

Monday, March Twelfth

Read through the Bible



The Gospel of Luke Week 4



In the TV show '24,' Jack Bauer is a federal agent notorious for not following the rules. It's not that he doesn't like them; he simply finds they sometimes get in the way of his work. In fact, there are many times throughout the series when Jack knows he should stand down and follow the proper protocol, but he chooses not to because saving lives is more important to him. In today's passage, Jesus breaks with the Sabbath traditions to heal a woman of a long-term illness.

Read: Luke 13:1-21

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What warning does Jesus give? (see verses 1-5)

Pilate was a cruel man. So cruel, in fact, that he had killed some Galileans and mixed in their blood with the regular temple sacrifices. Jesus sees this as a teaching opportunity to remind His followers that life is short, and the time to repent is now. Whether one's life is taken intentionally (like the Galileans in verse 2) or accidentally (like the eighteen people in verse 4), Jesus illustrates why it is unwise to put off repentance as "something you'll get around to later."

- What was the synagogue leader's problem with the crippled woman's healing? (see verse 14) How does Jesus respond? (see verses 15-16)
- How do the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast describe the kingdom of God? (see verses 18-21)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Throughout the season of Lent, a strong emphasis is placed on repentance. This is done not to make us feel bad, but to remind us that life is indeed short, and the time for repentance is now. Take some time each day this week to develop a posture and practice of repentance. As you confess your wrongdoings to God, be assured that they are all forgiven through the perfect work of Christ!

Tuesday, March Thirteenth

In south Tampa, Ciro's Speakeasy is a prohibition themed restaurant that offers an evening of food and fun for both regulars and tourists alike. There's one catch, though: in order to get in through the narrow door of the building, you have to know the secret phrase. If you know it, you are immediately ushered in. If you don't, there's a McDonald's not too far up the road. In today's passage, Jesus shares how people can enter through the narrow door of His kingdom.

Read: Luke 13:22-35

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What is the person's concern? (see verse 23) How does Jesus address this concern? (see verse 24)

Notice the contrast between the person's question and Jesus' response. The person wants to know how many people are going to be saved, but Jesus encourages him to simply consider his own salvation instead. Because Jesus 'knows' His followers (see verses 25 and 27), He will recognize them when they try and enter through 'the narrow door.'

Over the years, quite a few people have found this particular passage concerning. "How do I know if I am going to be saved? What if the owner of the house closes the door on me?" Rest assured, this will not be our fate, for "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

- How does Jesus respond to Herod's threat of death? (see verses 32-33)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Suppose you have a family member or friend who doubts they are truly saved (or perhaps this is a real situation for you). What might you say to assure her (or him) that she (or he) belongs to Christ and is indeed saved?

Wednesday, March Fourteenth

Boy, it sure ain't cheap to live in Pinellas County! In a seller's market like we find ourselves in today, people wishing to purchase a home have to first consider how they are going to afford it. What assets do they currently have? How much will the bank offer? What lifestyle changes might they need to make? These are the types of questions serious homebuyers must consider when determining the costs of purchasing a home. In today's passage, Jesus asks His followers to consider the costs of following Him.

Read: Luke 14:1-35

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What comparison does Jesus give for why He healed the sick man on the Sabbath? (see verse 5)

"Do as I say, not as I do." Jesus once again points out the Pharisees' hypocrisy: surely they would save their ox or child on the Sabbath. How is this man any different?

- What happens when we exalt ourselves? (see verses 8-9)
What happens when we humble ourselves? (see verse 10)
- What conditions must be met for someone to be a disciple of Jesus? (see verses 26-27)

Wait, did Jesus just tell us to *hate* our family members?! While He does not mean that we should hate them in a literal sense, He does mean it in a comparative sense. As true followers of Jesus, we must be willing to put Jesus far above anybody else – including ourselves!

- How do Jesus' examples show why it is important for us to consider the cost of following Jesus? (see verses 28-33)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

While the world today looks vastly different from the time Jesus walked upon the earth, many issues remain the same. Make a list of 'costs' you consider when following Jesus on a daily basis.

Thursday, March Fifteenth

Have you ever temporarily lost something valuable before? Perhaps you misplaced the item somewhere in your home, and so you spent hours shuffling through drawers, pulling out boxes, opening up every cabinet, and even checking through the pockets of your clothes in the laundry basket. And then finally, after much vigor and determination, you find it! What relief! What joy! What celebration! In today's passage, Jesus shares with us the joy He experiences when 'lost' folks are found.

Read: Luke 15:1-32

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to the parable, why is the shepherd willing to leave the 99 sheep to save the one lost sheep? (see verses 4-7)

From a logical standpoint, this scenario doesn't make any sense. After all, why in the world would a shepherd leave his 99 sheep to go find one? However, from a Gospel standpoint, this is exactly what He wanted the judgmental Pharisees to understand: every lost sheep is worth the shepherd's time and energy (see verse 2). The heart of the Gospel is that Jesus seeks out all who are lost and brings them back to Him.

- According to the parable, how does the woman search for the lost coin? (see verse 8)
- According to the parable, how does the father treat his lost son when he returns? (see verses 20-24)

Much like the father, Jesus doesn't turn away sinners. He welcomes them with open arms! Jesus was willing to destroy His reputation with the Pharisees if it meant saving sinners in the process.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take a moment to spend time in prayer thanking God that He has 'found' you. Pray that others in this world may be 'found' too.

Friday, March Sixteenth

On December 11, 2008, Bernie Madoff was arrested for operating the largest Ponzi scheme ever. Over the span of many years, Madoff swindled more than 4800 clients out of 64.8 billion dollars. Many of his clients were shocked: how could a man they trusted misuse their money so egregiously? In today's passage, Jesus shows us why it's important to be trustworthy and responsible with our wealth and possessions.

Read: Luke 16:1-18

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What does Jesus say in regards to how we handle our wealth? (see verses 10-12)

When God tasked us with taking care of His creation, He desired for us to do so honestly and responsibly. Jesus reminds us that all of us are susceptible to mismanaging the gifts God has given us. *But*, if we can learn to be trustworthy with very little, we can also learn to be trustworthy with much.

- Why can no one serve two masters? (see verses 13-15)
- How does Jesus use the example of divorce in verse 18 to explain His position in verses 16-17?

Back in Jesus' time, some men were divorcing women for absurd reasons: not folding the towels right, burning a meal, etc. Jesus reminds them here that issues like divorce are not to be taken lightly – there are consequences to doing so (see verse 18). However, it should be noted that there *are* Biblical causes for divorce (see Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:7-9, and 1 Corinthians 7:15). By using divorce as an example, Jesus shows us that even though He fulfilled the Law, it is still important in His eyes.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

How do you handle your wealth? Take some time to give thanks for the ways God has provided for you in both the small and big ways.

Saturday, March Seventeenth

When a teacher sees a student push another student, she gives him a warning and tells him that if he does it again, he's going to end up in the principal's office. About five minutes later, the same student pushes another student. The teacher then takes the student by the arm and walks him down the hallway to the principal's office. Along the way, the student screams, "Please! Don't make me go! I won't do it again!" "It's too late for that," the teacher replies. "You knew what would happen if you continued to push other students." In today's passage, the people listening to Jesus are reminded of the consequences of their own actions.

Read: Luke 16:19-31

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How are the rich man and Lazarus described? (see verses 19-21) Where do the two of them go? (see verses 22-23)

Remember, Jesus had just finished talking about serving two masters – God and money. In this story, the rich man clearly preferred his wealth (he wouldn't even help the poor beggar, Lazarus). It was only after he died and found himself in Hades did he realize the consequences of his decision to serve money.

- How does Abraham's response foreshadow Jesus' resurrection? (see verses 29-31)

Jesus was right to say that people would not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. After all, when He rose from the dead, many still did not believe. This makes those who *do* believe all the more remarkable: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; *blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*" (John 20:29).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

How might you explain to someone why you believe someone you have not personally seen for yourself?

Sunday, March Eighteenth

The late Billy Graham once said, "Forgiveness does not come easily to us, especially when someone we have trusted betrays our trust. And yet if we do not learn to forgive, we will discover that we can never really rebuild trust." In today's passage, Jesus shows us how we forgive those who betray our trust.

Read: Luke 17:1-10

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- According to Jesus, what is the difference between stumbling and causing someone to stumble? (see verses 1-3)

In this world, we are bound to sin. But that doesn't mean we should cause others to sin in the process. As Jesus' followers, we must always be careful to make sure we do not cause another brother or sister to stumble.

- How does Jesus say we are to forgive? (see verses 3-4)
- How do the disciples respond to Jesus' call to forgive? (see verse 5)

When Jesus told His disciples how they are to forgive, they exclaimed, "Increase our faith!" (another way of saying, "That's impossible!"). To consistently forgive those who repent can often seem like an impossible task, especially if they continue to sin against us over and over again. But that is what makes followers of Jesus unique: we forgive even when we do not want to. Jesus' call to forgive isn't a suggestion; it's a command (see verse 4 – "you *must* forgive them").

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time to go to God in prayer and ask Him to prepare your heart for the coming week. Two weeks until Easter!

Questions? Comments? Contact Vicar Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 531-2761.