

**The Weekly Word**  
February 4-10, 2019

Luke's Gospel has much to teach us. Happy reading...  
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

**Monday, February 4: Luke 2- Jesus grew ...**

The last story in this chapter, about Jesus being left behind in Jerusalem when he was twelve, launched my thinking. We know very little about Jesus' early life beyond His birth. Was He smart, precocious, athletic, coordinated? We know He could read, since He read the Synagogue scroll in Luke 4. Who taught Him? We do not know.

All indicators suggest He was an ordinary child. When He returns to His home town no one thinks He is anything special. Apparently, He was a normal kid, whatever normal meant in his era.

Thinking about Jesus' early years, I was drawn to verse 52. *And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.*

He grew... He was a normal boy.

This brief verse shows us that Jesus grew intellectually and physically. He went through growing pains just like every kid. He had to learn to walk. And his mind and thoughts needed to develop. He grew in wisdom.

The last clause says much. *Jesus grew in favor with God and man.* Jesus learned to please God. I love that His faith and trust in God grew. Even as a child He was learning to trust the Lord. This verse underscores for me the place of teaching our youngsters and youth the way of God. Young people today can learn to grow in favor with God, too!

Jesus was a real human being... He grew. And His life reminds me that part of our growth is to grow in favor with God.

That's true for young people and old as well.

*Lord, as I sit today... may my time with You in Your Word increase my growth and favor with You. Following Jesus' example and in His name, I pray. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 5: Luke 3- Supporting cast...**

Usually I find myself gravitating to Jesus, but today I wanted to think more about John, like I did a couple of chapters ago.

John is in the desert; Luke tells us, *during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness* (2).

In the quiet and solitude of the desert John heard God's voice and he knew what to do. *He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins* (3).

John prepared the way for Jesus. It is clear from Jesus' arrival that John knew he wasn't the main story, simply the preparation for the main story.

John was willing to play second fiddle. He didn't need to be the main story. He was obedient to his call, to be the preparer, the opening act before the main personality enters the stage. But

unlike opening acts, John wasn't hoping to be noticed so he could become a main act. John was content playing a small part in God's cosmic plan of salvation.

I wonder, am I willing to do the grunt work for God, allowing others to fill the limelight? I hope so and I pray so, because more often than not, I am the supporting cast rather than the lead actor.

*Lord, often it seems my role is the side role... please give me the grace to play my role well, to lift up and point to others and particularly Jesus. Lord, may I decrease so Jesus can increase. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Wednesday, February 6: Luke 4- Wilderness...**

Wilderness again attracts me. Luke records, *Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness* (1).

As we read, Jesus' wilderness experience was a bit more intense and personal than most of our wilderness experiences, however, his challenges are ones that face most of us in one way or another.

Food, sustenance, provision... temptations to acquire what we need and beyond that, what we want come to every person. How we go about acquiring what we need is the test. Will I earn it honorably? Will I be satisfied if people I know have more than me? Will I trust God to provide what I need or will I go after it by my own strength and ability alone??? These are issues I face, everyone faces... How am I (you) doing with this test?

Authority, power, recognition... again, temptations and enticements to authority, power and recognition tap each of us in one way or another. The parent who lords it over children just because he/she can. The boss who imposes her/his will on subordinates because they can. These are examples of people seeking authority and power. It is not only upper crust people who exert authority, I suspect every human is tempted by this in one relational circle or another. How am I (you) doing with this test?

Testing God... trying to put God in a situation where He must act. First of all it is so foolish that we human beings could cause God to have to act. God is God and we are not. Yet, there are times when I test God. Sometimes the way I pray, as the words come out of my mouth, I hear myself trying to butter-up God with superlatives in order to make Him answer me. Or I repeat some pious action simply because God answered me once when I did that action. It is as if I am thinking God has to answer my prayer again. One of the common sins of humanity is trying to 'make God work for us.' And that is getting things upside down. As I said, God is God and I am not!

*Lord God, help me to keep priorities right and lines of authority correct. You are God and I am Your servant. Thank You, Father, for reminding me of this again today and for opening my heart to Your world. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Thursday, February 7: Luke 5- Solitude...**

It was not wilderness per se but solitude that caught my eye today.

One prime aspect of wilderness is solitude, being alone with self, facing God and self. Today we see Jesus spending time in solitude. *But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed* (16).

First, I notice the word 'often.' Luke makes it seem that Jesus regularly spent time alone with His Father in prayer and connection. *Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.*

In this place of solitude Jesus prayed. When I am truly in solitude, I can hear things I don't hear when I am in the hustle and bustle of life. I can hear my inner thoughts and I can better hear the nudges of God. A thought comes to mind that could only be from the Lord. Because I can hear more clearly, I have an opportunity to act more faithfully. To be honest I can still say 'no' to the voice of God, but at least I hear it. I suspect I often miss the voice of God when I am moving at the speed of life much of the day.

And this brings me back to 'often.' Maybe, if like Jesus, I cultivate a regular and often pattern of being in solitude with God, I will learn to hear and distinguish God's voice better so that I might even hear Him when I am moving at the speed of life, which is much of my normal day. Secondly, maybe I can cultivate slowing down so that my normal speed of life is a little slower so I can hear God a little better.

Maybe.

Now, I just have to cultivate those times of solitude...

*Help me, Lord, find solitude time with You every day. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

### **Friday, February 8: Luke 6- God's agent?!...**

So much to choose from, I am at a loss where to pause and spend my time in contemplation. I sit in silence for a few minutes before I look back to the text. Somedays it is obvious where I should concentrate my thoughts and others not so much.

What do you want to say to me today Lord?

Looking back at the chapter, Luke's report of some beatitudes coupled with their reversal hit me, particularly the ones about hunger. *Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. ... Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep* (21 & 25).

Just the other day I learned that someone I know moderately well has no food to eat sometimes. This reality has hit me pretty hard. Even during some of my leanest years, like seminary, we always had food. Maybe some days dinner was plain pasta with sauce, but we had food. Not having food was never a situation.

I am haunted; learning someone I know has no food sometimes while I have plenty... more than plenty. Ouch, it stings. Reading the words of Jesus is a bit frightening...

*Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied...*

*Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.*

That's the disparity between me and this other person, I am well fed; they are hungry. Jesus goes on to say that the hungry will be satisfied. It hits me, what if I am God's person to help the one I know become satisfied? I am wondering what to do for them and how to help them while allowing them to maintain dignity. I am wondering what Jesus is calling me to do... and then how to do it appropriately, kindly, nicely.

*Jesus, I have read verse 21 many times and always considered that You would make sure that the hungry become satisfied. And, Lord, that is still certainly true, but I am thinking that You want to use me to help this one person become satisfied. Am I hearing You correctly, Jesus? Am I hearing the voice of the Spirit correctly? I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

### **Saturday, February 9: Luke 7- ...**

I was torn whether to spend my extended time with the story of the Centurion or the widow of Nain? The thought came to me, "Maybe it was the intersection of both."

The two people Jesus helped were very different. The Centurion was an important man with servants and the widow was near the bottom of the social ladder. A widow with no son puts her in an incredibly vulnerable position.

Jesus apparently saw the need and was not particularly interested in station of life. In the Centurion, it is clear that Jesus saw faith. Luke makes this clear; from the voices advocating for the Centurion to his absolute faith in Jesus, his account is one of faith... faith rewarded by Jesus' healing of this servant. The Centurion also stands as a witness against Israel since his depth of faith could not be found in all of Israel (see verse 9).

The woman on the other hand had no one advocating for her. She was utterly alone. And yet Jesus saw her pain and stepped in. She never asked for help... likely a woman would not approach Jesus. Touched by her pain and loss Jesus heals her son in a dramatic manner. The result was not only the son's resurrection but also the people praising God!

As dramatic and theologically rich as both of these stories are, at their base is Jesus helping a person in need. It didn't matter to him if the person was wealthy, successful or not. It didn't matter if the person was male or female. It didn't matter if the person was Jew or Gentile. Jesus saw a need and blessed the people involved.

Jesus cares for people...

Jesus cares for you and me. What a wonderful thought on the eve of Sunday. Pondering this is a tremendous way to prepare for worship tomorrow!

*Lord, as You cared for the Widow of Nain and the Centurion, You care for me. I am so blessed to be Your Son and disciple. Praise You, Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit. Amen and amen.*

## **Sunday, February 10, 2019, Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@LivingHopeCT.org](mailto:office@LivingHopeCT.org)*

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.