

# Gospel of Luke

Jesus, Savior of the World

# SESSION FOUR and FIVE

Philip inherited the northeast part of his father's kingdom and is mentioned briefly in the Bible by Luke (3,1)





# The Journey Begins

- “When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.” (9:51)
- “Set his face” is an echo of Isaiah 50:7 – “therefore, I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near.”
- **The journey will run from 9:51 to 19:28!**
- At eight places, Luke reminds us in one way or another that Jesus is on this journey.
- It is hard to find the structure of this lengthy journey.
- It is not geography – this only gets confusing as Jesus goes from Galilee to Bethany to Galilee to Jericho etc.
- Perhaps we should see this as one, last long pilgrimage that Jesus takes us on so that we might learn what it means to be one of his disciples – before he is “taken up.”
- We’ll need to grasp that Jesus knows where all this will end. It shades all the demands that he will place upon his disciples



# Jesus establishes the nature of the journey

- **Passing through Samaria (9:51-56)**
  - ✓ Jesus sends helpers to the Samaritans to prepare for Jesus' arrival.
  - ✓ He is going to minister to the despised Samaritans!
  - ✓ James & John are very angry that Jesus has been rejected by the Samaritans and want to call down God's fury upon them. But Jesus rebukes them. They've forgotten about love and forgiveness.
  - ✓ Revenge and retribution simply have no place in God's kingdom.
- **Accenting the cost of discipleship (9:57-62)**
  - ✓ Are Jesus' followers really ready to follow Jesus? They must be prepared to (1) depend totally on the hospitality of others, (2) place their loyalty to Jesus above their own family, and (3) go further than Elijah asked of Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21).
  - ✓ We need to hear the radical nature of discipleship!! There should always be a tension in our lives between the demands of the world and the demands of our discipleship.



# The mission of the seventy

- **The instruction of the seventy (10:1-12)**

- ✓ There are 70 nations in the world in Genesis 10 -- universality.
- ✓ The message to those who accept and those who reject are the same-- the kingdom of God is near. Judgment is to be left to Jesus.

- **Woes on the impenitent (10:13-16)**

- ✓ These cities have had the privilege of Jesus' ministry. To whom much is given, much is required! Note that their rejection of the preachers is the same as rejecting Jesus and rejecting God.

- **The return of the seventy (10:17-20)**

- ✓ The preacher's success is more evidence of Jesus' power over the forces of evil. But the 70 ought not to be rejoicing over their successes; they should rejoice that God knows them.

- **A prayer of thanks and a blessing (10:21-24)**

- ✓ Jesus rejoices in the Spirit. We can never find God (the wise), God must find us (revelation to the babes). It is Jesus, and only Jesus, who leads us to the Father (v. 22). How blessed are Jesus' disciples!



# Two stories about hearing and not hearing

- **Jesus and the lawyer, a “wise” expert on the Law! (10:25-37)**
  - ✓ The two commandments that sum up all the OT Law – love God (Deuteronomy) and love neighbor (Leviticus).
  - ✓ The lawyer knows the answers, but having the right answers does not mean that one knows God.
  - ✓ Who is my neighbor? Exactly whom I thought it could never be!! It is not the upright Jews who help the man, it is the despised Samaritan!
  - ✓ This is a message to “go and do.”
- **Jesus, Martha, and Mary (10:38-42)**
  - ✓ From John, we know that these are sisters living in Bethany, a suburb of Jerusalem.
  - ✓ This is a radical story – rabbis did not allow a woman to sit at their feet to learn. Jesus has no problem with women being disciples.
  - ✓ The message here is “sit down, listen, and learn.”



# Teachings on Prayer (11:1-13)

- **Again, Jesus praying.** Luke has gathered together here some of Jesus' teachings on prayer.
- Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer. Ours is patterned most closely on Matthew's.
- ✓ Prayer need not always be impromptu or off the cuff. Prayer is learned. Set prayers definitely have their place.
- **The parable of the persistent friend**
- ✓ A rather awkward story. We misread it if we think it means we have to hound God to wake God up! Rather, if friends will answer our "midnight" requests, how much more will God!
- ✓ This is a story calling us to a life of persistent prayer – whether we feel like it or not!
- ✓ Giving the Holy Spirit – again, the Spirit is central to understanding Jesus and the church in Luke.



# Conflicts and controversies

- **Concerning Jesus' power to exorcise demons (11:14-28)**
  - ✓ Is Jesus able to cast out demons because he is in Satan's employ?
  - ✓ Would Satan work against himself? No. Satan is being overthrown by a more powerful force. This is the beginning of Satan's end.
  - ✓ Blessed are those who hear and obey. It does no good to chase out a demon unless one's life is filled with Christ. An empty house invites intruders!
- **Concerning the search for signs (11:29-36)**
  - ✓ The people have seen what Jesus does – but is it God's doing?
  - ✓ Jonah's sign was his preaching & that is all the people will get from Jesus. Jesus' message is clear enough. Those who won't see, can't see.
- **Jesus counters his critics (11:37-12:1)**
  - ✓ The Pharisees and lawyers (experts in the law



# Exhortations and warnings to a crowd

- **A call for open confession (12:2-12)**
  - ✓ Be fearless in your confession of Jesus. What is the opposite of fear – trust/faith. Those who deny Jesus, Jesus will deny before God. Are we embarrassed believers?
- **Concerning possessions (12:13-34)**
  - ✓ A straightforward warning against greed. Our lives do not consist of what we possess. How would you live and love if you were dying? Do not worry nor be preoccupied with material things.
- **Concerning preparedness and fidelity (12:35-48)**
  - ✓ Be ready. Be prepared. Jesus will return when he is not expected. We need to hear Luke speaking to the church as well as Jesus speaking to his followers.
  - ✓ Much is being given and entrusted to the leaders in the movement. They must be faithful stewards. Much is being demanded of them!



## Exhortations and warnings (cont.)

- **Concerning the crisis created by Jesus' ministry (12:49-59)**
  - ✓ You would think that peace would be the outcome of Jesus' ministry. But no. Jesus brings a crisis – that divides!
  - ✓ The people can read the weather signs; they can surely see what is happening in Jesus.
  - ✓ The time to get things right with God is now. If you wait until you are standing before the judge, all that will be left is the sentencing!
- **The call to repentance (13:1-9)**
  - ✓ There is no suffering/sin calculation to be made. Without repentance, all is lost anyway.
  - ✓ God is patient, so the fig tree gets one more year. Still, God won't wait forever. The people are about out of time. Repent or perish!
  - ✓ We uphold severity AND grace. It is not an OR and the two are not mixed together, thereby diluting each. The Christian faith is filled with lots of ANDs.



# Tensions and forebodings of the Passion

- **Controversy over a Sabbath healing (13:10-17)**
  - ✓ Again with the Sabbath. Note, it is the “Lord” who responds to the leader! The leader is angry with the crowd because they’ve come seeking healing on the Sabbath.
- **Parables of the Kingdom (13:18-21)**
  - ✓ A small, inconsequential act marks the beginning of God’s reign and Satan’s end (the healing of the crippled woman).
- **Strict requirements for the Kingdom (13:22-30)**
  - ✓ The invitation is open but the way is narrow. Indeed, the door will not be open forever. God’s purpose moves toward the final day, the day of judgment. When the door is closed, it is closed.
- **A warning about Herod and a lament (13:31-35)**
  - ✓ Pharisees sound the alarm! Jesus warns that nothing can stop him from reaching Jerusalem – but he weeps for the choice Jerusalem will make.



# Reflections

- What have we seen so far on this journey?
- ✓ The cost of discipleship. What are we really signing on for?
- ✓ Hear and obey. Trust and obey. Obedience is not about following some arbitrary list of rules, it is about walking in the path laid out for us by God. It is the path bounded by love of God and love of neighbor.
- ✓ The acceleration of Jesus' ministry: one to twelve to seventy. Now crowds of thousands press in on Jesus.
- ✓ The collision course that Jesus is on!
- We need to hear Luke speaking to the church. Luke is writing as much as 40-50 years after the events he describes. He is proclaiming the Good News of Jesus for the community of which he is part.
- ✓ There are many challenging passages. We must engage all of Scripture, not just the parts that seem sensible or palatable to us.
- ✓ There could be a sermon series on the Hard Sayings of Jesus.

# Week 5

## The Journey to Jerusalem – Part 2





# Table Talk (14:1-24)

- These four stories are all told within the context of meals. Meals were laden with symbolism in the Jewish faith. Same for us – the Lord’s Supper. These are radical Kingdom texts.
- **Dispute over a Sabbath healing (14:1-6)**
  - ✓ No healing on the Sabbath?? How absurd.
- **A lesson for guests (14:7-11)**
  - ✓ Humility – small, apparently trivial acts reveal our character.
- **A lesson for hosts (14:12-14)**
  - ✓ Hospitality must be extended to all. Is our table a place of exchange or a place of grace? This is not about dinner on Friday; it is about welcoming those who cannot reciprocate.
- **The parable of the banquet (14:15-24)**
  - ✓ Notice that all the excuses are good ones! God has priority over our best agendas. There are many ways to hear this parable!



# Teachings concerning discipleship (14:25-35)

- **Back to large crowds. The problem? Enthusiasm! They think they've joined a march or a parade.**
- **The cost of discipleship**
  - ✓ Disciples need to have open eyes. Know where you are headed. Know the cost.
  - ✓ "To hate" is not an emotion. It is a Semitic expression re-detaching. Jesus' claim on our lives **MUST** come before all other claims.
- **About salt**
  - ✓ Salt was a symbol of God's covenant with his people. Will the crowds stay in covenant with Jesus or will their salt lose its flavor over time and in the face of difficulties?



# Three parables of joy (15:1-32)

- **All three are only in Luke and all three speak of the joy of finding what was lost – a sheep, a coin, a son.**
- **The Found Sheep and the Found Coin (15:4-10)**
- ✓ These two set up the third, hence the comment re-repenting sinners.
- **The Parable of the Loving Father (15:11-32)**
- ✓ Where is the emphasis in this parable?
- ✓ For the first listeners, it would probably have been on the Father. He has been insulted by his younger son, yet has unrestrained joy at the son's return. Surely, this would have been heard as a story of the Jew's long-awaited return from exile.
- ✓ Can we hear the offense of grace in this story. Where is the justice?
- ✓ There is a tension that cannot be relieved – God is a God of Grace AND a God of Justice.



## *Teachings concerning wealth (16:1-31)*

- **The Parable of the Shrewd Steward (16:1-13)**
  - ✓ Addressed to disciples and speaks of the constructive use of money.
  - ✓ How odd. Even offensive. Jesus commends a man how has acted dishonestly. Of course, we all do. A “shrewd saint?” Link verses 4-9: Are we doing what we should here to ensure our security later?
  - ✓ Verses 10-14 are proverbs that are loosely connected to the parable.
- **The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:14-31)**
  - ✓ For the Pharisees, wealth = blessed of God = obedience to the Law. But . . . perhaps not, Jesus says!! This is about the Pharisees’ bad theology.
  - ✓ The point of this whole section is the Pharisees’ gross misreading of Scripture and its consequences, from their understanding of divorce to the linkage of wealth and blessing.
  - ✓ This is a common story in the ancient world. We should not read this parable as being about our eternal destiny or the circumstances of Hades.



# On Sin, Forgiveness, Faith, & Duty (17:1-10)

- **Jesus now returns to speaking only to his disciples. Paying attention to the audience is important.**
  - ✓ Don't cause someone else to stumble, especially the newer Christians (vv. 1-2).
  - Rebuke => repent => forgive (vv. 3-4). This is about Christians living in community. It is about the practice of love.
  - **Verse 6 could be translated: "If you had faith [and you do]."**
    - ✓ This parable is in the context of master/slave. There is no clear analogy in our culture. So, take care in the interpretation.
    - ✓ A slave is a servant 24 hours a day. There is no time at which the slaves (Christ & disciples) are finished serving.



# Teachings => the Final Prediction! (17:11-18:30)

- **The grateful leper (17:11-19)**
  - ✓ There are two stories here: (1) a healing and (2) the salvation of a foreigner, whose “healing” is “saving.”
- **The kingdom and the Son of Man (17:20-37)**
  - ✓ The kingdom has come. Jesus is present. The lame walk. But Jesus will come again. The kingdom has not yet arrived in all its fullness. When will Jesus return? We can't know. Keep your eyes off the calendar. When he does, it will be dramatic!!
- **Two parables on prayer and vindication (18:1-14)**
  - ✓ If a cruel judge will give way to the widow, how much more will God listen to the prayers of the saints.
  - ✓ Both parables are about vindication. This is law-court language; having the judge decide in your favor. The disciples may tire of waiting for Jesus' return, but in the end, they will be vindicated. The widow and the tax-collector would both be declared in-the-right by God.



# The upside-down kingdom

- **Children and the kingdom (18:15-17)**
  - ✓ Children bring nothing to the kingdom and receive it. There is nothing here about merit and achievement.
  - ✓ What does it mean to receive the kingdom as a child would receive it? Children receive gifts without any thought to reciprocation. They are “cheerful receivers.” Adults are often not cheerful receivers – how many of us keep a few generic Christmas gifts at the house just in case someone gives us a gift?
- **The rich and the kingdom (18:18-30)**
  - ✓ The man’s question, “What must I do to inherit eternal life,” betrays his wrong mindset.
  - ✓ The man depends upon his wealth rather than upon God. Hence, he is an idolater. He is sad because he is unwilling to give up his own “god.”



# The Journey Ends

- **The final prediction of the passion (18:31-34)**
  - ✓ The disciples still understand nothing about what lies ahead. Yet, what Jesus said was “hidden” from them. Logic fails us here.
- **Healing a blind man near Jericho (18:35-43)**
  - ✓ But . . . Jesus has the power to open the eyes of the blind.
- **Salvation is brought to Zacchaeus (19:1-10)**
  - ✓ Recalls and almost repeats the story of Jesus and Levi (5:27-32).
  - ✓ Zacchaeus has guilty hands in a corrupt system. But his repentance bears fruit. He will repay far more than required. Being “saved” is about more than our souls, it is about our whole life.
- **The Parable of the Pounds (19:11-28)**
  - ✓ Yikes! The kingdom is NOT about to be fully realized. Jerusalem is not where this will end.



# Reflections

- **The last parable: two stories**
- ✓ Jesus is king, but he is not going to claim the throne in Jerusalem. He will go away and return. Those who reject Jesus while he is away will be denied joy and life at Jesus' return (the parousia).
- ✓ While Jesus is gone, his disciples will need to be faithful and accountable. We are to multiply what has been entrusted to us.
- **Luke has amply prepared us for the controversy and trouble that awaits Jesus in Jerusalem. He has continually confronted the key symbols of his day, such as the Sabbath.**
- **Jesus has amply demonstrated the coming of God's Kingdom.**
- ✓ He has enacted it: the lame walk, the blind see, the world turned upside-down. He has embodied God's presence, e.g., by forgiving sins, choosing twelve.
- **Discipleship is demanding and radical and important!!**