



## Session Fourteen

### The Gospel of

### Luke, Pt.11

### Luke 19:28-21:38

These chapters of Luke cover the last week of Jesus' life from the triumphal entry (Palm Sunday) to just prior the eating of the Last Supper (Maundy Thursday).

#### **Questions to consider as you read Luke 19:28-21:38**

1) Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem (19:28-40), when he is hailed as a king, is a good opportunity for us to remind ourselves exactly what kind of king he was. As biblical scholar R. Alan Culpepper points out,

*The cloaks thrown on the road that day were not expensive garments but tattered shawls and dusty, sweat-stained rags. Jesus was the king of the oppressed and the suffering. He shared their hardships, relieved their suffering, accepted them when others deemed them unacceptable, gave them hope, and embodied God's love for them. Jesus was a king, but no ordinary one—the king of fishermen, tax collectors, Samaritans, harlots, blind men, demoniacs, and cripples...[and] those who followed Jesus were a ragtag bunch.*

We tend to think of Jesus as king of people just like us; and he was. But think about what you've read to this point of Jesus and his earthly ministry. How often is he depicted reaching out to/ministering to/helping people like us? By contrast, how often are the recipients of his ministry those on the margins of society...the sick, the crippled, the possessed, the poor...the "least of these"? What does it mean to you and your relationship with Jesus that he spent most of his earthly ministry with people very different from you and I?

2) In 19:42 Jesus says to all Jerusalem, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace."

- a. Based upon what you know of Jesus' ministry and teachings, what would you say are "the things that make for peace"?
- b. Why do you think Luke places these words of Jesus just prior to the episode where he drives the moneychangers out of the Temple?

3) The questioning of Jesus' authority (20:1-8) is a reminder that the issue of religious authority is at work in each of our lives. Faced with theological or ethical issues that you must resolve, to whom/what do you turn?

- a. Jesus, Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are all sources on which we can draw when making decisions. What priority do you give each of these?
- b. Assuming that you do not attempt to live your life according to every teaching in Scripture, how do you determine which you follow and which you don't?
- c. Why do Jesus and Scripture have authority in some areas of your life but not in others (assuming this is the case)?

4) Read the Parable of the Wicked Tenants (20:9-19) then consider the following:

- a. Like most of Jesus' parables, this one works on multiple levels but, clearly, one of these levels concerns the repeated rejection of God's call on our lives. Think about your own life. How often have you rejected God's call from the fear of change it would entail or because it interfered with your own ambitions?
- b. The parable also illustrates the dynamic character of sin: greed leads to rebellion... rebellion is expressed in violence...violence escalates to murder...murder results in the loss of everything. Another way of looking at this is to say sin always results in more sin. Mindful of this, can you think of any situation where sin is an appropriate response?

5) Luke 20:20-26 is commonly understood as being about the appropriateness of paying taxes. But the case can be made that these verses are really a warning that we not give to the government what rightfully should only be given to God. Which raises an issue that, while longstanding, has assumed particular importance of late: confusing patriotism and religious fervor.

- a. Based upon what you know of Jesus and his teachings, how do you think he'd respond to the statement, "America is a Christian country"?
- b. Jesus was not particularly explicit about the obligation of his followers vis-à-vis the country they call home. Again based upon what you know of Jesus and his teachings, how do you think he'd define such an obligation?

6) Luke 20:27-40 is one of the most difficult—and most disputed—passages in all of Scripture, in large part because it hinges on an arcane argument between the Sadducees and other sects within Judaism about whether or not there is life after death. One way of thinking about the passage, however, is to recognize that it is the product of a culture that viewed marriage primarily as an arrangement of a man's right to a woman and a woman's right, under certain circumstances, to male support. The point here being that, in heaven, there will be no need for such arrangements because, if we put aside fleshly matters of physical intimacy which likely won't apply in heaven, there will be no need to restrict love, intimacy, or companionship to a monogamous relationship. How do you respond to this view of Jesus' words?

7) Luke 20:41-44 is a reminder of how frequently in our journey through Luke we've acknowledged people struggled to understand what *Messiah* meant applied to Jesus because his behavior and teachings were so contrary to what tradition had taught them to expect. Think carefully about this question: What does calling Jesus "Lord" mean to you?

8) Read 20:45-47. How do you feel Jesus' warning about the scribes applies to you?

9) Read 21:10-4. Note how Jesus distinguishes between the "gifts" of the rich and "all she had to live on" of the poor widow. Clearly, Jesus' teaching is not about the relative amount of money each gave but about what the amount given meant vis-à-vis their resources as a whole. It also is about the faith of each. The poor widow gave with a selflessness that indicates she was taking Jesus at his word when he said, "Seek first the Kingdom." What do you seek first and how is it reflected in your actions?

10) Read 21:5-19 and consider the following:

*If in every generation there are those whose religion is simply a form of escapism into the fantasy of futurism, every generation has also had its courageous and prophetic visionaries who devoted themselves completely to Jesus' call to create community, oppose injustice, work for peace, and make a place for the excluded. Every generation, therefore, is called back to the teachings of Jesus by the examples of those who have suffered persecution and hardship because they dared to strive to live out Jesus' call for a community that transcends social barriers, that cares for its least privileged, and that confronts abuses of power and wealth.*

Escape into an imagined future is almost unavoidably about "me" or "I"; devotion to Jesus' call to create community, etc. is almost equally unavoidably about others. These two positions are not necessarily mutually exclusive; we often move back and forth between them. The question is, which position do you find yourself in most often?

11) Relative to 21:20-36... Despite the obsession many Christians have with prophecy and "end times," biblical forecasts of destruction, suffering, and loss of human life only have one purpose: to call God's people to repentance. In terms of the Gospel, part and parcel of the call to repentance is the call to obedience (thus his words at the end of the previous periscope [21:19]). This is the case not just with the forecast of destruction and suffering but as a response to destruction and suffering happening this very moment. Consider the destruction and suffering ongoing in the world right now and how we, as a country, are responding—or threatening to respond. How would it be different if, instead, our response was repentance and obedience to Jesus?