

# Love Letters

*Reading Through the Gospels*



Reading Guide  
Week #11

Luke 17-22



NEW HORIZON  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Love Letters Reading Guide for Week #11

Luke 17-22

**A Week in Review.** Jesus makes His grand entrance into Jerusalem. He is swarmed by children (18:15) and a crowd of joyfully followers (19:37). But very quickly the mood changes, and Jesus is challenged and questioned. Jesus speaks in cryptic language as He describes future calamity, then joins His followers for their Last Supper.

**This Week's Reading.** This week we will notice another shift. Jesus will continue His teaching, but is making His way to Jerusalem and His cross. As tensions mount, we will witness fewer miracles and more predictions of His impending death. We will close with the Lord's Supper, and the table will be set for His arrest, trial, and crucifixion...

### ○ MONDAY—LUKE 17

**Consider.** Take care: In our daily Christian lives we must not cause others to stumble (v.1), we must be quick to forgive (v.4), and we must listen, trust, and obey our God (v.5,6). Yet, in the end we are still unworthy of God's blessings and eternal life. Instead, this is the *least* we can do in response to all God has done for us: "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty" (v.10). How does this notion set with you?

#### **Read.**

- As Jesus calls His disciples to forgive others (v.3), their response is "Lord, increase our faith!" (v.5). Forgiving others sometimes requires faith—drawing strength from God. When has God helped you forgive? Do you need God's help forgiving someone today?
- When Jesus healed ten men of leprosy, only one of the men, a Samaritan (non-Jew), returned to thank Jesus (vv.11-19). Although all ten were healed, the Samaritan received something extra—blessing God's heart by offering gratitude. How has God blessed your life? How might you be more expressive of your gratitude?

**Reflect.** Jesus promises to return. Yet His return will take *all* by surprise, "like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end

to the other." No one is able to predict it, because "the Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation" (v.20). Why do you suppose the day of Jesus' return is so secretive? What is your emotion and response?

### ○ TUESDAY—LUKE 18

**Consider.** Prayer is evidence of faith. In prayer we connect in faith with a God Who is concerned, able and involved. Therefore, Jesus lovingly encourages us to "always pray and not give up" (v.1). Prayer is our way of showing God we trust Him (v.8) How does your prayer life demonstrate a confidence (or lack of confidence) in God's response?

#### **Read.**

- In Jesus' parable of The Persistent Widow, He teaches that persistence pays. Do you ever feel you are tiring God with your needs and requests? How does this parable help us understand God's heart regarding our needs and prayers?
- When Jesus asked the Blind Beggar, "What do you want me to do for you?" (v.41a), the man said, "Lord, I want to see" (v.41b). The man approached Jesus with his need, and Jesus gladly healed him. How comfortable and forward are you in asking Jesus to meet your needs?

**Reflect.** The New Testament teaches salvation through faith in Christ, not through our works of righteousness. In today's reading, Jesus addresses "some who were confident of their own righteousness" (v.9), and The Rich Ruler, who was confident he had kept all the commandments "since I was a boy" (v.22). Indeed, "how hard it is for the rich" (those who are self-righteous) "to enter the Kingdom of God!" (v.24). How does this recurring theme strike you? Do you feel your relationship with God is based on your merits or His grace?

### ○ WEDNESDAY—LUKE 19

**Consider.** The King is coming! People scramble to see and be with Him. But His coming is far from meek and mild. Following Him calls for radical works of repentance, allegiance, and obedience. Yet the crowds continue to grow and

"all the people hung on His words" (v.48). Picture yourself in this story. What would be your response when the Savior came to town?

**Read.**

- The story of Zacchaeus is a good example of "synergy," which means *God and humans working hand in hand*. Zacchaeus runs to view Jesus (v.4); Jesus responds and invites Himself for dinner (v.5). Each prompts the other's response. How have you initiated and responded with God? How has God initiated and responded with you?
- The Parable of the Ten Minas (coins) (vv.11-27) is very disturbing. First, the nobleman imposes himself upon others by being appointed as their king (v.12). Then he takes from those who have less and gives to those who have more (v.24). Finally, he calls for his enemies to be brought before him and killed (v.27). How do you reconcile this parable in light of the loving and just character of God?

**Reflect.** Jesus doesn't assemble the crowds—they simply form around Him. Nor does Jesus ask his followers to shout praises as He enters Jerusalem (vv.37-38)—it is their spontaneous cry. Jesus describes the phenomenon: "*If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out!*" (v.40). What is your natural, unprovoked response to our Savior? What attention do you offer the Savior without His asking?

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○ **THURSDAY—LUKE 20**

**Consider.** Today Jesus begins to encounter His most hostile opponents—the religious leaders in Jerusalem. We already know this opposition will ultimately lead Jesus to His cross. Jesus' days of teaching the crowds along the peaceful shores of Galilee are over. We can sense His mission is drawing to a close. What are your personal emotions for Jesus as our story continues?

**Read.**

- In chapter 19, we saw the last of the Pharisees (19:39), a Jewish renewal movement in Jesus' day. Today we meet the Sadducees (v.27), the Jewish sect that held positions of power in their religion. They are "*the chief priests and the teachers of the law,*

*together with the elders*" (v.1), and were largely opposed by the Pharisees. Where do you see similar lines drawn among followers of Christ today?

- Is Jesus the anticipated "Son of David" that God promised the Jewish people (vv.41-44)? Although Jesus comes from David's lineage (see v.3:21), Jesus has been teaching that His authority doesn't come from His ancestry or from the religious system. Jesus is the Christ because He is *God's Son* (Edwards, p.82). Has Jesus' life and teachings convinced you?

**Reflect.** Jesus is ultimately rejected by the people He came to save, and Jerusalem and the Jewish temple will soon fall to the Romans. What might have been the outcome had God's people received their Savior? What might God have in store for you as you give yourself fully to following Jesus?

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○ **FRIDAY—LUKE 21**

**Consider.** As Jesus nears His suffering, He foretells what others will face following His death. Are you able to sense Jesus' concern as His disciples head toward hardship and struggles? How have you shared in the challenges that have faced believers over the centuries?

**Read.**

- Throughout Scripture, God shows particular concern for widows and those unable to care for themselves (James 1:27, for instance). Imagine Jesus' grief as He watched a poor widow place her offering in the collection box: "*She out of her poverty put in all she had to live on*" (v.4). How might you help care for the "widows" in your life?
- Was Jesus wrong? He says, "*Not a hair of your head will perish*" (v.18), yet many have suffered and died for the sake of the Gospel. It appears that Jesus isn't guaranteeing physical safety, but assuring eternal life: "*By standing firm you will gain life*" (v.19). In what ways have you risked for Jesus' sake?

**Reflect.** Jesus' words in this chapter must have been very reassuring for believers in Luke's day because they were experiencing the very struggles Jesus was foretelling. How does it

make you feel to know that Jesus is aware of the struggles we face as we follow Him, and that many Christ-followers before us have faced the same challenges?

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○ **SATURDAY—LUKE 22**

**Consider.** Today we find Jesus celebrating the Jewish festival of Passover with His disciples. The New Testament teaches us that Jesus ultimately fulfilled the promises commemorated by the first Passover. As you read, how does it strike you to witness the completion of what God began hundreds of years earlier?

**Read.**

- "*Then Satan entered Judas*" (v.3). This is the first mention of the devil since chapter 4. Following Jesus' temptations in chapter 4, we are told that "*the devil...left Him (Jesus) until an opportune time*" (v.4:13). Some believe the "opportune time" was Judas' betrayal. The coming of Christ and His crucifixion have stirred the God's enemies. What might be evidence today of that ongoing battle?
- Notice Luke's "Two-Cup Communion" story—Jesus passes a cup both before and another after the meal (vv.17-20.) Yet the other Gospels don't include this ritual. Not to worry—scholars tell us that the two-cup practice is consistent with the Jewish Passover ritual. How does the historical accuracy of Luke's narrative strike you?

**Reflect.** The early church was taunted by non-Christians who argued that an all-knowing Savior would not have permitted Himself to be betrayed by a follower (Edwards, p.85). But we learn that Jesus was well aware of Judas' intentions (v.21). What are ways that some in our day are critical of God's actions or (apparent) inactions?

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