

# FOR EVERYONE, *ALWAYS.*



A STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF LUKE

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HE INVITES *EVERYONE* TO THE TABLE.

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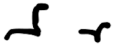
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# INTRODUCTION



This fall, we are walking through the Gospel of Luke in a series called, “For Everyone, Always.” Luke was a physician, evangelist, and a master historian who wanted to give an orderly account of the life of Jesus based on eyewitness reports. His gospel was written to show that the Christian’s faith is based upon historically reliable and verifiable events.

In Luke, we see that our faith is historical and evidential. Luke also gives us a beautiful portrait of our compassionate Savior. Jesus was not turned off by the poor and the needy. In fact, they were a primary focus of His ministry. Israel at the time of Jesus was a very class-conscious society. The weak and downtrodden were powerless to improve their lot in life, so they were very open to the message that the “Kingdom of God is near.”

The beauty of the Gospel is that it is for “everyone, always.” Jesus invites everyone to the table. He offers hope to everyone. Today, we are invited to follow His example and bring the good news of salvation to the spiritually poor and needy. Our prayer is also that through the Sunday morning teachings, LifeGroups, and the daily devotional readings, we will be challenged to live a life of love and compassion.

Believing for great things these next few months together,

*STONE CHURCH PASTORAL TEAM*



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to give a very special thank you to the Content Team, Devotional Team, and Editing Team, who spent many hours preparing this book. We are so grateful for their observations, insights, reflections, and the use of their gifts.



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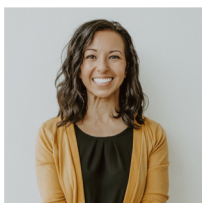
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# WEEK ONE.

September 4-8 | Luke 1-2





# TRUST AND OBEY

BY DARLA JOHNSON

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 1:1-45

This scripture passage reveals Jesus' divine nature and faithfulness to His promises. Expectant mother Mary visits her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, who is also pregnant. The Holy Spirit fills Elizabeth upon hearing Mary's greeting. She is the first person to verbally acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah because she recognized the response of her unborn baby, John the Baptist. He was prophesying about Jesus from the womb! Even in utero, Jesus' power and position were undeniable.

Also, it reminds me of how unexpected God is. He used two unborn babies (and their pregnant mamas) to acknowledge Jesus as Messiah! God sees, values, and knows us before we are born. Psalms 139:13-16 tells us that we are made by intentional design and fully known by God, even in our mothers' wombs. What a beautiful snapshot of how much God values every life.

At the end of Elizabeth's praise and recognition of Jesus, in verse 45, she says to Mary, "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." We will be blessed when we simply take Jesus at His word. We need to read the Bible, learn what He has promised, and believe He is faithful to us.

The Old and New Testaments declare that our God is faithful and keeps His promises. Deuteronomy 7:9 says, "Know that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God, keeping His covenant of love with those who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." Hebrews 10:23 says, "Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful."

These two passages are a small example of what the Bible tells us about God's faithfulness. But we can't take part in the blessing if we don't know who He is. We need to read and understand who Jesus is, so we can believe what He says and be blessed! May the Holy Spirit reveal Jesus to us, just as was revealed to Elizabeth and her unborn child, and let us strive to simply take Jesus at His word.

# HIS PROMISES ARE SURE

BY NOELLE BONDS

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 1:46-80

This passage frames Jesus' birth as the ultimate example of how God keeps His promises. The passage includes two songs from two very different people: Mary's Song in verses 46-55 and Zechariah's Song in verses 68-79. While Zechariah's Song demonstrates God's power and sovereignty, Mary's Song shows us God's intimacy and faithfulness.

Once Zechariah's son, John, is born, he sings as a temple priest, representative of his people, of the nation of Israel, to a God who rescues them. Zechariah speaks in 1st person plural using "us" and "our." Zechariah's Song shows us God's divine plan to reconcile all humanity to Himself through Jesus. God's power and sovereignty is on full display. On the other hand, Mary's Song shows us God's desire for personal relationship with each one of us.

Now a pregnant virgin, Mary is undoubtedly under cultural and religious criticism during her betrothal to Joseph. For Joseph, he could divorce her. However, Mary could face judgment from the elders and even stoning. Looking at the context of Mary's Song, it's very inspiring that her song is one of praise. Her song just as easily could have been filled with fear, worry, or anger.

Elizabeth says of Mary, "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her" (45)! Instead, Mary's is a very personal song of praise to a God who sees her and meets her needs. She speaks in 1st person singular, using "my" and "me." The first 7 lines of her song are her personal testament of what God has done for her. She says, "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant" (46-48). The word mindful shows that God's awareness is focused on her, humble as she may be. Being raised Jewish, she is fully aware of God's promise to their nation to send a Messiah; however, here she praises God because His faithfulness and mercy fills her heart with joy.

These two songs show us God's faithfulness to keep His promises. Because we can trust that He is powerful to build and tear down nations, there is comfort in the fact that God is at work in plans much larger than ourselves. For surely how much more is He near to us!

# EXTRAORDINARY THINGS IN ORDINARY PLACES

BY DAVID PEREZ

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 2:1-20

I worked at a Christian bookstore for a few years, and Christmas was one of the busiest times of the year. The manger scenes were always one of our top sellers. It was interesting how many different artistic interpretations there were; they were all beautiful. Although beautiful, the situation of Jesus' birth probably looked slightly different. I always thought someone should come out with an accurate manger scene portrayal. But perhaps it would not sell as well as the others.

Why? It may be less than ideal or appealing. The birth of Jesus was not ideal when looking at the surface. The pregnancy of Mary was probably not widely announced. Mary and Joseph were not married, so people may have talked badly about it. Perhaps even if they did know, they might not have believed that Mary, by God's supernatural power, was with child. Who knows if they had any support?

Mary did not give birth to Jesus in a comfy hospital room. Jesus was born in a stable, and His first bed was a manger. No family was there. The people that did celebrate with them at His birth were strangers who were shepherds. Yet this humble and less-than-ideal situation was a divine moment that was spoken of in prophecy and would change the course of history.

For God to do something extraordinary, the situation does not have to feel ideal or look ideal. In fact, we can often see God work in the most challenging and humble situations. God often flips the script and raises beautiful things out of lowly places. We see this displayed in Mary's song in Luke 1:46–53. Mary was humble, the setting was modest, and the shepherds were not highly esteemed among men.

When our attention is not preoccupied, it directs our eyes to the one extraordinary thing—Jesus Himself. I encourage you to allow God to work in your life in even the most unfavorable circumstances. God will often allow extraordinary things to happen out of nothing because it makes Him the focus of our attention, praise, and worship.

# CLEAR *EXPECTATIONS*

BY DAWN SUDERMAN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 2:21-40

The Israelites had an expectation of who the Messiah would be and how He would come. They were expecting a king - one who would deliver them from Roman oppression. They had heard the stories of the Old Testament prophets and knew well of the coming Messiah that would save them.

Expectations are a funny thing. When we base what we are expecting to happen on past experiences or examples of others, they are shaped with knowledge. However, when we have no past experiences or examples, our imaginations can run wild and we can quickly set ourselves up with unrealistic expectations.

Mary and Joseph had the stories of their people that had been passed down, as well as the law (Leviticus 12:1-8) that was given to the Israelites, to form their expectations as the parents of a first-born Israelite son. Circumcision, the purification process and dedication to the Lord at the temple, were all requirements of the Jewish law. They likely had an accurate expectation of these ceremonies. It's in the temple when the unexpected begins to happen.

Simeon and Anna's responses to the sight of Jesus must have been a bit surprising to His parents. Recognizing that this was the Lord's Messiah - the one Israel had long waited for, giving praise to God for the Savior of all nations, were what Simeon and Anna had lived and served expectantly for. Their words lead us to believe that His presence was even better than they could have imagined.

Isn't it like God to allow us to have our own expectations, and then to surprise us with more than we could have imagined? His Word guides us and the stories within it help to shape our expectations. Through His Spirit moving in our lives, there is often room for pleasant surprises for us, much like Simeon and Anna. What expectations have you placed on your life? How have you allowed your past experiences to shape your expectations of God? Searching the stories and promises of the Scriptures - even this study of Jesus' life in the book of Luke - can help shape your expectations. Both for this life and eternity with Christ.

# HONOR YOUR FOLKS AS JESUS *EVOKES*

BY JARED GOIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 2:41-52

The Bible only mentions one event in Jesus' youth after infancy. In Luke 2:41-52, Jesus' parents search Jerusalem for young Jesus. They find Him in His "Father's house" (or about His Father's business), dazzling the temple teachers with His wisdom and understanding of God. At an age just shy of adulthood, He was fully aware that He was the Son of God. Despite being a sinless child prodigy, Son of God, and Savior of the world, Scripture says He returned to Nazareth with them and obeyed them.

Jesus grew up in a household of modest means. While living with His mother and adoptive father, He did chores and followed rules. In our youth, there are times when obeying our parents means doing things we don't want to do, missing out on things we'd rather be doing, or following rules we don't want to follow. It can be encouraging to remember that we please the Lord when we obey our parents (Colossians 3:20). Also, later in Jesus' life, there were multiple occasions where He reminded adults of God's commandment to "honor your father and mother" (Matthew 15:4, Matthew 19:19, Mark 7:10).

For children and youth, are there situations in your life where you could better obey your parents? You could please the Lord by resisting the temptation to argue or not complaining when asked to help. It may mean fighting with your siblings less or obeying a curfew.

As an adult, are there opportunities to better honor your father and mother? It may mean talking to them more often and involving them in your life more. It may mean helping them, showing them gratitude, or forgiving them for past wrongdoings. For parents raising children, it may mean speaking highly of your parents in front of your kids or facilitating the relationship between your kids and their grandparents. Do your kids see you honoring your father and mother so that they might do the same when they are grown?

If you pray to your heavenly Father for your earthly parents, He may reveal other ways to honor your folks as Jesus evokes.

An aerial photograph of the ocean at sunset. The water is a mix of deep blue and golden yellow, with white foam from breaking waves in the foreground. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow across the entire scene.

# WEEK TWO.

September 10-15 | Luke 3-6



# THE AUTHORITY OF *CHRIST*

BY BEN SALAZAR

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 4

This section of Scripture shows the incredible power of the Holy Spirit and the authority Jesus has over all things. In the previous section, Jesus relies on the Holy Spirit to resist temptation in the desert. And in the following verses, we see the continual fruit that is produced by a life of living in the Spirit. Despite being met with conflict and almost being pushed from a cliff in his hometown, Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, speaks the truth with boldness and confidence (Luke 4:14).

We can use this moment from Jesus' ministry as a reminder that we are filled with the same Spirit today. No matter what we go through, whether it's sickness, like with Simon's mother-in-Law (Luke 4:39), or a spiritual battle (Luke 4:35), we have the power of the Holy Spirit to claim victory through Jesus. But this is hard to live by every day. Some days you just don't feel it. You might feel distant in your relationship with Jesus. But we shouldn't be dictated by emotion or our feelings but by truth and knowledge.

I know that in my own life, I've had to learn to be more sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting, especially when I doubt myself. Even writing this devotional, I was nervous and uncomfortable stepping out and speaking boldly about what I felt God was putting on my heart. I thought "Why would God want to work through me for this?" But I believed God called me for a reason, and even if I can't see or fully understand, God is doing amazing things despite the situations in front of me.

To be more confident in the Holy Spirit we can memorize scriptures like 2 Timothy 1:7 or Acts 2:17-19, and remind ourselves of these truths when we doubt. Cultivate your relationship with Jesus by praying, reading the Bible, journaling your thoughts, and the next time the opportunity arises, speak boldly and know that you're a child of God and He wants to use you.





# FIX IT OR FLIP IT?

BY MARTIN DRUMM

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 5

**Luke 5:36.** And He was also telling them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment, otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old.”

Have you ever tried to fix something? From a broken mug to broken relationships, we’ve all tried to fix things. Counselors will say that we often spend our whole lives trying to fix what was broken in us, or around us, as children. Jesus was talking with just such a group. They were a group of leaders; they knew things around them were broken and they were trying to fix them. They had heard about the Miracle Worker and came to listen and watch. However, their curiosity soon turned to anger because Jesus and His disciples were breaking the very rules they thought would fix things. They thought, “If only everyone would follow these rules, everything would be the way it’s supposed to be.” Sometimes, like those leaders, we want Jesus to fix our world our way, and we can’t hear Him or see what He is doing.

Lord, give me ears to hear and eyes to see You today. Instead of trying to fix things my ways, help me to recognize when I’m deaf and blind to You and learn to trust Your ways above my own. Holy Spirit, give me Your heart of love towards the broken world around me rather than a heart of stone and condemnation. Amen



# HIS LAW IS LOVE

BY MEAGAN ANDERSEN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 6:1-11

Is a day of rest something you look forward to or do you find it difficult to slow down? The Sabbath is God's gracious invitation for us to rest in His presence and be renewed. We can be reminded that all of our striving, our busy schedules, and the pressures of life are nothing when compared to the peace of Jesus. In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to rest, because He knows what's best for us. His law is always designed for our ultimate good. The Psalms are full of delight and respect for God's law. In fact, King David describes God's laws and commands as refreshing the soul, making wise the simple, giving joy to the heart, and giving light to the eyes. That is what the Sabbath is meant to give us!

In Luke 6: 1-11, the pharisees had twisted God's law into a burden instead of a blessing. They accused Jesus of breaking the law because He allowed His disciples to eat or "harvest" grain on the Sabbath, a day when it was considered unlawful to work. Jesus declares that He is Lord of the Sabbath; in other words, He created it and He knows how to honor it better than any of us. He later heals a man with a shriveled hand and asks the crowd, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?" Jesus isn't disregarding this commandment to rest in either of these situations. He allows His disciples to eat because they need food to nourish themselves and He heals the hand of a man in need. God's commandment to rest is meant to be nourishing and healing — refreshing for our souls like it says in the Psalms.

Maybe you need to reflect on whether you see God's commands as restraining rather than life giving. Ask Him to bring you joy as you follow His will! Or maybe you realize that your life doesn't have any regular moments of rest and that's something you want to implement. Are you taking time to rest in His presence, and accept the peace He offers?

# THE GREATEST *REWARD*

BY VANESSA CASAREZ

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 6:12-26

You know that part in every sports movie where it's the last quarter and both teams are neck and neck, and the coach of the team you want to win delivers a deep, move-you-to-tears, award-winning speech to his team minutes before they need to go back in and play their hearts out? That is the visual I got when I was reading through Luke 6.

In Luke 6:12 we see that Jesus spent all night seeking God's council and as daylight came, He summoned His disciples and chose twelve of them to be His apostles. These men would carry on His work and share the gospel to the entire world. He chose them and would equip them – they were His team.

We then go on to see that Jesus continued teaching and healing and encouraging faithfulness among His disciples. Beginning in Luke 6:20 we see where Jesus takes a moment to deliver one of His most prevalent sermons. This speech has long been recognized as the sum of Jesus' ethical teachings. Jesus was intentional with His words here and taught what it meant to live life as a true follower of Jesus. Jesus states that blessed are those who are poor, hungry, and who weep, for there will be a time for them to inherit the kingdom, be filled, and rejoice. Those who are poor in spirit can ask and receive from the Lord. (Matthew 7:8)

It is in these desperate times that we are led to seek God wholeheartedly and live for Him. God promises us that despite our hardships we can rejoice and leap for joy in those days because our reward will be great in heaven. All these years later, I believe these words given to us by Jesus, the greatest coach of all time, that were used to teach and encourage His disciples and followers then, can be used to teach and equip us in our lives as we face the world today. Whatever quarter we are in, Jesus calls us to keep these things in mind and live our lives with eternity in heaven as our greatest reward. That sounds like a win to me!

# LOVING LIKE *JESUS*

BY RILEY GOIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 6:27-36

In this passage, Jesus calls us to not only love our enemies, but to do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them! I think that it would be a pretty safe bet to say that this can often feel like the exact opposite of what we want to do.

The world tells us to write off those who hurt us. Get back at them by treating them in the same manner, or sometimes even worse. But you see, what Jesus calls us to can often be seen as a full 180 to what our flesh tempts us towards. When we feel like avoiding our enemies at all cost, the Lord tells us to bless them. When we want to get revenge, God calls us to do good to them. Jesus' paradoxical ways of thinking, teaching, and living are the mold to which we must form our lives.

The Bible tells us that when we follow the commands of the Lord, our reward will be great. When we live in a way that seems so opposite to the world, God blesses our faithfulness as we are living out the life of "standing out" that He calls us to.

Sometimes, choosing to love our enemies means more than standing back and loving them from afar. Sometimes, the Lord will convict our hearts to take a step further to demonstrate His character to the people around us by laying down our pride and covering our enemies with prayer and life-giving words. By choosing to speak life towards our enemies, we show the love of Christ in a tangible way that is so unlike the world.

It isn't deserved, but that is just how the Lord loves us. I believe that we will find unexplainable reward when we live in accordance to this call on our lives. Maybe it won't always be tangible or visible to those around us, but the peace, joy, and fulfillment that we find in Jesus is beyond anything physical that this world can offer us.

**QUESTION** | *What are some ways that you can show the love of Jesus to those in your life who could be considered "enemies?"*





# **WEEK *THREE.***

September 17-22 | Luke 6-8







# JESUS MEETS US IN OUR *DOUBTS*

BY MATT ALEXANDER

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 7:18-35

In Luke 7:18-35, we find John the Baptist in a place of doubt and uncertainty. Having heard about Jesus' teachings and miracles, John sends his disciples to ask Jesus a question: "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Luke 7:19). John, who had boldly proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, now finds himself questioning it in the middle of his own suffering.

Jesus responds by pointing to what has been seen in His ministry: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have Good News preached to them. These signs were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, confirming Jesus as the long-awaited Savior. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He speaks words of encouragement to John's disciples, saying, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me." Jesus recognizes that doubt can lead to offense and stumbling, hindering our faith journey. He encourages us to trust in Him even when we don't fully understand His ways.

Following this, Jesus takes time to honor John the Baptist. He declares, "Among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." Jesus affirms John's significant role, while also highlighting the surpassing greatness of the kingdom of God.

This passage reminds us that doubt is a natural part of our faith journey. We may encounter seasons of questioning and uncertainty. But in those moments, we can turn to Jesus for reassurance. He is patient with our doubts and offers us the evidence of His love and power. He invites us to find hope in Him, knowing that He is the one who fulfills all prophecies and brings salvation to the world.

Let us remember that Jesus is the ultimate source of hope, and when we place our trust in Him, our doubts and questions find their answers. May we be like the "one who is not offended by Him" and continue to follow Him with unwavering faith, even when circumstances seem unclear. Through it all, Jesus remains our steadfast Savior, guiding us and revealing His truth in His perfect timing.

# MISSING THE *POINT*

BY NOELLE BONDS

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 7:36-50

With the story-within-a-story structure, you could argue that this passage is less about a “sinful woman” and more about Simon the Pharisee.

First, the frame story. The section is titled “Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman.” Jesus is at a Pharisee’s house for dinner when an uninvited guest shows up. Right away in the title, we are introduced to this woman not by her name, but worse yet, a label -- “sinful.” This appears to be how she is defined by those around her, as she is referred to as “a woman in that town who lived a sinful life” (37) and then as a certain “kind of woman” (39). It’s implied that she’s not good enough to be in that company and that Jesus wouldn’t pay her attention if He knew her.

That’s just the thing. He knows who she is. He doesn’t call her sinful. He says, “Do you see this woman” (44)? This woman isn’t a label, this woman isn’t overlooked. He sees her as the individual she is. He sees the depth of her love, not her pile of sins. Jesus doesn’t see us as others try to label us; Jesus loves us before He sees our sin.

The story-within is a parable Jesus tells Simon the Pharisee. Simon correctly summarizes the lesson of the parable: a person who has been forgiven much will love much. What Simon gets wrong is that he assumes this parable is about the “sinful” woman. It’s about him. Sadly, Simon misses Jesus trying to connect with him and guide him.

Have you ever sat in church listening to a sermon and wanted to elbow the person next to you instead of realizing the Holy Spirit is talking to you?

Simon is a Pharisee -- he knows all the answers, wears the right clothes, and enjoys membership in the inner circle. What he doesn’t have is love demonstrated in action. In 2 Timothy 3:5, Paul describes people like this as “having a form of godliness but denying its power.” There’s an old hymn that goes, “They will know we are Christians by our love.” This simple scene of dinner at a friend’s house, an outsider, and kindness is represented in our lives multiple times a day.

# NO THOUGHT UNKNOWN

BY KELLEY GOIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 8:1-15

We see multiple times in the Bible where “Jesus knew their thoughts.” Here in Luke, we see that Jesus was able to stop the disciple’s argument by knowing what they were thinking. He recognized His friend’s prideful thoughts and humbled them. Greatness in God’s eye is not measured the same way we humans often calculate it. The way we care selflessly for others is what makes us “great” in God’s eyes.

In other books, we see that Jesus would answer questions that had never been spoken, address thoughts that were never voiced. Jesus knew the thoughts of those around Him, and He knows your thoughts as well. Our minds hold our deepest secrets, biggest fears, and life-long dreams. We find ourselves daydreaming or losing sleep over the thoughts swarming through our minds. Often, we don’t share these thoughts with anyone for fear we will be judged, made fun of, or criticized. Many of us are thankful that unless we speak our thoughts, they remain privately tucked away in our innermost being. We believe that as long as we don’t open our mouths and speak, no one will ever know what we are thinking.

However, there is One who knows everything and every thought about us. Jesus knows it all, and loves you all the same. He knows when we are angry, happy, lustful, jealous, shameful, envious, or hopeful, without a single word being spoken from us. If you have given your life to Jesus, the idea of Him knowing your every thought should bring you comfort. Don’t be afraid to be vulnerable to the One who knows you better than you know yourself. Bring every thought, dream, and concern before the Lord. Do this daily; let Him reveal and work things out in your life, be willing to change when He leads you to conviction. Confess your every thought, and share your every fear, to the One who already knows them.

**QUESTION** | *What thought do you need to confess to the Lord today?*

# LET YOUR LIGHT *SHINE*

BY SEAN BROWN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 8:16-21

After sharing the Parable of the Sower, Jesus shares a ‘mini parable’ about a lamp. When someone lights a lamp, they do so for others to see the light. They don’t light a lamp and place it in a clay jar and hide it away to keep it from everyone. Lamps are to be displayed as a benefit to those who may enter a room so they can see the light and aren’t in darkness. And so it is with the Light of the World – it shines brightly and illuminates the truth to those who may be living in darkness.

God’s Word not only illuminates the truth, it also enlightens the mind. When we can carefully hear the Word, we can faithfully proclaim the Word. Jesus tells us to “pay attention to how you hear.” If we listen to His Word correctly, more understanding will be given. We must be open to what Jesus says. We must not hide from what we hear from God. Over time, the more our hearts are open to Him, more understanding will come.

How are you letting your light shine in such a dark world? How are you faithfully keeping His Word in your daily life? How are you sharing His Word with others? All of us that have been given His Word and have chosen to follow Him have a responsibility to share it with others. We are not called to just listen to the Word and remain unchanged; rather, to put it into action and be transformed. Being transformed is something we want to share with as many people as possible. Today, go and share the good news of the Gospel with someone. Share the amazing things God has done in your life. Go and let your light shine.

# CALM WITHIN THE STORM

BY GRACIE DUCHEMIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 8:22-25

Many years ago, our family was on vacation in Chelan, WA. One of the days was a beautiful, sunny, summer day. People were relaxing on the beach, swimming and enjoying the sunshine, when all of the sudden the scene changed. Rain started pouring, thunder and lightning began, and a storm was underway. We bolted out of there to the comforts of our hotel room!

This might have been similar to what the disciples encountered in this passage. They were calmly fishing when all of the sudden a mighty storm broke out, but they didn't have any place to go like we did in Chelan. They were fearful for their lives. Maybe you haven't been stranded in the midst of a literal natural disaster, but you might know the feeling of being stuck in one of life's storms. Whether emotional, physical, relational, or mental, these storms can be overwhelming, and might even come on suddenly.

We can begin to focus so much on the choppy waters of our life that we momentarily forget who is with us, Jesus. When the disciples called on Jesus, and He silenced the storm, He asked, "Where is your faith?" He asked this not in a critical way, but in a loving manner, because He wanted to be their peace. Where do we put our faith? Do we put our trust in the circumstances, or the One who controls those circumstances? Jesus has the power to calm every storm we might face. Verse 25 says, "He commands even the wind and water, and they obey Him." Because Jesus has the power to control everything - even the wind and waves - we know that if He allows a storm to come, it must have purpose. Romans 8:28 encourages, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."

Whatever storm we pass through, we are not alone. We can call out to Jesus. He wants to be our comfort. Psalms 62:8 writes, "Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to Him, for God is our refuge." Peace is a gift, but we have to receive it. Jesus promises to be our Calm within the storm.



# *WEEK FOUR.*

September 24-29 | Luke 8-9





# SHAKE THE DUST OFF YOUR *FEET*

BY JARED GOIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 9:1-9

In the dating world, after being turned down by a romantic interest, it is common for a person to cope by saying something like, “it’s them, not me,” as if there must be something wrong with them to reject me.

In Luke 9:1-8, Jesus tells His 12 disciples something similar, as He sends them throughout villages to preach the gospel and heal the sick. Where the people reject the message, Jesus instructs the disciples to “shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.” He is essentially telling the disciples they have fulfilled their duties, and are free to move on to the next village. The consequences of rejecting God’s truth are on the people, not the disciples. In other words, “it’s them, not you.” Jesus also explains in “The Parable of the Sower” (Luke 8:4-15), that not all soil will yield a crop. When we sow the seed of God’s Word, it won’t be accepted by everyone.

Fear of rejection can sometimes prevent believers from sharing the truth with others. But, Christ makes it clear that when we tell others of the good news, in obedience to the Holy Spirit, we are not responsible for the recipient’s response. This knowledge can provide a sense of freedom and boldness to overcome our fear of rejection.

While not an excuse for apathy or lack of perseverance, there are situations in our lives where figuratively shaking the dust off your feet, and moving on to more fertile soil, may be the appropriate thing to do when the Holy Spirit directs us. If we have done all we have been asked to do by God, and people still reject the truth, they are really rejecting God, not us.

Are there situations in your life where the Holy Spirit has prompted you to share God’s Word, but fear of rejection prevented you from following through? Let Jesus’ words to “shake the dust off your feet” give you courage to obey His will.

# ARE YOU WILLING?

BY BEN SKILES

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 9:10-17

When Jesus was preparing to feed the five thousand, He asked His disciples to separate the people into groups of fifty. While not knowing what Jesus was going to do, they were obedient, with an obedience that proceeded understanding. The body of Christ was able to position the people where they needed to be, then Jesus took it from there, and created the miracle. Jesus chose to partner with them, bringing them into His work and creating one of the greatest miracles in recorded history.

Miracles. We all want to see them right? We all want to see God working as clearly as the disciples did. The truth is, miracles are still happening every day, and all of us are invited to join in the work that God is doing. During different times in your life, God will give you the chance to trust and follow His direction. Sometimes it will not make sense. Sometimes it may be confusing. Always, it will be a step of faith with God asking you to trust Him.

The truth is, you have a calling on your life. The question is, are you willing to do what God is asking? Are you willing to trust His guidance? Are you willing to step out in faith into uncertain situations? God will always give you the choice, but when those moments arise there will be boldness and bravery that the Lord puts on your heart. As the body of Christ, we have to be willing to say yes. It is more than just the action, it's you saying you want to know and partner with Him. It's you saying you trust Him. It's you saying you love Him.

God will get you through, step by step, situation by situation. He will continue to put on your heart when and where to step out in faith; when to speak, when to pray, when to just listen. The great thing about it is, when we say yes in faith, God takes over and creates the miracle. Not in our power or strength, but in our Father's who is faithful in His promises because of His love for us.

# WHAT CAN I GIVE UP?

BY MEAGAN ANDERSEN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 9:18-27

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus clearly identifies Himself as Israel's promised Messiah. He also defies their expectations in many ways! The disciples were probably surprised to hear Je-sus say that He would suffer, be rejected, killed, and then raised to life. They might have been even more surprised to hear that they were to follow in His footsteps. Jesus gives them a chal-lenge to take up their cross daily. He says, "Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. For what good is it for someone to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit their very self?"

For the disciples this wasn't just figurative speech. They all gave up their lives daily to advance the message of the gospel, and most of them were killed painfully through methods such as cru-cifixion, beheading, and hanging. And yet, this is what Jesus says actually saves them! It might be hard to imagine giving up your life this way. Maybe your faith is still brand new, and giving up your life looks like giving up sinful habits. In John 15, Jesus says that God is a gardener. He cuts off the branches that don't produce fruit, and He prunes the branches that do bear fruit to make them even healthier. Our Father wants to cut away the dead parts of our lives that are kill-ing us instead of giving us life.

It can be so easy to become attached to things that hurt us. Maybe you love the music you're listening to, but the lyrics are leading you deeper into depression and anxiousness. Maybe you're in a relationship that is hurtful, and causing you to stumble in your walk with Christ. Or, maybe you are dependent on a substance like alcohol, drugs, or addictive foods. Is there any area of your life where you feel the Lord calling you to deny yourself, or give up something that is actually costing you life? As we step out in faith and pursue the Holiness that God calls us to, He gives us the courage to give up more, and do more, than we ever thought possible. What we gain is greater than we can imagine, and worth infinitely more than anything we lose.

# AWAKENED.

BY KERRY DUCHEMIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 9:28-45

As a child, I used to find it highly amusing to watch people nod off during sermons. Now I find myself “nodding off” at times...not in church, mind you (what would Jeff think?!), but there are times when I just cannot keep my eyes open. This may have been how Peter, James and John were feeling as they were praying on the mountain with Jesus. However, all drowsiness fled when they saw a transfigured Jesus, His face shining like the sun, and His clothes white as the light. He was standing between two of the most highly respected Old Testament figures, Moses and Elijah, talking with them about His death and resurrection that would be happening in eight short months; the very subject He had mentioned to His disciples just a week earlier.

The transfiguration is full of symbolism and Biblical imagery that the disciples would have been familiar with, spanning from when God freed the Israelites from slavery and pointing to the second coming of Christ. What is significant about this scene is that Moses represented the Law (the first 5 books of the Old Testament), and Elijah represented the prophets (the remaining parts of the Old Testament). Jesus fulfilled the law and the prophets. He gave the law its full meaning and was the fulfillment to hundreds of Messianic prophecies found in the Old Testament, ushering in the new covenant (Matthew 5:17).

Why did the transfiguration even happen? Commentators suggest numerous reasons, pointing back to the conversation that Jesus had with His disciples in Luke 9:18-27. The transfiguration gave Peter, James and John a greater revelation of who Jesus is and showed His deity, opening their eyes spiritually as well as physically. This moment helped prepare them for what was ahead. They saw a glimpse of His future glory and heavenly kingdom and it marked them. In fact, many believe that this was what Jesus was referring to in Luke 9:27 when He said that some would not taste death before they saw the kingdom of God.

**Years later, Peter shares about this experience (2 Peter 1:16-19). It's as if he was saying, "Our faith is not built on clever stories, but it's real! Listen to what I saw with my own eyes and to what I heard God say." Take a moment to read the first chapter in 2 Peter and reflect on why he shared about the transfiguration in the context of the surrounding verses. How might this strengthen us as believers?**

# FAITHFUL *FOLLOWERS*

BY KELLEY GOIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 9:46-62

Ministry is often supported by those whose work is less visible, but just as essential. It can take a whole team of behind-the-scenes volunteers to accomplish an outreach project, an event or mission trip. We see this to be true with the women who followed Jesus. They offered their resources, their hard work and gifts to the Lord on a daily basis. They didn't do these things to gain fame or attention, but out of love and devotion to Jesus. This is what Jesus desires from all of His followers. He wants your devotion, your time and your talents.

We don't all possess the same abilities, we can't all do the same tasks; don't focus on what you can't do, but instead contribute by doing what you can do. As these ladies followed and supported Jesus' earthly ministry, they got a front row seat to watching miracles happen, parables being taught, meals being shared and lives being radically changed. They stood by watching Jesus' trial, they grieved as He was beat and made to carry His cross to Golgotha. They cried and wept as their friend and Savior hung on the cross to die and was later placed in a sealed tomb. These women loved the Lord and served Him in life as well as in His death.

When the women arrived to Jesus' tomb, they were the first to see it empty. They were greeted by angels and informed that Jesus had risen from the dead. They were honored with this experience because of their loyalty to Jesus. For Mary Magdalene, she had the blessing of being the first to encounter the resurrected Jesus. During the years these ladies served with Jesus they experienced heartbreak, but also extreme joy! Like these women, we are all called to lovingly serve and support Jesus' ministry wherever it may lead us. Let us be on the front row to witness the mighty power of God.

Are you using your gifts and talents to serve the Lord?



# WEEK *FIVE*.

October 1-6 | Luke 10-12





# SUNDAY SERMON *NOTES*



DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 10:1-24

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# DON'T MISS YOUR MOMENTS WITH JESUS

BY RONNA GARCÍA

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 10:38-42 & 11:1-13

***Knock, Knock, Knock!*** “Martha, someone’s at the door.”

Abandoning her task at hand, Martha smoothed her hair and apron as she hurried to the front door. Sunshine spilled into the room as Martha’s eyes were filled with surprise.

“Mary, It’s Jesus! Welcome to my home, Teacher. Please, come in!”

The women must have fussed over Jesus and made sure He had the best seat in the house. They may have brought Him a bowl and washed His dusty tired feet. More than likely, they brought Him some refreshments, a home baked treat, and something to drink. Ahh, all settled in. It was time for a visit.

Mary situated herself at Jesus’ feet and hung on His every word. She did not want to miss a second in His presence. Her ears intently tuned in, and her eyes fixed on His expressions as Jesus shared the things He knew Mary’s heart longed to hear. If she spoke, He listened, really listened completely to her.

Jesus had come to visit both sisters. Martha was buzzing about doing other tasks she deemed immediately necessary. She probably cocked one ear to catch what Jesus and Mary were talking about, and the other ear to her own distracted thoughts. She broke into Jesus and Mary’s conversation slightly irritated. “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to give me a hand.”

Martha’s many distractions led her to a missed opportunity. Jesus was there in her home. He came intentionally to spend time with them. Martha lost focus on the one thing that was most important at that moment — spending time with Jesus.

What would you do if Jesus knocked on your door? Would you welcome Him in and sit at His feet, or would you be distracted with other things? Don’t miss your moments with Jesus. Soak in His truth by reading His Word, the Bible. Quiet yourself before Him, pray, and then listen, really listen. He knows the things your heart longs to hear. In His presence there is fullness of joy.

# "SUPRISE!"

BY DICK MALVANEY

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 11:14-36

“Puff the Magic Dragon” and “Wouldn’t You Like to Ride in My Beautiful Balloon?” were popular songs in the 1960s. As a teenager, I remember playing a Lawrence Welk album on our stereo and singing along with “Puff the Magic Dragon.” I sincerely doubt dear Mr. Welk had any more idea than I that “Puff” was a song about smoking a joint of marijuana. I also didn’t realize that ‘balloon ride’ references taking a trip on LSD. Things are often not as they seem.

In Luke 11:14-36 we’re exposed to the physical and spiritual world. Have you observed the disconnect between the physical and spiritual world as the power of secularism has grown? One notable example is that as the years have progressed, we’ve been taught to believe that what we see is all there is. That is, if it can’t be proven ‘scientifically,’ then it’s a fairy tale. We’re expected to accept that there is no such thing as a spirit world.

This passage acknowledges the existence of a spirit world. Just as those two songs had an underlying application so Christians must be aware that there is a spirit world as well. We can do this by asking if something pleases God or opposes God. Or question who benefits from a particular belief or action, God or Satan?

Jesus said in verse 23, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.” It’s that simple. “If you are not for me, you are against me.” Are we for Jesus? Most of us would respond, “Absolutely!” So then, we must be in tune with every aspect of our lives, making sure what we believe, think, do, and act benefits Christ and His Kingdom.

This passage has a lot about Satan and demonic activity. We may never fully understand everything about that. Yet, we must realize it exists, and our spiritual defense is what Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:11. “Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.”

# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

BY BETHANY CHAVEZ

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 11:37-54

Were you given a “creative” nickname in Elementary school? I remember a boy named Michael who sat across from me in Science class and loved to call me — Barfany. And yes, I was highly offended at his insulting yet inventive remix of my name. Every day he would smugly lean over the desk and say, “Whatcha doin’ Barfany?” I hated it.

In Luke 11:44, Jesus gets creative and calls the Pharisees “unmarked graves.” But this insult was way more offensive than a silly nickname. Jesus had purposefully and seriously offended the Pharisees; here’s how...

The Pharisees were the religious elite, like the number one draft picks for keeping the law. They had a pristine public reputation and maintained the utmost level of spiritual cleanliness. The law said that if a person walked over a tomb, they were considered unclean for seven days. So, just as people unwittingly walked over unmarked graves, those who followed the teachings and examples of the Pharisees were unknowingly being led astray and contaminated.

Jesus was letting them know they were spiritually unclean, as disgusting and dirty as a grave, and contaminating unsuspecting people. Now that’s an insult! But how does this apply to us in 2023? Our legalism, or as I like to call it, petty, unattainable standards that we make, keep, and hold over others may be keeping them from the Gospel truth. For example, if a new believer learns “do this, don’t do that,” they will be consumed with following the rules and miss the heart of the church, which is loving God and others.

I don’t know about you, but I’ll pass on being an “unmarked grave.” Instead, I want my life, thoughts, and actions to reflect the love of Christ so that when people come in contact with me, they feel His loving grace. Is there something in your life that may be leading others astray? Ask God to reveal those legalistic or sinful areas in your life so that you can repent and lead people to an intimate and loving relationship with Him.

# OUR VALUE

BY ADAM ELDRIDGE

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 12:1-12

One of the most engaging discussions that I have with my students centers around what makes something valuable. Whether it's the most recent sports contract for a superstar athlete, the cost of the latest iPhone, or the price of an original comic book sold at auction, the "value" of the item is largely based on what the person paying for the item is willing to pay. In class, we will talk about things like supply and demand, as well as the way our emotions impact our valuation decisions. They will argue their idea of what a "fair" price should be and will have heated discussions about why something should carry a particular value.

As humans, I think we tend to question our own value. We get caught up in comparing ourselves to others and at times feel unworthy. However, in Luke chapter 12, we are reminded of our "value" in God's eyes. In verses 6 and 7, Jesus says "Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." Our value in God's eyes is not based on what others think nor on anything that we can do. He lets us know that our value is based on being His child. He is the Creator, and He says we have value. God paid the ultimate price for us in sending his Son to die so that we can live eternally with Him.

I am reminded of the lyric of Tauren Wells in his song "Known" that says, "I'm fully known and loved by You." Let that sink in. Most of us don't like certain things about ourselves, but to know that God KNOWS each of us (even to the point of knowing how many hairs are on our head) and loves us unconditionally is key to understanding how valuable we are in His eyes.

# THE RICH FOOL

BY NOE BARERRA

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 12:13-21

As we read this section of Luke, we find Jesus teaching people when He is abruptly interrupted by a man asking Jesus to settle a money dispute between him and his brother. But Jesus answered saying “Man, who appointed me judge between you?” Then Jesus goes on to tell him to be on his guard against all kinds of greed, just before giving the parable of the rich fool. In this parable, Jesus explains how a rich man gets richer. Then that rich man decides to hoard all his riches and crops for himself and gives no consideration to God or anyone else for that matter.

Indeed, it was not the fact that the rich man decided to save up his wealth that made him greedy. In fact, it was God who blessed him with such an amazing harvest. Rather, it was that he put his faith and trust in his material possessions, and trusted in that, instead of trusting in God. There was also a strong emphasis on the selfishness the rich man had. Obviously, selfishness and greed go hand in hand. And it's easy for selfishness and greed to blind us from our responsibility to God and to others in need. This is because when we are selfish and greedy, we are making ourselves the most important thing in our lives. And yet those who are greedy, seem to always want more. It's like king Solomon said in Ecclesiastes “whoever has money never has enough, whoever loves wealth is never satisfied.”

This was an eye-opening study for me because I began to realize that at times it is hard not to covet what others have. It may not just be money, but opportunities or social positions that others hold that I wish I had. However, personally, I found that the more I thank God for the things I do have, the more I want to seek God for blessing me with those things. So, I will not put my trust in material things. Instead, I will put my trust in the Father who delights in giving us good gifts.



# WEEK SIX.

October 8-13 | Luke 12-13





# ARE YOU READY?

BY TRENT MALVANEY

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 12:35-48

How many of you have ever had those moments in life where you have missed out on an opportunity?

When it comes to our faith, I know that many of us have had moments where God has prompted us and called us to things. But for many different reasons, there have been times when we have held back and not stepped into where God was leading us. As a result, we end up missing out on what God was trying to do in our lives.

The reality is that we never know what is on the other side of our obedience. It could be a blessing, a breakthrough, healing, an opportunity to bolster our faith, an encounter with God. **WE TRULY NEVER KNOW.** So why do we hesitate and miss out?

When we have a knowledge of who God is and the life He has called us to live, but we knowingly choose to do things our own way, we miss out on God's blessings and the best that He has for us. We also separate ourselves from the eternal blessing of Heaven only found in Christ.

Luke said, "Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him." This is specifically in reference to the return of Christ. The truth is, we don't know the day or the hour of Christ's return and so we need to be sure that we are living in such a way that we are ready in season and out of season. We need to be sure there are no secret or hidden sins and that Christ is truly at the center of our lives!

When Christ is at the center, we as believers have the promise of eternity in Heaven with our Father and let me tell you, if there is one thing we don't want to miss out on, it's that. We need to make the decisions today to live in such a way where Christ's return doesn't scare us, but rather we rejoice thinking of the day when we get to spend eternity free from suffering, pain, and death. So, what can we do today to be ready for eternity?

# JESUS OR POPULAR APPROVAL: PICK ONE

BY MIKE JOHNSON

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 12:49-59

Some things in life are “either/or.” You’re either pregnant, or you are not. However, most things are really “both/and.” My spouse is different from me, which is a basis of admiration *and* frustration. Jesus is the Prince of Peace *and* the Great Divider. Jesus is like a continental divide, where rivers lead to different oceans depending on which side of the mountain they find themselves.

Jesus says, “Look! Judge for yourself” (v57). You could let the river of today’s cultural current carry you. It will probably seem like a smoother option at first, but where does it take you in the end? Plus, that modern version of Jesus you think is in the canoe with you, riding the current of Progressive Christianity? That Jesus is just a life-size cardboard cut-out; he’s not the real Jesus.

You could let Grace and Truth sweep you off your feet and take you a different way, never to return. Where would the Spirit of Truth take you if you let Him? To God, of course. But that journey will eventually leave behind everything and everyone who is going the other direction. Will you trust God enough to lose what and who might go the other way?

Jesus came to bring peace between God and anyone who will accept His offer of grace and truth in Christ. *And* He did not come to bring peace on earth (v51) but division. Accepting peace with God in Christ means crossing a divide from all who still ride the river that empties all passengers into a dead sea.

Family and friends, coworkers and colleagues will accuse you of bad faith. “You think you’re better than us?! Jesus wouldn’t treat people that way,” they’ll say. Here ends the “both/and.” You can’t ride in two rivers at once. This part is “either/or.” Jesus or popular approval: pick one.

A fire has been kindled on earth (v49) — the fuse has been lit. We are all on our way to meet a Judge (v58), and you will be judged according to which side of Jesus you have chosen to stand.

# JESUS' PERFECT *INTERCESSION*

BY KINSEY RAYBURN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 13:1-9

Today we read a parable about a vineyard-keeper who interceded between the fruitless vine and the owner of the vineyard. Miriam Webster defines the word “intercede” as follows, “to intervene between parties with a view to reconciling differences” (Miriam Webster Dictionary). One central responsibility of a High Priest was to intercede, or mediate between God and man. In Hebrews 3, we read that Jesus is the perfect High Priest, He is faithful in all areas, thus able to sacrifice Himself as a pleasing aroma to the Father. Through this sacrifice, we are reconciled to the Father. The qualifications for a High Priest are given in Leviticus 21. Interestingly, there were strict parameters regarding which people they were allowed to enter a mourning process for. The Lord is compassionate and close to the broken-hearted, so we can hypothesize that these priestly parameters are not denoting the importance of mourning loss. I wonder if this law reveals the need for a qualified High Priest to be continually available to intercede on behalf of man. It was God’s desire to have Heaven convene with earth but that held specific requirements. Intercession was a non-negotiable along with the necessity that the intercessor obeyed God’s law.

Jesus’ response regarding the tragic loss of life reflects His priestly role. While He likely experienced human emotions, He obeys His task as High Priest and does not meddle with the natural scenario, rather He gives a call to repent. He was the conduit between Heaven and earth, His intercession bringing redemption to those who would repent. As we look around us today and see the perils that permeate our society, we may find ourselves wanting the Lord to act on behalf of the injustices we are living through. We can find comfort knowing that the King of the Universe has an eternal solution for our problems that has not been fulfilled yet - but His answer in the meantime is the intercession He makes on our behalf, bringing us into right relationship with the Father. How can you ask Jesus to intercede for all the needs in your life today? He longs to talk with God our Father on your behalf.

# HE MEETS OUR *NEEDS*

BY DEBBIE BULLARD

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 13:10-21

In these verses, a woman with an affliction of 18 years is healed by Jesus on the Sabbath. She didn't ask Him to, but when He called her forward, she came. He saw the need and filled it. He was then publicly confronted by the ruler of the synagogue for healing a woman on the Sabbath. Jesus responded back by saying, "Don't you untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water?" Jesus is our Healer. Whether it's through the faith of a friend or family member bringing us to Him through a hole in a ceiling (Mark 2:3-11), a friend telling us about Jesus and being healed of illness like the leper (Matthew 8:2-3), or any one of us calling on Him with faith the size of a mustard seed (Matthew 17:20-21) to heal us. Nothing can or will stop Him from calling us forward, coming to us, or meeting us where we are in our pain or suffering.

After Jesus healed the woman of her infirmity, He called her, in front of the crowd and religious leaders, a "daughter of Abraham." To be called a child of Abraham is to be part of a covenant, a family, an adopted, wanted child. To call a woman a "daughter of Abraham" was rare. Jesus will sit with us where we are and fill us with what we need, it doesn't matter who is around us (Psalm 23:5).

After He healed the woman, she "straightened up and glorified God." And after He stood up to the religious leaders, the crowd (minus the religious leaders) rejoiced in the healing Jesus did. We can glorify God through our testimony. We rejoice by telling our testimony and singing and giving praises to God. God invites us into His presence every day and at every opportunity. No mountain is too high, no valley too deep. Nothing can keep us from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). Whatever you're fighting against today or whatever is weighing you down and has you bent over, come to Jesus and let Him help you (Matthew 11:28-30).

# THE NARROW DOOR

BY RYLAND SCHUT

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 13:22-35

After reading today's passage, are you now asking yourself, "How do I enter through the narrow door?" Although the door may be narrow, there is a way through it, but we must know Jesus and He must know us.

In this passage, the owner of the house would tell those who would not be allowed in, "I don't know you. Away from me, all you evildoers." Because of our sin, we cannot enter through the door by our own power; however, God still wants a relationship with us. He sent His son, Jesus, to die on our behalf. He took on the burden of our sin.

Since we cannot enter through the door ourselves, we must lay down our sin to Jesus, to the one who bore our sin. We must know Him, for Him to forgive us. We must humbly submit to Him, and then we will be allowed to enter through the door that leads to life: Heaven.

How do we get to know God? The Bible offers ideas to further our relationship with God:

1) Seek Him. James 4:8 says, "Come near to God and He will come near to you." This may look different for each person. You may draw near to God by sitting in silence and listening to His still, small voice. Some may choose to worship Him in their car on their way to work. Whatever this may look like for you, you must do it earnestly and pursue God throughout your whole life.

2) Read His Word. The Bible is God's literal words, declaring what He has done and what He will do. There are promises of His faith, love, and forgiveness. If you read the Bible, you will begin to see God's character.

3) Pray. Praying can be as simple as letting Him know what is on your mind and in your heart. When you talk to God through prayer, it is a way to invite Him into your life.

Most importantly, we do not enter through the gate because of who we are; we can enter through the gate because of who we belong to.



# WEEK SEVEN.

October 15-20 | Luke 14-17









# LIFEGROUP NOTES



VIDEO #3 | LUKE 15

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# MAKING MOUNTAINS OUT OF MOLEHILLS

BY MELIAH SALAZAR

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 16:1-15

The parable in this passage describes a desperate man using the resources available to him to set himself up for success. He does this dishonestly, but the master he cheated is still impressed by his cleverness. When verse 9 instructs us to use our worldly wealth to make friends like the manager did, it's not condoning the dishonest behavior of the manager. Even a few verses later we see that dishonesty is not the way to advance yourself. In fact, it shows that when we are instead trustworthy and faithful, we will be blessed and trusted with more opportunity.

The role of money and worldly wealth in our lives needs to fit into this heavenly perspective--meaning we cannot love money as the world loves money. As Christians, Jesus is our highest priority, but as we see here, we are called to be wise with any wealth and resources that we may have and to bless others.

We can also apply this to our individual ministries as well. As we're all called to go and make disciples, we all have a ministry that the Holy Spirit empowers us to. If we are faithful with the small things that God places before us, He will bless us with more opportunities to serve His kingdom. We serve a God that wants us to use our gifts and resources to love His people, but He will not force us into servitude. Instead, He allows us to succeed in the small things and understand how He provides for us before allowing us to serve on a greater scale with the blessing that comes with that.

Is there an opportunity in your work, school, or ministry that you hope God will trust you with? What small things may God be calling you to be faithful with today? How can we be wise with our resources to be in a place to bless others?

# GOD'S SUPERNATURAL *GUIDANCE*

BY JEFF DUCHEMIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 16:16-18

I absolutely hate being lost. I remember driving in Seattle one time, trying to get to a destination, and finding myself driving down a crowded one-way street...the wrong way. It was stressful. Let me tell you, the person driving the right way wasn't pleased with me, and he let me know it! I don't know about you, but when I get lost or don't know which direction to go, it can feel overwhelming. I can get sweaty and impatient. On the flip side of that, what a relief it is when someone points me in the right direction because they know which way to go!

God knows that as we navigate relationships, our career, family, decisions, and temptations, we can get lost and overwhelmed. He wants to help point us in the right direction. He wants us to flourish so He has given us His Word, the Bible, as a step-by-step guide. In Luke 16:16-18, Jesus says that the "Law and Prophets (shorthand for the Old Testament) were proclaimed until John." Now Jesus has fulfilled that, and ushered in a new covenant. When Jesus came, people responded in a big way! There was such enthusiasm for Him, and His message of freedom and grace, that it was as if they were "forcing their way" into the kingdom. But Jesus also wanted people to understand that His Word (the Law) has relevance for today and is vitally important for our Christian walk. His Word is eternal, and His promises are reliable, so God doesn't want us to minimize His Word. This is why He included the example of His teaching on divorce and remarriage in verse 18. It was one aspect of the law that the Pharisees tended to minimize, and Jesus gave it as an example to emphasize His point.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." God's Word is our road map, and as we read it, study it, and live it, it will help keep us from getting spiritually, morally, and relationally lost.

# WHO IS OUR LAZARUS?

BY MARK KUNKLER

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 16:19-31

Jesus taught with parables to teach us principles of God's Kingdom. What is He teaching us here? The key verses Jesus quoted at the very start of His ministry from Isaiah describe Jesus' mission as announcing and implementing the Kingdom of God—God's rule in heaven established on earth. Isaiah had written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord." (Isaiah 61:1,2a).

In this parable, the rich man was "habitually dressed in purple [an extremely rare and costly dye and garment], gaily living in splendor every day." Lazarus was homeless, hungry, poor and sick (Luke 16:19-21). The verses also state that Lazarus was laid at the rich man's gate where he was visible every day while the rich man came and went. While the rich man observed Lazarus' horrendous need, he offered him nothing, not even a crust of bread.

Both men died. Lazarus is carried by angels to 'Abraham's Bosom' (heaven), but the rich man ends in Hades and torment. In the parable, the rich man calls out to Abraham asking that Lazarus bring him relief. Abraham informs the rich man that this cannot be done.

Two lessons stand out. First, our God is a God of compassion. His mission and His Kingdom are ones of compassion for the afflicted, downcast, sick and despised. We are instructed to help others and to meet needs as we are able.

Second, we need to humble ourselves and recognize that those whom society rejects and condemns are to be the very ones we are to show compassion to. But we also need to be ready to respond to anyone—including the "elites"—to give an answer for the hope that is in us. (Remember, Jesus also ministered to Nicodemus, a Pharisee--John 3:1-21.)

**QUESTIONS** | *Why was the rich man condemned? When we see someone with obvious needs, what should be our response?*

# UNWORTHY SERVANTS

BY VANESSA ELDRIDGE

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 17:1-10

In today's passage, Luke documents a story that Jesus told about the roles of a servant and his master. The servant was expected to do his work in the fields, come in and prepare food for the master, and serve the master. The master does not serve the servant. Then Jesus very clearly states to his disciples, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

This command to servanthood quickly puts many of us on the defensive and into a selfish state of mind. Our society and culture are opposed to the idea of servitude. We are inundated with ideas of what we should want and what we deserve, not how to fulfill the needs of others. We have been taught to believe we are *entitled* to relaxation and nice things without putting forth work or taking responsibility. The last thing we want to do is serve a master.

However, this Master is unlike any other. Our Master, Jesus, laid down His life for His servants. He wants only good things for us. He does not abuse or misuse His people. On the contrary, He keeps us safe and comforts us. When we give of our time to serve, it changes not only those we serve but it changes us. God uses our service to strengthen and encourage us, not to Lord it over us.

We don't deserve God's unconditional love. We don't deserve God's forgiveness for our sins. We don't deserve the mercy of God to forgive us again and again and again. Yet God freely gives us all these things just for the asking. We ARE unworthy servants, but how thrilling to work for such an amazing Master.

# HEALS TEN, SAVES ONE.

BY NOAH GONZALEZ

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 17:11-19

Lepers stood at a distance because of the law and custom. To come near to those who were clean was prohibited, for fear of infection. (See Leviticus 13:46, Numbers 5:2, and 2 Kings 15:5 to learn more.) In those days, people with leprosy were cast out. There was no cure. Jesus is the only one who could heal leprosy and He's the only one who can heal our hearts from sin.

The ten, who had leprosy, called out to Jesus for healing. Jesus simply told them to go show themselves to the priests. They obeyed Him and went out on belief and faith that they would be healed. Amazingly, they were! Here Jesus gives of Himself, not in part, but wholly. He gives, not craving our gratitude, but freely, simply out of love. Yet we are the ones who will benefit if we receive Him with open hearts and minds; if we notice what He has done for us, and return due thanks.

After the one leper came to thank Jesus, He said to him, "Get up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you." By faith, the man had received physical healing and was delivered from separation from society and disease. He also received spiritual healing and his salvation, because of his faith and gratitude! His praise to God told all who were around, that he personally experienced the power of God. His praise turned into thanksgiving, as he fell at the feet of Jesus. We need to use our voices to proclaim the work of God that we experience in our daily lives. Our praise will be a testimony of thanksgiving for what Jesus has done.

God values the least, honors faith, and cherishes gratitude.

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good!  
His faithful love endures forever."*

*Psalm 107:1*



# *WEEK EIGHT.*

October 22-27 | Luke 17-18





# THE POSTURE OF *PRAYER*

BY ASHELYN PACHECO

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 18:1-8

Isn't it funny how sometimes we can read Scripture and feel completely in the dark about what is being conveyed? Maybe while reading this parable you thought, "What is Jesus trying to teach here"? But as we dig deeper, we can rest assured that this parable is not trying to convey God as an unjust judge. Instead, it showcases how His character encourages us to live out a consistent prayer-filled life.

This judge was unrighteous, using his platform for his convenience. Jesus is righteous in all His ways and cares for us. Even as He is seated on the Throne, He demonstrates for us His unfailing love, justice, and righteousness (Jeremiah 9:24) with no agenda. This corrupt judge gave the widow justice simply to rid himself of her, but we know that God is never willing to do only the bare minimum for us, just check out Matthew 6, verses 28-30. If an unjust judge would be willing to give justice to this widow, how much more would Jesus, who is righteous in all things and who loves you, be willing to bring you your long-awaited justice, your miracle, your answered prayer?

Jesus has walked this life, experienced heavy loss, and has felt the burden of walking in obedience. But, despite all the hardship, Jesus modeled holy consistency in prayer. In Mark 14, verse 32 Jesus enters into prayer not once, but twice before being arrested. What is interesting is that the Bible notes that Jesus prayed two times using the same words each time; He prayed the same prayer. God is calling us to be consistent in prayer. It is how faith is produced and cultivated. He asks, "When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on Earth?" and that question should challenge us all to pursue prayer consistently.

God wants us to have faith that isn't contingent on answered prayers, but faith that grows even amidst the heaviest prayers; so that when He returns, He can find His people full of true faith. When Christ returns, will He still find you praying, yearning, and seeking amidst the challenges you have faced? How is God challenging you to dive deeper into prayer and relationship with Him today? What prayer have you long given up on that God is calling you to pray again?

# AM I HUMBLE OR *PRIDEFUL*?

BY EVAN GARZA

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 18:9-14

In verse 9-14 we read about two men who come to a place of prayer with two completely different heart postures. First, we see the Pharisee who comes to the temple to pray with a prideful heart, thanking God that he is not like other people - robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like the tax collector who is talked about next. The Pharisee comes to the temple to pray with a self-righteous heart, thinking that because he is not like these other people, he is good and that he has “made it” or “arrived.” Simply stated, he is exalting himself in his prayer time.

Then on the opposite side, we see the prayer of the tax collector. He comes to the temple to pray, and he comes with a humble heart. Verse 13 says, “He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’” The tax collector approached this moment of prayer with a humble heart, knowing there is so much more he could work on so that his life better resembled God’s word. I think there can be times within our lives that we can have an attitude like the Pharisee, prideful and self-righteous. Sometimes we may think, “At least I’m not like this person or that person.” It is so easy for us to compare ourselves with a self-righteous heart, thinking that we are better than others. This heart posture is not what the Word of God encourages at all. We all fall short of the Glory of God, and because of this, we will always need to come to the Lord in humility and prayer, willing to ask for His mercy and grace no matter how big or small.

In our own lives, are there any areas of self-righteousness? If so, let’s identify them and surrender them to God. We want to resemble Christ, living and praying humbly.

# WHEN I GROWN UP, I WANNA BE A KID!

BY GARY MODINE

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 18:15-17

Do you remember the last time you were told to “grow up”? For some of us, it’s been less than a day. For others, it’s been much longer since we were challenged to mature. What I find interesting, is that here in Luke 18, Jesus didn’t push the children to grow up, instead, he challenged the grown-ups to be more like children.

This passage, specifically verse 17, was the first verse my wife, Sheila, memorized as a child. And, twenty-five years ago, it was the verse that came to our minds after being asked to come to Stone Church and lead the Children’s Ministry. We were ready to decline the invitation and remain comfortably at a church in SeaTac, Washington, but this verse would not leave our minds. Night and day, these three verses resonated in our heads.

Here, we find the disciples trying to do crowd control to keep Jesus focused on what they thought was His primary ministry. People not only brought their children along with them, but brought children to the forefront. We can imagine that with the children came a little bit of chaos and disorder. As the disciples stepped in to bring ministry to adults back to the forefront, Jesus made it clear that ministry to children was a priority.

As I’ve contemplated this passage over the years, I imagine Jesus, taking this opportunity to make a second point: I envision Him standing one of the children up on his knee for all to see while making it clear that we all need to be a bit more childlike in our faith.

Take a moment to consider what that means. What is it about children, that you and I as adults must emulate? Is it their ability to trust? Is it their lack of a filter? Is it their ability to pray without doubt? Let me challenge you right now to consider where your faith could and should become more childlike. Before moving on to your next task today, take the time to pray about this and take a step or two to be more like a kid.

# TREASURES IN *HEAVEN*

BY KYLEE DUCHEMIN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 18:18-30

As a third grader, I set a goal to earn my way into the school's "100 Mile Club," which meant that throughout the year, two days a week during lunch recess, I would run laps. A scanner added up my laps and near the end of the year I reached 100 miles. In life, we are taught to work hard to earn things...to strive. One lesson we learn in Luke 18:18-30 is that we don't have to strive to earn eternal life. It is God's gift. The rich man came to Jesus asking what he could do to inherit eternal life. Jesus eventually challenged the man to sell his possessions and give his money to the poor, but this he could not do. The man couldn't save himself. He couldn't earn eternal life. Jesus encouraged those listening with these words: "What is impossible with man is possible with God." (27)

Jesus' work on the cross paid the price for our sins; all we have to do is put our faith in Him and know Him. Ephesians 2:8-9 says "God saved you by His grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it."

Another truth from this passage is that we need to have God alone be number one. The man in the story wanted eternal life, but after Jesus challenged him to give up his money, he unfortunately went away sad (Mark 10:22). We choose who or what we serve and have ultimate loyalty to. Matthew 6:24 says, "No one can serve two masters...You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money." Although this speaks of wealth, other things can become number one in our lives if we aren't careful: Relationships, jobs, abilities, even ourselves. What do we value too highly that we need to surrender? What we value the most will be what we live for. Jesus is the only one worth living for. When we seek God first there is blessing on the other side, eternal treasures.

# DESPERATE *FAITH*

BY BEN SALAZAR

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 18:31-43

Toward the end of this chapter, we see a blind man hear the commotion of people passing by as Jesus was making His way near Jericho. He hears that the crowd of people are gathered for Jesus and he recognizes right away that this is His Savior. This is the Messiah, the descendant of David. He immediately cries out for Him; not just another voice in the crowd, but loud enough to annoy those around him. But he only cared about getting to Jesus. His outcry was full of desperation and longing. Jesus then stops and asks him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" (Luke 18:4)

I am always amazed by the amount of faith people had while encountering Jesus. It's very encouraging. There were no written accounts of what He had done, only testimonies of His incredible works being spread throughout the different cities. They were so desperate for the Savior and Healer that they cried out no matter who tried to silence them or what stood in their way. Nothing could hold them back from encountering Jesus. That type of faith and boldness is what we should all strive for. It reminds me of the woman with the issue of blood (Luke 8). Jesus was surrounded by a crowd of people and He was on His way to heal someone else, but she just needed one moment, one touch from Jesus, and she believed she would be healed.

When was the last time you had a desire for Jesus like that? When was the last time you realized your desperate need for the Savior? If you can recall a moment, I want to encourage you to write it down. If you are going through something right now that you want Jesus to bring you through, write that down as well and go back to it when he has delivered you from it. It can be a reminder as you go back to it and share with others and hopefully encourage their faith.



# WEEK *NINE.*

October 29-November 3 | Luke 19-21









# THIS IS THE *DAY*

BY MISSA UHLMAN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 19:28-44

Just days before He would be crucified, Jesus rode up to Jerusalem. Seated not on a horse (an instrument of war), but on a donkey's colt. Befitting royalty, He entered as the Prince of Peace. This was foretold 500 years earlier by the prophet Zechariah, "Behold, your king is coming to you... mounted on... the foal of a donkey." His disciples rejoiced, quoting Psalm 118:26: "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

As He neared the city, Jesus wept. "If you... had only known on this day what would bring you peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes." This day. What was **THIS** day? The prophet Daniel declared there would be 483 years between the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and the coming of the Messiah. **THIS** day was 483 years *to the day* since King Artaxerxes ordered the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls. On **THIS** day, Jesus orchestrated the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, a Messianic prophecy. **THIS** day was the day of Psalm 118:24 – "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." – and *still* Jerusalem did not recognize the Messiah.

Amid the joyful procession, Jesus wept for the consequences of Jerusalem's unbelief: their missed opportunity for peace. Jerusalem itself means "City of Peace", but they would not experience God's blessing of earthly peace. Just forty years later, Jerusalem would be horrifically destroyed by the Romans and even today, constant conflict continues there. Since His people rejected Him, the truth was hidden from their eyes and the spiritual peace found in the Gospel continues to elude most Jews.

How often do we fail to see what God has for us **THIS** day? How often do our circumstances, expectations or idols keep us from experiencing the peace that God desires for us and freely offers? Perfect peace is beyond our understanding (Philippians 4:7) and can only come through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). No matter what today holds, Jesus is Lord: Lord of all creation, Lord of our circumstances, and Lord of our hearts if we will submit them to Him. Jesus, our Messiah, offers us real and lasting peace **THIS** day, and every day. Don't miss it.

# SNAP BACK

BY MANNY GARZA

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 19:45-48 & 20:1-8

Have you ever noticed that your priorities are out of order? Do you remember how you felt when you came to that realization? Maybe you felt constantly tired or short-tempered. Maybe you realized that your pace was not sustainable. In these times, we need someone or something to help us realign our priorities, otherwise misplaced priorities can become our way of life.

In this passage, we read that when Jesus arrived at the temple, He “began to drive out” people who were selling. These people were turning the temple into a marketplace and taking advantage of the poor. According to the law, two doves or pigeons were required to be offered as a sacrifice, but it was difficult for long-distance travelers to bring birds with them. Knowing this, people began selling birds in the temple at incredibly high prices. Jesus condemned what they were doing and displayed righteous anger by “overturning tables.” I’d say He was a little upset! Although that might be an understatement, Jesus reminded everyone that the temple was created to be a house of prayer. Jesus said they had made it a den of robbers.

I can imagine being there at that moment: shocked, maybe a little alarmed at the clanging of tables, animals running all over, and people shouting in disbelief. What a scene! It seems like it had become normal for people to use the temple as a marketplace, but Jesus came to help snap their priorities back into order and to return the temple to a house of prayer.

The religious leaders asked Jesus, “With what authority are you doing these things” (v2)? He answered their question with a question – what a guy! Jesus’ question had them stumped. If they answered one way, they would be admitting that He had the authority. If they answered the other way, there would be an uprising against them. Jesus wasn’t trying to evade their question by asking a question. He recognized their question was not from a sincere, truth-seeking heart, and His question was meant to reveal who He was and to show the hypocrisy of the leaders. After some thought, they finally answered with, “We don’t know.”

**Jesus has all authority, and He doesn't want us to lose sight of what is truly important. If you find that your priorities have fallen apart and you are tired of being tired, I urge you, "Seek the Kingdom of God before anything else, and all things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).**

# JESUS OUR CORNERSTONE

BY RONNA GARCIA

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 20:9-19

Mile nine of a ten-mile training run. Weariness had set into my legs and arms from the constant motion. Come on, you're almost there! Breathe, keep your pace. And then, in an instant, my toe caught the uneven concrete edge of the sidewalk. I was airborne. Oof! The wind was knocked out of my lungs as I hit the pavement. Bloody scrapes on knees to elbows and arms stopped me short of my ten-mile goal. My mishap was due to exhaustion and the uneven sidewalk. If only the concrete slabs had been aligned. It would have been seamlessly joined together, instead of a stumbling hazard. I probably wouldn't have wiped out.

Teaching at the temple, Jesus tells the parable of the vineyard owner. His audience includes the religious leaders and the chief priests. They were fully aware that His parable was exposing their wickedness and greed. Jesus concludes the parable by saying, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone." He explains that, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but on whomever it falls, it will shatter him."

Why was Jesus referring to a cornerstone? A cornerstone is the first stone placed in the construction of a building. It is the most important part of any building. All other stones are set in reference to the cornerstone. In His word picture, Jesus is the cornerstone. He spoke plainly about those who stumble over Him and don't accept Him. He said they would be broken to pieces, and shattered if the stone falls on them. Simply put, those who reject Jesus stumble and trip over Him right into judgement.

Jesus is named as the chief cornerstone in Ephesians 2:19-21. The church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord."

Are you aligned with Christ, the chief cornerstone? By accepting Jesus, believers are built into a holy temple where God dwells. We are God's dwelling, created to display His glory.

# THE CHRISTIAN AND *POLITICS*

BY LARRY MALCOLM

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 20:20-40

This is the most important week in history! Allow me to set the scene: It's Tuesday, just seventy-two hours away from Jesus' death. On Easter Sunday, He will rise from the dead. On Friday, Jesus will die. On Thursday, Judas will betray Him. Tuesday's focus is a day of verbal conflict between Jesus and the religious figures of His day about government.

One might ask, "Did Jesus have a political party?" If you start talking about politics today, the discussion can get pretty heated in a hurry. This was true in Jesus' day as well. They asked Him, "Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not" (Luke 20:22)? This question posed to Jesus was not about taxes in general. Instead, they were zeroing in on a specific tax – a poll tax. This was an annual tax of one denarius and for nothing more than having Caesar as the emperor.

You see, if Jesus answered in favor of the tax, a large segment of Israel would have lined up against Him. And if Jesus answered against the tax, a group would have gone to Pilate and said, "Jesus is an insurrectionist." The authorities would have crushed him. So, when Jesus asked for a denarius, the anticipation built to a climax in the crowd – "What's He going to do?"

Jesus immediately perceived their craftiness and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, 'Caesar's.' He said to them, 'Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch Him in what He said, but marveling at His answer they became silent" (Luke 20:24-26).

Inside Jesus' statement are two commands for us today: 1) Jesus tells us to obey our government authorities – "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's," and 2) Jesus also commands us to never give Caesar our ultimate allegiance. Jesus teaches His followers no political system deserves our ultimate allegiance, for no political system will truly deliver the revolution we all need. The kingdom of God always comes before the kingdom of men.

# CAUTION!

BY DARLA JOHNSON

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 20:41-47 & 21:1-4

Interestingly, when read as a whole, this passage includes a warning and a commendation.

First, Jesus warns His disciples about the teachers of the Law, those who use their positions to elevate themselves, and those whose primary interest is themselves. In a place where our focus should be on worshipping God, these people turn the attention of others to themselves for their personal gain and glory. Even after being written a few thousand years ago, when I read this, I immediately knew the type of person Jesus was talking about. I've encountered a few in my life. But when I read Jesus' following words, He brings the disciples' attention to the temple offering box, to a poor widow giving without a thought of attention-seeking, self-aggrandizement, or even false humility. Jesus commends the widow and her generosity of spirit and obedience even while being in extreme poverty. Her gift may seem small comparatively, but Jesus knew the fullness of her heart.

The difference in this passage is not between the rich and the poor but instead focuses on humility, obedience, and the motivations of the heart. I see a warning for myself and others in this Scripture because I know how easy it could be to fall into the habit of the teachers of the Law, leading a life focused on personal gain or giving the appearance of holiness without genuinely surrendering to God and being obedient to His word. Our entire culture reinforces this self-promotion and self-idolatry to a degree that we may not even realize that it is influencing us. We can recognize the lies that are so readily accepted by our society when we surround ourselves with the Truth of God's Word. When we practice becoming more like Christ, we learn humility, generosity, and integrity, among other traits.

So how can we become more like the faithful widow and less like the boastful teachers of the Law? By reading our Bibles, putting into practice what Jesus asked of us, and keeping Jesus in His rightful place in our lives, that's how! Begin by making the choice today!







**WEEK *TEN*.**

November 5-10 | Luke 21-22



# TAKE HEART!

BY DICK MALVANEY

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 22:1-6

My wife and I had opportunity to travel to a particular foreign country to attend a worldwide missions conference. The church sponsoring the event was having phenomenal success reaching their city and surrounding area. There were thousands of individuals attending every service. The Spirit of God was evident during those meetings and we left the conference believing the church would go upward and onward even more. However, quite soon after our visit we learned the government had targeted the pastor and his ministry. Through a series of attacks and false accusations it appeared the ministry of the pastor and church would be greatly reduced. I wish I could report everything turned out fabulous. Sadly the scope of ministry was greatly reduced. Time will tell what effect the governmental leaders' jealousy had on the Kingdom of God. Make no mistake about it. Jealousy is why the leaders set out to destroy that ministry.

In Luke 22:1-6 Jesus encounters the same jealousy. The established religious leaders were determined to rid themselves of Jesus. Even though those who followed Jesus and His teachings would be more devout in their faith and conduct, the popularity of Jesus was just too much for the established religious leaders to endure. How glad they were when Judas Iscariot stepped up to help.

But have we forgotten who is really behind these jealous pursuits? "Then Satan entered Judas," it reads in verse three. Judas became a pawn for Satan who was more jealous than even the established religious leaders. Obviously Judas was entertaining treasonous thoughts even before Satan entered him. So, Satan walked through that open door and used Judas to accomplish what even Satan thought would be the end of Jesus. Never forget, Satan is the real enemy!

Someone said, "A word to the wise is sufficient." What can learn from all this? At this point in history no leader is going to abolish Christian ministry in America. Why? "For fear of the people." Yet the stronger the Christian church becomes the more threat it is to those who oppose it. What then shall we do? Stand on Jesus' own words. "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18). Christ and His church will be victorious!

# THE HOPE OF COMMUNION

BY BETHANY CHAVEZ

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 22:7-38

The scene opens up with Jesus instructing Peter and John to go and prepare for the Passover meal. Putting together Passover was like preparing for Thanksgiving. Think of all the work that goes into a holiday meal, like planning the menu, basting the turkey, and decorating the table. And don't forget about all the apples Aunt Edna has to peel for her famous apple pie. It's a lot.

But Jesus had already taken care of the details (which is just like Him, isn't it?!). So Peter and John followed His instructions. But why was this meal so important to Jesus that He sent a party planning committee ahead of Him?

Passover represents the Israelite's deliverance from the Egyptians, and Jesus, aware of what awaited Him, embraced this final Passover as an opportunity to foreshadow the ultimate sacrifice He was about to make for the redemption of humanity.

After dinner, Jesus takes the unleavened bread, symbolizing His broken body, and blesses it. Then, He breaks the bread and passes it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Similarly, Jesus takes the cup of wine, which represents His shed blood, and offers it to His disciples, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."

Jesus emphasizes the importance of remembrance. He urges us to partake in the Lord's Supper, not merely as a ritual or tradition but as a sacred act of remembering His love, sacrifice, and victory over sin and death.

But communion is also a reminder of our hope for Jesus' return. Paul says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26). He is coming! Jesus is in heaven waiting to celebrate Passover with us there. It's called the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:9), and we'll all be there, feasting with Jesus. So, the next time you take communion with your family, life group, or during a church service, remember Jesus' sacrifice but also know that He will return, and we will celebrate with Him someday soon.

# THE HABIT OF *PRAYER*

BY VANESSA ELDRIDGE

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 22:39-46

Jesus went out as “was His habit” to pray. I can imagine that throughout Jesus’ life He had times of loneliness and even fear and anxiety. His habit of prayer was always the unwavering answer to the struggles of His humanity. Jesus frequently left the crowds to go and pray in solitude, but this prayer, on the Mount of Olives, was different from the ones before. Jesus was about to be betrayed by one of His disciples, beaten and ridiculed while being excruciatingly killed and the Spirit of God, Jesus’ own spirit, would leave Him as the weight of the world’s sins were laid on Him. We don’t know many of the words Jesus said during this prayer, but we have a striking image of how overwhelmed He was. “Being in anguish, He prayed more fervently, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground” (44). These words emphasize the very real, human nature of Jesus.

I was recently witness to a mother’s anguish. I was working at the hospital. A full-term baby boy was born without a heartbeat. The medical staff worked quickly to get the baby’s heart pumping and he was put on life support. A rare anomaly had occurred before the boy was born and this perfect little baby could not sustain life. The boy’s mother was told he could not live without the life support. I will never forget the mother’s wailing cries when she held her son as the life support was removed. It is true anguish to have a child pass away at any age.

Times of anguish are overwhelming with grief, anger, and confusion. May the image of Jesus’ fervent prayer spur us on to make prayer our habit so that when times of anguish come upon us or those we love, we go to God, in prayer, knowing that God is for us (Rms 8:31-32) and He knows what we are going through (Heb. 4:15-16).

# PETER'S UNANSWERED *PRAYER*

BY KINSEY RAYBURN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 22:47-53

Can you think of a prayer you are thankful that God answered? What about a prayer you are thankful that God did not answer? It can be hard to believe, but a request being denied is, at times, merciful on God's behalf. As I read this passage, I wonder if Peter had a similar experience as he looked back on this night, when Jesus was betrayed and Peter's worldview was forever changed.

While Luke writes ambiguously regarding the assailant of this passage, John informs us that it was our good friend, Peter, who cut off the ear of Malchus, the high priests' servant. I cannot say that I blame Peter, for just a few short verses earlier, Jesus mentioned how a sword was now vital for the disciples' protection. Notice, Jesus never said that a sword was necessary for His own protection. While Peter chose to defend the Messiah, Jesus knew that He, himself, was born for the purpose of atonement. I can almost imagine Peter thinking to himself, "My Teacher needs my sword! I will defend Him because I love Him". And Jesus firmly, yet kindly, responding, "Peter, your mind is not on the things of the Father. You have no idea how great the need is for *my* submission at this moment".

Jesus could have instantaneously called for the heavenly armies to come to His aid. But what Jesus most desired, more than self-preservation, was to do the will of the Father. This obedience required a cross before a crown. This paradoxical logic finds its roots in God's Kingdom and necessitates unwavering faith. Peter's faith was still developing. Thus, we see him stepping in, trying to assist Jesus in working out a plan that made sense to Peter's finite mind.

We have the opportunity to submit our finite understanding to the Lord today, fully trusting that His thoughts infinitely surpass our own (Isaiah 55:8). If we find doubt sneaking into our mind, whispering lies about the Lord's provision being insufficient, we can remember that God's ways are faithful and far higher than our own. Let us ask for His vision as we aim to walk in obedience to Him today.

# COME AS YOU ARE

BY MISSA UHLMAN

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 22:54-65

Have you ever felt underrated? Has anyone said you can't when you just know you can? Peter could relate. For three years, he'd loyally followed Jesus. He'd left his job and his wife, traveled dusty roads, and slept outside. He'd seen people healed and demons cast out...

He'd walked on water for a few seconds. Once, watching those walking away, Jesus asked the disciples, "Do you want to go away as well?" Peter answered the only way he could: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You... are the Holy One of God." (John 6:67-69) Peter wasn't going anywhere.

So, imagine his surprise when Jesus declared that he would turn away. Unbelievable. He'd rather die. Literally. But Jesus was unwavering, and His words struck Peter's heart: "...the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me." (Luke 22:34)

After Jesus' arrest, Peter was scared. He followed behind, watching what would happen to Jesus, while trying to stay under the radar... But that servant girl! "Who me? Nope, just warming up by the fire." And that man! "Not sure what you're talking about, friend." And again! Peter swore (that should convince them), "I DON'T KNOW HIM!" Immediately, the rooster crowed and Jesus, being led from the high priest's house, locked eyes with Peter. It was done.

Just a few hours before, Jesus had washed Peter's feet. Passed him bread. Poured him wine. He had known full well that Peter would let Him down, and yet Jesus had served him and loved him. He had invited him to the table and called him friend. Just like Jesus knew Peter's heart, He knows ours. He knows what we think we're qualified for, and He knows all the ways we'll fail. And still, He bends down to wash our feet, stretches out His arms to bear our sins, and calls us beloved. Peter knew Jesus as Lord yet denied Him; something we do every time we try to sit on His throne, or anytime we look more like the world instead of salt and light. But despite Peter's failures – even his future ones – he was welcomed at the Lord's table. YOU are welcome too. No matter where you are, Jesus isn't surprised. He invites you, beloved, to come as you are and pull up a chair.







# WEEK *ELEVEN.*

November 12-17 | Luke 22-24





# WHEN LIFE SEEMS *HOPELESS*

BY KEILA GARZA

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 23:44-49

Have you ever been in a season that felt hopeless, a season where it felt like the air was being taken out of your lungs, where you walked around in a haze wondering if, maybe, you were living a nightmare, and wishing you'd wake up? Have you felt the weight of something so heavy that it seems you might never be able to take a deep, peaceful breath again?

I imagine this is what the Jews must have felt as they stared up at the cross, at Jesus' body, which had been beaten and worn just moments before He died. In this passage Jesus yells out with a desperate cry, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." Then, full of agony, gave one last breath. Jesus had been beaten and unfairly persecuted. While it grieves us to think of the Savior of the world enduring this level of suffering, I wonder if God did it so that we might realize that Jesus understands our pain. When we are suffering, He knows every level of human emotion that we experience. He knows what it is like to feel defeated. His friends and family knew those feelings too.

The centurion recognized that Jesus must be a righteous man, but the people who were nearby started to celebrate; finally, the false teacher was dead. Those who knew Jesus stood at a distance and watched. They watched as the skies grew dark and for the next two days, they didn't have a glimmer of hope. They, too, knew what it was like to feel hopeless. Everything they believed to be true was gone. Jesus, in that moment, was defeated. If they were going to have any chance at surviving another day, they would have to recall the words that Jesus said when He told them He would rise again.

We know the end of the story. We know that when Jesus resurrected, there was victory for the entire world. Sometimes it's hard to hope when we don't know the end of the story. If only we could see how each situation would play out, life would be easy! But God asks us to trust Him in the most hopeless of moments. He promises to give us peace when all seems lost. Jesus says, "I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble, but take heart! I have overcome the world."

# GETTING REAL WITH THE SACRIFICE

BY MIKE JOHNSON

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 23:50-56

The fact that they could and did kill Jesus proved to His enemies that they had been right about Him. He couldn't have been the Messiah, or they'd be dead instead. See? He was a "false teacher" the whole time! But to His followers, it must have all seemed so bizarre and backward. Jesus walked on water, stopped storms with His voice, fed thousands, and even raised the dead! Finally, days earlier, He came to the capital, welcomed like a beloved king returning from a long absence to set things right again. He had won every confrontation and debate with the rulers. Then, it all flipped over.

"Could it be real? Maybe we're dreaming?" they thought. What if He's not dead, and this is another one of Jesus' unique ways of making a point? What if? Perhaps this is why Jesus was killed on a Friday, so everyone had to sit around all day Saturday on the Sabbath. Jesus' body had to just lie there, proving that He was really gone.

God did not want us to fast-forward through this sacrifice. It had to sink in, and it still has to. We need to see what sin does and what our sin did. Jesus died because of my sins, your sins, our sins. He didn't just press pause until Sunday morning. Jesus died for you. That's how much He loves you.

What are you still clinging to that needs to be buried with Him? What shame died with Him but still needs to be buried with Him? What loss do you still need to grieve, mourn, and bury? What freedom was bought for you that you are still afraid to embrace?

There is no resurrection without death. Seeing that He loves you this much, will you trust Him enough to die to yourself?

# SEEING THE FOREST THROUGH THE TREES

BY MELIAH SALAZAR

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 24:1-12

In this passage we get the wonderful proclamation from the angels of Jesus' resurrection. This is the greatest news the followers of Christ could receive! Yet, like most interactions with the unexpected, the women were frightened and confused. Even though Jesus foretold His death and resurrection, His followers were blind to the prophecies that were being fulfilled in front of their eyes.

In some cases, God purposefully allowed His followers to be blind to the truth (Luke 18:34), but here we see the angels explain exactly what happened and which prophecies it fulfilled. We may look at this and wonder why the women and Jesus' disciples did not believe what they were told. But how often do we find ourselves blind to the truth of God's Word because of the ups and downs in our lives? It's easy to get caught up in our emotions and miss the bigger picture. Confusion, anger, doubt, disappointment, fear, or any number of things can distract us from our hope in Christ.

Jesus' followers must have been feeling any mix of emotions after their teacher, whom they hoped was the Messiah, was killed by human hands. All the while, the truth was that He had risen. His followers could not celebrate in the joy of the truth because they were too focused on their limited understanding.

We also see Peter run to the tomb after receiving the news from the women. Although he didn't fully believe or understand what the angels told the women, he was the only one of Jesus' disciples that went to investigate. Maybe his eagerness was inspired by his actions before Jesus was crucified, hoping he could reconcile with Jesus, and so he ran to see the tomb.

Whatever his reason, having the boldness to pursue truth is commendable. Beyond just seeking truth, we must also take the truth of God's Word and allow it to challenge the way we live by applying it to our own lives. We need to allow God's truth to shape us. What can we do to shift our focus to God despite our feelings?

# TAP INTO THE SOURCE

BY ADAM ELDRIDGE

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 24:13-35

A few years back, I was having a conversation with someone who was discussing a program at work. They were relatively new to the job and as they were talking, I began to realize they had some fundamental gaps in their knowledge around the origin of some aspects of the program. When the person was done explaining things as they understood them to be, I took the time to outline some areas where the person had misconceptions about the program. It was not that the person was maliciously misinterpreting the way things were, rather, it was an ignorance rooted in inexperience and a lack of historical knowledge.

In Luke chapter 24, we see a similar lack of knowledge and history impacting two men who encounter Jesus on the road to Emmaus. The men are walking when Jesus approaches them. They aren't able to recognize Jesus for who He is and He asks them to explain what they are talking about. The men then recount their version of what transpired. When they finish, Jesus responds in verses 25 and 26 with "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" Jesus then proceeded to educate them on what had been foretold in Scripture; yet the men still didn't realize who they were talking to at this point. But once their eyes were opened, they commented to each other "Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (verse 32).

The challenge to us is to make sure that we are not "foolish" and "slow to believe". The men on the road to Emmaus eventually had their eyes opened to see it was Jesus speaking with them. He was revealed to the men in a way that we will most likely never experience personally. However, through prayer and the study of Scripture we can increase our knowledge and deepen our relationship with Him.



# THE UNTHINKABLE *HAPPENS*

BY MARK KUNKLER

## DAILY READING PASSAGE | LUKE 24:36-49

Imagine the scene: the disciples and others are in a room; they are troubled, fearful, confused, and panicky. Jesus had been crucified three days ago and Peter and John are saying that Jesus has risen from the dead. (Luke 24:33, 34).

And while they were telling these things, [Jesus] Himself stood in their midst.

But [the disciples] were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?”

See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have (Luke 24:36-39).

I can't be too hard on the disciples. I would have reacted in the same way. But then, a new emotion begins to take over the disciples as Jesus reinforces the reality of His resurrection by eating a piece of broiled fish, and they begin to rejoice.

Astounding. Jesus rose from the dead; He is alive. Yet, the disciples still didn't fully grasp the importance of His resurrection. Jesus then begins to explain to them that what happened was foretold by the Prophets and Psalms and He opened their understanding (Luke 24:44-48).

Jesus accomplished salvation for all mankind, not just the Jewish people. The Gospel is to be proclaimed “to all nations”. The Good News is for everyone. Jesus also claimed the full authority of both the Old Testament and the New Testament. He used the Old Testament to prove His purpose, mission, and victory. The entire Bible points to God's purposes and fulfillment in Christ.

**Jesus caps His instruction to the disciples in verse 49. His last words emphasize the new mission of the Church– to preach the Gospel and make disciples of all nations. He will also assure that His disciples will always experience His presence and power as they begin their new mission: “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”**

**What would your reaction be if you were there when Jesus suddenly appeared? Why did Jesus appear in a resurrected body to His disciples?**



# WEEK *TWELVE*.

November 19 | Luke 24:50-53





