear – of the one sitting in the boat with them! A holy fear, the fear that God’s saints have when God is present.
5. Who then IS this? Now we see the awesome extent of Jesus’ authority even more clearly: his word has power over nature in all its vastness and untamed ferocity.
6. What comfort this is for us to know, in the midst of our trials: “Be still, my soul. The waves, the winds still know his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.”

Jesus Heals a Man with a Demon (Luke 8:26-29):

1. They come to the country of the Gerasenes, Gentiles living on the far side of the sea.
2. Stepping out of the boat, they are met by a man tormented by demons, driven in his anguish to violence and self-destructive behaviors; a man who, with the supernatural strength of tortured abandon, had broken the chains by which he’d been restrained, and who now lived naked and alone among the tombs.
3. Here is a frightening picture of living death, of the terrible enormity of sin’s effects in a fallen world – and here especially, beyond the bounds of the Promised Land, among people that were “alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (**Eph. 2:12**)
4. Demons – the spiritual powers that oppose us with fearsome malevolence, their reality and presence revealed by the coming of Jesus’ light into the darkness.
5. Jesus orders them to leave the man, and they cry out, declaring his name: “What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?” We’ve seen that Jesus has been trying to veil his

identity to some even while gradually revealing it to others. The demons will try to disrupt his plans by outing him. "I know who you are!"

6. It's interesting that the demons recognize him, but Jesus knows that their recognition is without faith or willing submission to his authority. Knowledge without understanding or wisdom; knowledge without faith and submission. (See **James 2:19**.)
7. Jesus asks their name, and the answer is "Legion, for many demons had entered him." (**Mark 5:9**, "My name is Legion, for we are many.") "Legion" is surely interesting in that it calls to mind that seemingly invincible instrument of Roman military power. A power which Jesus will now dislodge with a single word! "Go." (**Matt. 8:32**)
8. The demons beg Jesus to let them enter a herd of pigs feeding nearby, and he lets them do so. And immediately, we see the awful intensity and scale of the spiritual power that had tormented the young man, as the pigs, afflicted by these demonic powers, are driven in a mad rush off the cliffs to their death by drowning. What a picture of the power of sin that is here afflicting us in this world...
9. The response of the townspeople to the double shock of seeing the young man now healed combined with the destruction of their herd was one of abject fear, and they begged Jesus to leave.
10. The man who had been healed begged that he might accompany Jesus, but Jesus send him away. Why? That he should return home and tell others how much God had done for him. In other words, that he should witness and prepare the ground for when Christ would come again (e.g., the feeding of the four thousand, **Mark 8:1-9**).
11. One final thing: it may seem disturbing that the pigs had done nothing wrong, and yet they were driven to their deaths. It's helpful to consider three things here:
12. First, the drowning of the pigs is a powerful picture of the enormity of the bondage and power to which the man had been subjected. The torment that he'd been experiencing was enough to drive an entire herd of pigs to dive off a cliff to escape it. This is a picture of the awfulness of the sin and grievous sorrow and pain in our world.
13. Second, it is a reminder of the cost of our sin – specifically, in that we, who were designed for communion with God now could not enter into God's presence and live; and the price of our entering into God's presence, the price of our communion, was death. Every time a person drew near to God through the course of the entire Old Testament period, it was not without blood – the blood of an innocent lamb that died in place of the sinful person. Thank God for Jesus, on account of whose perfect sacrifice – of himself – the ancient system of animal sacrifices could be brought to an end, with God and man reconciled through his blood.
14. Jesus executed the office of priest in his once offering up of himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God. "He who knew no sin became sin for us, in order that we might become, in him, the righteousness of God." (**2 Cor. 5:21**)
15. Third, this brings us to consider what the cross of Christ is really all about. In the wilderness (in Numbers 21), when the people had rebelled and were being afflicted by fiery serpents, God instructed Moses to set up a pole with a bronze serpent placed upon it, and directed that the people should look to it and be delivered from the serpents. The serpent lifted up in the wilderness was a picture of the very thing that afflicted them, and by looking at the curse with which they were afflicted, as they trusted God's word to do so, they were healed and delivered. What a picture this is of Christ on the cross! Who took upon himself all the sin and misery of the world, all the awful weight of sin and injustice, in our place; that when we look to him in faith, and trust in him, we are healed.

16. **1 Cor. 1:23-24:** “We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Jesus Heals a Woman and Jairus’ Daughter (Luke 8:40-42):

1. For me, these two accounts are just mountaintops – incredible, life-changing examples of the awesome extent of Christ’s power, but joined now in a most exquisite way with his compassion and gentleness. Hallelujah, what a Savior!
2. The girl is twelve years old, and the woman suffering from the flow of blood has been hemorrhaging for that long – twelve years. The stories are linked. The woman has been bleeding, and thus ritually unclean, for as long as the girl has been alive.
3. Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, comes and begs Jesus to come help; his daughter is dying.
4. While Jesus was going to Jairus’ house, he was approached by a woman who came up from behind him and touched the hem of his garment, hoping to be healed of her long suffering.
5. It wasn’t just a matter of physical suffering, but of the additional spiritual burden of being unclean as a consequence of this ongoing discharge – unclean for twelve years, meaning that for twelve years, she couldn’t worship in the assembly of God’s people, she couldn’t eat of the peace offerings in the fellowship of God’s people, she couldn’t be touched without making the other person ritually unclean. Like being a leper. (See **Lev. 15:25-31; 7:19-21.**)
6. Understand the structure of worship and life in the Old Covenant administration: Israel was to keep itself carefully between two walls of separation, the wall of holiness separating them from God, and the wall of cleanness separating them from impurity that should not draw near to God in worship. Note that uncleanness was not the same as unrighteousness! A leper may have done nothing wrong, ethically-speaking, nor the woman in this instance. But they were unclean and were cut off from the fellowship of God’s people as long as the uncleanness was upon them.
7. Why? Because there is a typological aspect at work here, where the people, in being clean, were offerings to God, without blemish or spot, living sacrifices, and together a royal priesthood and holy nation. (See **Eph. 5:27; 1 Pet. 1:19; Rom. 12:1.**)
8. And the “three D’s” that rendered one unclean were disease (e.g., leprosy), discharge (e.g., this flow of blood from the woman), and death (e.g., of the young girl in our passage).
9. But we might press, why should a woman with a flow of blood be considered unclean in God’s sight? And the answer to that – beyond what we’ve already mentioned about the sacrificial aspect of the category of ritual purity in Israel – is that visible blood was and is a mark of the fall. Consider that in heaven there will be no death, no disease, no blood shed... No tears, for that matter!
10. But her ritual impurity didn’t mean that God didn’t love her to deliver her and restore her and save her. Like the sinful woman who had anointed Jesus, the woman in our passage approached Jesus without asking permission, driven by sheer need and hope and faith in his power and goodness to heal her. But she was also burdened by a weight of shame, so she tried to touch him without his knowing.
11. But of course Jesus knows what has happened. In his questioning who touched him, it’s not that he’s trying to find out who touched him, but that he is calling upon the one who did it – the woman – to confess. And in one of the most beautiful scenes in Scripture, what she thought would be a confession of sin and guilt for having touched the teacher was in fact, as it turned out, her confession of faith by which she was saved! “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace.” Beautiful!

12. And what was this faith that saved her? Again, it's not some special quality in her. It wasn't some special power in her. It was nothing in her at all! It was the love and grace of God in the person of Christ! All she did was look to him and draw near to him in her need. And that is enough! Because Christ is enough. And he is faithful in all he has promised. And he is mighty to save. Amen.
13. Then he goes into the room where the girl was, who had now died. He goes in only with Peter, James, and John, and the parents. And he says, "Child, arise!" Mark captures the actual words in Aramaic, "*Talitha koum!*" Which are actually sweet and gentle. "Little girl, little lamb, time to wake up. Arise!"
14. A quick note here: Jesus forbids the parents from telling others what had happened. Why does he do this here, while having asked the healed young man to do exactly the opposite? First, because when he was in Gentile territory, there was no need for Jesus' mission and ministry to be veiled. It was in Israel that Jesus faced the double danger of lethal opposition and equally lethal, but misguided, support, as we've seen.
15. But there's more. We might press the issue: What does it mean, Don't tell anyone...? I mean, wouldn't the people *know* that she had been raised? I mean, the girl had died, and now she's walking around just fine. Praise God! Praise God! But... they're going to ask, right?
16. My thought here (and it's just that: I'm still thinking about this matter – would love to hear your thoughts on it!) is that Jesus' intent is not that they should remain completely mum. Clearly, people will talk about one of the greatest miracles ever witnessed in the history of Israel! I think his point is that they shouldn't go reporting it preemptively themselves, but that, if asked, they should indeed be prepared to say exactly what happened. In other words, they shouldn't raise the issue themselves, lest it become a sidetracked discussion on "was she really dead?" Instead, they should be ready to tell the truth to anyone who asked, because they had seen it with their own eyes. This has to do with why Jesus came. It is Jesus' works and the word of God, and the Father himself, first and foremost, that bear witness to Christ, not men.
17. **John 5:34-36:** "Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. [John the Baptist] was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me."
18. In summary, for both the woman and the girl, we see, once again, (1) the compassion of our Savior, (2) his willingness to offend the sensibilities of the religious gatekeepers (e.g., taking the dead girl by the hand), and the awesome extent of his power – Pentecost power: he is not made unclean, but the woman is cleansed, and the little girl is raised. In Christ our Savior, all things are made new – even you and me.

Amen!

LUKE 13: THE TIME IS NOW!

- **STRUCTURE OF THE PASSAGE**

Jesus' Warning: Repent or perish! (vs. 1-5)

The Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree (vs. 6-9)

 An Incident Revealing the Glory of the KING (vs. 10-17)

 2 Parables on the Mystery of the KINGDOM (vs. 18-21)

Jesus' Warning: The Narrow Door (vs. 22-30)

Jesus' Lament Over Jerusalem (vs. 31-35)

- **AN INCIDENT REVEALING THE GLORY OF THE KING:**

- **The Woman with the Disabling Spirit (vs. 10-17)**

18 years: 3 references to "18" in Luke, and all in this chapter.

This 13th woman with whom Jesus has interacted in 13 chapters.

We see two things about Jesus here:

- (a) His compassion, attesting to his noble character
- (b) His power, attesting to the truth of his word & mission

We also get a lesson on the true meaning of the Sabbath:

- (a) Is Jesus opposed to Sabbath observance? No!
- (b) It's the Fourth Commandment (= binding moral law!)
- (c) Three reasons for Sabbath observance:
 - The WISDOM principle (it is good for us)
 - The JUSTICE principle (it is the basis of a just society)
 - The FAITH principle (it is the mark of faith in practice)

So the Pharisees weren't wrong to sanctify the Sabbath.

They were wrong in the application – missing the point!

Jesus reveals the weightier matter at stake here:

- (a) Not just works of *necessity*, but works of *mercy* are permitted.
Indeed, mercy sanctifies the day!
- (b) The heart of Sabbath observance is not a fastidious concern to rest for oneself, but a loving concern to bring rest to others, to share that rest with us!

To summarize:

- (a) Our glorious Savior brings rest and restoration NOW!
- (b) NOW is the time to receive rest and bring rest.
NOW is the time to worship the Living and True God!

- **TWO PARABLES OF THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM:**

- **The Parables of the Mustard Seed & Leaven (vs. 18-21)**

The Parable of the Mustard Seed:

- (a) The kingdom is living, growing; it comes small, unnoticed, but grows to enormous extent.
- (b) For us, the new life is NOW! Grow!
- (c) For the church: it grows inexorably from smallness and seeming insignificance to become the fullness of him who fills all in all! (See Dan. 2:34-35; 44.)

The Parable of the Leaven:

- (a) Leaven usually = sin! Here the kingdom of God!
- (b) A picture of its gradual, hidden, inexorable growth.
- (c) The kingdom is here NOW, at work in our midst!

To summarize:

- (a) The KING brings life and rest NOW!
The new life he brings is already begun!
- (b) The KINGDOM he brings is present and growing in our midst NOW!
- (c) What comfort this is for those who love the King and pray for his Kingdom!
Come, Lord Jesus!

- **JESUS' WARNING:**

- **Repent or Perish! (vs. 1-5)**

Is suffering the result of sin?

Sometimes! But sometimes not!

Don't be like Job's friends, blaming the sufferer.

Don't imagine that you're always as innocent as Job.

But Jesus knows the deeper intent of their question:

"Did they deserve it and what does that mean for me?"

"As long as we're not *that* bad, we'll be okay, right?"

But Jesus says (2x!) that ALL need to repent:

"Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

There is none who do good! (See Psalm 14:1-3.)

We compare ourselves to one another, but miss the point!

The holiness of God! ALL have fallen short of his glory.

ALL must repent to enter into life.

To summarize:

- (a) The KING brings life and rest NOW!
The new life he brings is already begun!
- (b) The KINGDOM he brings is present and growing in our midst NOW!
- (c) But there is a strong warning that comes with this good news:
The time to repent to enter this kingdom is NOW!

- **JESUS' INTERCEDES ON OUR BEHALF**

- **The Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree (vs. 6-9):**

The unfruitful fig tree is Israel, and the owner is God.

The vinedresser (like Moses) intercedes for the tree.

Good news: There is still time while we live and breathe.

God is long suffering and slow to anger.

Bad news: God's patience isn't forever.

Judgment is coming.

But ... am I fruitful enough...? How fruitful must I be...?

Are we to be like the Pharisees? "Do more! Try harder!"
No! (See Psalm 13:1-3; Matthew 5:20)
Confronted by the truth, we feel Denial or Despondency!
What to do? Remember the fig tree! (See Matt. 21:18-19.)

The fig tree's leaves were concealing its fruitlessness.
Hypocrisy! (Any other examples of fig leaves in the Bible?)
Figs are a picture of God's blessing (see Num. 13; Deut. 8:9; Song 2:10-13; 1 Kings 4:25).
The removal of figs is a picture of God's judgment (see Ps. 105:33; Amos 4:9).
The fig tree is also a picture of Israel (see Jer. 24:1-10).

Jesus cursing the fig tree is a SIGN on entering Jerusalem.
He sees the fruitless fig tree (= Israel) and curses it.
It is a sign of the coming judgment on the nation.
But Jesus had come to bear that curse, to be that curse! (See Gal. 3:13-14)
Here is the mystery and the glory of God's great grace!

To summarize:

- (a) The KING brings life and rest NOW!
 - (b) The KINGDOM he brings is here NOW, and growing!
 - (d) The time to repent is NOW.
 - (e) Good news: Jesus has borne the curse!
NOW is the time of grace.
 - (f) Bad news: But judgment is coming.
Let us avail ourselves of grace NOW!
- **The Narrow Door (vs. 22-30):**
His patience will not last forever. And when once you've passed the event horizon, it is done...
See Matt. 7:13-14: The wide gate and easy way for the many people
vs. the narrow gate and hard way for the few people.

Again, does this mean "Do more, try harder"? No!
CHRIST IS THE DOOR! (See John 10:7, 9.)
And that door is so narrow, it will admit only one at a time!
(a) No slipping in with the crowd!
(b) The only in is through Christ, your Judge ... and Savior!

To summarize:

- (a) The KING brings life and rest NOW!
- (b) The KINGDOM he brings is here NOW!
- (c) Bad news: You are more sinful and flawed than you had ever dared imagine.
Judgment is coming!
- (d) Good news: You can be more loved and accepted than you had ever dared hope.
Jesus has borne our curse.
NOW is the time of grace. Avail of it!
Come, let us rest in the presence of our Savior, and bring rest to others.
Come, Lord Jesus! Amen!

Luke 14: “Guess Who’s Coming to Sunday Dinner”
January 14, 2024
Mike Domenica

BACKGROUND

- Enmity between the “seeds” of Eve and Satan (Gen. 3:15)
- Continuing friction with the unbelieving Pharisees is the picture of the continuing enmity
- Two kings, two kingdoms...one Savior
- Jesus’ parables and messages are directed at Pharisees/Israel...and the Church of the NT

SUNDAY DINNER WITH THE RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE (14:1-24)

1. The Law, the Gospels and the Cross “The Law” (v.1-6)

a. The key point is not compassion for the sick; not healing on the Sabbath!

“...they were watching him carefully.” (14:1b) “...looking to accuse him...(12:10)

- Trapping the trappers
- What is happening here? Critical to understand: The Law, the Gospels and the Cross

b. The conflict of Laws: the written code vs. the Law of the Spirit!

“Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?” (Matt. 12:10ff)

The Law: The reflection of the character/holiness of God.

Righteousness and Godliness: What is the difference?

The written code addresses Righteousness; The Holy Spirit addresses Godliness

“Consecrate yourselves and be ye Holy for I, the Lord your God, am Holy.” (Lev. 20:7)

*“For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”
(John 1:17)*

- By the hand vs. of the heart
- Outward vs. inward
- Self-defined standards vs. God-defined standard
- Attainable vs. Unattainable
- Being vs. doing

The purpose of the written law: To kill the “flesh”, the self, the “old man”!

c. The purpose of the Law: That every mouth may be stopped (Rom. 3:19)

“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”

Note 14:4,6 *“But they remained silent...and they could not reply to these things.”*

d. What happened at the cross?

- The written law brings righteousness; The cross brings Godliness
- Righteousness without the cross is self-righteousness
- *“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live...”* (Gal. 2:20)

e. See Hebrews. What day is the Sabbath? Every day!

- The veil has been torn...by the High Priest...the very, very, very High Priest!!
- No sacred and secular: Everywhere you go is sacred; Everyone you meet is a divine encounter!
- How do we then live? With the cross comes the Spirit...but that is for another day!

2. Recognizing Our Place at the Table (14:7-11)

Jesus notices where the important, distinguished guests choose to sit as they enter the room. Up front, next to the host, beside their wealthy friends, near the honorable people. He tells a parable:

- a. Be careful where you sit...someone more important than you may come and you will have to move.
- b. You will be humbled and shamed when this happens.

“for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled; and everyone who humbles himself will be exalted” (14:11)

But how does one humble himself? It is difficult to do to oneself. The act of humbling oneself is, in a real way, actually exalting oneself as a humble person! As soon as we think we are humble, the humility disappears!

In fact, the only means of true humility comes through our relationship with the Lord. When we stand next to the full import of his laws of love to God, neighbors and enemies, humility is the natural consequence. It is our reference point that is the problem.

Best conveyed by John the Baptist at Jesus’ baptism:

“Indeed, I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Matt. 3:11)

Summary to the Pharisees: Sit at the lower end of the dinner table, because someday someone is going to come to dinner infinitely higher and more important than you or anyone else in the room...and you are going to be very embarrassed if you are sitting anywhere near the head of the table. You will be ushered to the back...in complete humility...and maybe out of the room! (14:24)

This is what the law does!

3. Setting the Guest List (14:12-14)

Jesus to the Host: *“You invited the wrong people! You invited your distinguished, rich friends, relatives and neighbors!”*

Host: *Well, then, who should I invite?*

Jesus: (Clarifies to the host who are the more important people that should have been invited!)

“The poor, the blind, the crippled, the lame...!”

When these poor, crippled, miserable people come to the table, your rich friends will have to move to the lower places and they will be embarrassed!

Host: *“Why do I invite them!”*

Jesus: *Because they cannot repay you!*

Host: *What do you mean? What kind of logic is that?”*

Jesus: *“These wealthy people don’t need you! They can repay you! Invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, **because they cannot repay you.***

“You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...” (Matt. 5:19)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven...If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matt. 5:43-48)

Jesus: (paraphrased) *“Besides, your wealthy, distinguished friends and neighbors are really, in God’s eyes, the ones in the most need...they just don’t see it!”*

Jesus to the Laodiceans:

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked...Behold I stand at the door and knock.” (Rev. 3:17)

“He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (14:35)

4. The Guest Plans a Banquet of His Own

“When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

- Jesus’ message goes completely over his head.

Ahh...won’t it be nice when all of us here can have a great dinner like this in the Kingdom...”

- Jesus describes a banquet:

“But...a man once gave a banquet”... (probably the “wedding feast by the King for his Son... (Matt. 22:1-13)

- Entering the Kingdom: Unless you are poor, miserable, hungry, humbled (metaphors for the soul)
- Many excuses for not coming to the party...for turning away from Christ
 - “Many are called, but few are chosen.” (v.23)
 - How does Jesus “...*compel people to come...*”
 - How did he “compel” you to come? “He loved you ‘ere you knew him.
 - Irresistible grace = Irresistible love; Unconditional love; The perseverance of God.

5. Counting the Cost: The Call to a Godly Life (14:25-35)

- Jesus **warns** the crowds following him:

*“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. **Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.** (14:25,26)*

“But Jesus did not entrust himself to them (the crowds), because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.” (John 2:24)

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9)
- Hating your parents! The danger of hyperboles...we miss the reason for the hyperbole.

“Then Peter said in reply, “See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new kingdom, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones... And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold^l and will inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”
- Counting the Cost: (v.28-32)
 1. This is very expensive: it is your whole life you are giving; its everything you have
 2. Count the cost: Don’t do it...if you don’t want to finish
 3. It is humiliating; humbling; embarrassing; saps all your ego out of you e.g. Going to your enemies to ask for terms of surrender! (v.32)

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17-27) “*He went away sorrowful...*” “*But, Jesus loved him!*”
- What does Jesus mean?
 1. “Are you really sure you want to follow me? Do you hear what I am saying?”
 - “...*hate your father and mother...and even your own life...*” (v.26)
 - “...*bear your own cross...*” (v.27)
 - “*Foxes have holes, birds have nests...*” (Matt. 9:20)
 - “...*let the dead bury their dead...you come and follow me.*” (Luke 9:60)
 - “*Therefore, if anyone does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple*” (v.33)

2. *"Many are called..."*, but few choose to continue
3. Count the cost...(v.27-33)

What Christian parent would not want their children to love God more than them? The best way to ensure the true love of anyone, is for that person to love God more than anything else.

4. What is love?
 - Filios: brotherly, friendly love
 - Eros: romantic, sexual love
 - Agape: Godly, sacrificial love

What is "sacrifice": *"Not my will but thine be done."* Dying to self.

6. Summary:

- The purpose of the Law...that every mouth should be stopped...
- *"O wretched man that I am..."* – Paul, Isaiah, Job, Peter, John Newton
 - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."*
- *"He who holds his life will lose it; and he who gives his life for my sake will find it."*
(Matt. 16:25)
- The Call: *Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden...take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and lowly and will give rest unto your souls."*
(Matt. 11:28)
- *"...take up your cross..."* *"Follow me..."*; Where are we going?
- Abraham and Isaac: *"Come with me son."* But where is the sacrifice?
- Entering the Kingdom: *"...and the veil was rent...from top to bottom..."*
- Everything is sacred. Everyday is the Sabbath. Everywhere you go is sacred. The truetruth applies everywhere all the time.

7. *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* (14:35b)