



Session Thirteen

The Gospel of

Luke, Pt.10

Luke 17-19:27

These chapters of Luke follow Jesus as he gets ever-closer to Jerusalem and the last week of his life, ending just prior to his triumphal entry.

Questions to consider as you read Luke 17-19:27

1) As our study to this point makes very clear, Jesus had a great deal to say about discipleship: what it involved and its importance. In light of that, we might be tempted to wonder if, in doing all Jesus commands and doing it well, we deserve some reward. But, as these verses suggest, when it comes to discipleship we can *never* do more than is required. Thus, we find 17:1-10 presenting us with three realities:

- a. We are to never be a hindrance to the discipleship of others.
- b. We are to rebuke sin and forgive all who ask forgiveness.
- c. Accept that, when we've done all this, we've done nothing more than is required of us.

If this all sounds like servanthood, that's because it is—Jesus calls us to be *servants*. What is your reaction to this? What is your reaction to the fact that no matter how much or how well we do as disciples/servants we can never do more than is required?

2) The story of the healing of the 10 lepers (17:11-19) poses the questions what do we see and what do we do when we see? When, for example, you see someone who appears homeless, do you just see how they look or do you see beyond that, at how they feel, or the situations that may have made them homeless to begin with? Then, what do you do when you see? Do you just see or does what you see lead you to act, and how far are you willing to act? This story makes it clear what Jesus sees and what Jesus does, and it's reasonable to assume he expects us, in similar situations, to do the same. Think about what you see and what you do—and ask yourself *why*?

3) Read 17:20-37, then reflect on the following:

Many followers of Jesus want to bypass the cross for the glories of the Kingdom, but the Kingdom in our time will only be seen by those who take the cross as the controlling power of their lives and live for the relief of human suffering and the reconciliation of all persons to one another and to God.

4) One biblical scholar, in response to the Parable of the Unjust Judge (18:1-8), wrote the following:

“The unjust judge’s failure to fear God or be concerned about the needs of other people establishes him as the antithesis of God’s justice and compassion for the oppressed. The just God does not protect the property interests of the privileged but is compassionate and looks out for those who have no power to leverage privileges from the powerful. The way of the Kingdom, therefore, calls for priorities based on compassion.”

Does this square with your own politics and/or understanding of how the world does (or should) work? If so, does your own life reflect these words? If not, how would you interpret this parable so its teachings do square with your politics/understanding/life?

5) Read the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14). The case can be made that it is a parable about a number of things, but I urge you to think about it in terms of grace, mercy, and forgiveness. How would you respond to the following statements?

- a. Grace can only be received by people who have empathy for others.
- b. Only the merciful can receive mercy.
- c. Only those who forgive will be forgiven.
- d. The Pharisee had enough religion to be virtuous but not enough to be humble.

6) What do you think Jesus means that we must “receive the Kingdom of God as a little child” (18:17)? Why do you think Luke places that teaching of Jesus immediately before the story of the rich ruler (18:18-30)? You likely do not consider yourself “rich” but, relative to the world’s population as a whole, you are probably a good deal richer than 75-80% of all people living today. Jesus tells the rich ruler to sell all he had, give it to the poor, and follow him. How much of what you have would you be willing, in the name of following Jesus, to sell and give the proceeds to the poor?

7) Luke 18:31-34 is a reminder of the depth of the hostility directed at Jesus. It’s a reminder, too, that one of the secrets of God’s redemptive work in a broken creation is its remarkable capacity to absorb hostility. Consider the reality that violence always breeds more violence; accordingly, Jesus’ life suggests that the appropriate response to violence is suffering love and obedience to the call of the Kingdom because they are the only effective means for ending the spiral of violence begetting more violence.

- a. How great is your willingness, let alone your capacity, to absorb hostility in the name of the Kingdom?

b. “Suffering love and obedience” may not be your cup of tea. What, then, is your alternative for ending the spiral of violence begetting more violence?

8) Read 18:35-43. What blindness do you need Jesus to cure?

9) The story of Zacchaeus (19:1-10) is a story of the Kingdom breaking into life in an immediate, powerful way; it is evidence that people—and situations—can change. Look about you: where do you see the Kingdom breaking into life?

10) The Parable of the Greedy and Vengeful King (19:11-27) at first appears to have much in common with the Parable of the Talents in Matthew (25:14-30). But whereas the parable in Matthew offers a lesson on responsibility and stewardship, this parable is a portrait of greed and vengeance, a personification of the maxim that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. As such, it should not be read as telling us about life in the Kingdom but telling us about what life in the Kingdom is *not*—in other words, it is a not unreasonable depiction of life in the world. But the contrast it provides is instructive: whereas, in the world, people who serve those in power well are rewarded and enemies punished, in the Kingdom, as we’ve seen time and again, standards for reward and punishment are reversed (the greedy are punished and the selfless and generous rewarded). So, as followers of Jesus, we find ourselves in the difficult position of being commanded to live by a set of values and assumptions prevalent in a place—the Kingdom—that not only is yet to be fully present but are frequently at odds with those of the place we do live. We are, in effect, called to be “resident aliens.” How would your life be different if you began thinking of yourself as a “resident alien”?