

Reading Through the Gospel of Luke – Part III

We recommend you have a notebook and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Bring this notebook with you to Faith Group for discussions and prayer times. Select a quiet place and consistent time to read and pray. We also recommend you pray for a moment before you read God's word and ask for his illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read.

Abbreviations: TAI – *Think About It* PP – *Prayer Point*

Monday, January 3 – Luke 12:1-7

TAI: Why do you think Jesus calls hypocrisy “the leaven of the Pharisees”? What does Jesus want us to know about hypocrisy in our lives? Verses 4-7 say both “fear” and “fear not.” In what sense should we “fear” and in what sense should we “fear not”?

PP: Ask God for help in eliminating hypocrisy in your life. Confess to him your struggles in this area. Express to God your trust and love for him, with thanksgiving that “you are of more value than many sparrows” to God!

Tuesday, January 4 – Luke 12:8-12

TAI: Yes, this is a tough passage; however, it is no problem as long as we do this: trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, acknowledge our love and loyalty to him, and rely on the Spirit's help in times of persecution. *As for blaspheming the Holy Spirit, “The person who persists in hardening his heart against God, against the work of the Holy Spirit, and against the provision of Christ as Savior, is outside the reach of God's provision for forgiveness and salvation” (Schreiner and Grudem, ESV Study Bible notes, p. 1982). In other words, persistent unbelief and rejection of God's provision in Christ, until death, puts us outside of God's grace for salvation.*

PP: In prayer, express to God your faith in Christ and love for him. Ask him to help you trust him even in the most challenging life circumstances, fully relying on the Holy Spirit to help you.

Wednesday, January 5 – Luke 12:13-21

TAI: This passage powerfully speaks to us about our priorities in an age when personal wealth and possessions is highly honored. What would Jesus say about “Cribs” (or for us older folks, ‘Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous’)? What do you think it means to be ‘rich toward God’?

PP: Confess to God if you find yourself living for the things of this world rather than the next. Ask God to help you discern when greed and materialism is taking hold of you. Ask him to help you lay up treasures in heaven! Pray for the salvation of lost people in your sphere of influence.

Thursday, January 6 – Luke 12:22-34

TAI: Worry and anxiety are a huge industry in our culture. What would Jesus say to this? Where does Jesus tell you to put your priorities and emphasis? Do you enjoy giving to others? If “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” – where is your heart today?

PP: Pray for our Faith Baptist Benevolent/"Share" Team as they finalize policies and plans for our revitalized ministry to others in need (Dave Moe, group leader; Christa Olson team leader). Ask God to give you a heart for his kingdom and a spirit of generosity toward others. Ask God to help you overcome your worry and anxiety, if that is a problem for you.

Friday, January 7 – Luke 12:35-48

TAI: When is the Son of Man (Jesus) going to return? What are we to be doing until he returns? What is the main point Jesus is making with this parable of the wise and unwise managers of the master's household? How do you think this parable applies to us today?

PP: Ask God to incline your heart to daily readiness for Christ's second coming. Confess sin which easily misdirects you from such readiness. Praise God for his grace, that those who are truly the children of God do not need to fear condemnation when he returns.

Weekend, January 8-9 – Luke 12:49-59

TAI: What do you suppose is "the baptism" Jesus refers to in v. 50? In what way will Jesus bring division to households? Is your account with God settled and ready for the return of Jesus Christ?

PP: Pray that your household will be united in trusting Jesus Christ for salvation and not divided. Ask God to give you discernment about our times and readiness for his return. Thank God that through Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection, your account can be settled by faith!

Monday, January 10 – Luke 13:1-9

TAI: In verses 1-5, Jesus debunks a rather popular notion of the time. What is it? What point does Jesus make in response, something we all need to keep in mind? What do you think is the point Jesus is making with the parable of the barren fig tree?

PP: Ask God to help you maintain a repentant and softened heart toward him. Thank him that in Christ Jesus you do not need to fear the judgment that is to come. Pray for peace in Jerusalem, and for a turning to Christ among both Jews and Palestinians in Israel today.

Tuesday, January 11 – Luke 13:10-17

TAI: What does this narrative reveal about: 1) the power of Jesus; 2) the attitude of the religious leader in the synagogue; and 3) the response of 'the people' to Jesus. Does this kind of hypocrisy sometimes creep into our attitudes? How might that happen, and how should we respond?

PP: Rejoice in the healing power of Jesus, thanking God for ways Christ has brought healing to your life. Ask God to give you Christ-like love for others in need, and a spirit of joy when good things happen in the lives of other people.

Wednesday, January 12 – Luke 13:18-30

TAI: What do you think is the point of these comparisons concerning the kingdom of God? Are most of the people in your sphere of influence seeking to go in by the narrow door, or another way? What are these warnings of Jesus, and how do they apply to us today?

PP: Pray for those in your sphere of life who are seeking to enter God's kingdom by some other door. Pray for those who are ignoring God's kingdom altogether!

Thursday, January 13 – Luke 13:31 - 14:6

TAI: This section has much to say about the times of Jesus as it relates to the Jewish religious leadership and religious climate. What is Jesus saying when he refers to "as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not"? Why couldn't the leaders respond to the questions Jesus asked about the Sabbath?

PP: Ask God to protect your faith from legalism (the tendency to exchange God's grace toward us with rules and regulations in order to control others and ourselves). Ask God for grace to love others and live for his glory in every aspect of your life.

Friday, January 14 – Luke 14:7-24

TAI: These parables point to this truth: not everyone who fully expects to be with God in his kingdom will be there. And many who are considered "outcast" will be there! Jesus was confronting the arrogance of some Jews who assumed their ethnic heritage assured them a seat at the Great Final Banquet. Are there parallels to this today? How could our church do a better job of inviting needy people to join us on our kingdom journey?

PP: Pray for our church to be a welcoming, gospel-saturated place for people who need to know Jesus Christ. Pray about your personal witness to lost people. Ask God to keep us free from arrogance or pride in our walk, and to humbly love God and serve in his strength.

Weekend, January 15-16 – Luke 14:25-35

TAI: Wow! What is Jesus saying in these verses? What do you think he means? Is he using overstatement to make his point? What is the "cost" to be counted in being a disciple of Jesus? Have you as a believer kept your saltiness? What does that mean?

PP: "Lord, help us to be salty Christians! We have counted the cost and are fully devoted to following you, no matter what it requires!" Ask God to keep your life free from idols – even ones like family – and to take up your cross to follow Jesus.

Monday, January 17 – Luke 15:1-10

TAI: The first two verses will put the parables which follow in perspective. What is that perspective? What is the main point of the parables? How do these parables speak to us today about our lives and our church? Were you ever "the lost sheep" or "the lost coin"?

PP: Rejoice in a prayer of worship that God cares about lost people – including you! Thank him for providing such a magnificent salvation through his Son, Jesus Christ. Ask God to help us as a church be committed to reaching and loving lost people with the gospel.

Tuesday, January 18 – Luke 15:11-32 We'll spend 4 days on this crucial passage.

TAI: What mistakes did the younger brother make in this story? What insight helped this son come to his senses? Was he right about how he would be received if he returned home? Is there a parallel here for the kind of mistakes we often make in our lives?

PP: Ask God to help you live your life with wisdom that comes from him. Ask him to help you make wise choices. Express thanks that though you have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, he has loved you and given you grace to believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

Wednesday, January 19 – Luke 15:11-32 Yes, read it again!

TAI: What did the younger son say when he returned to his father's home? How did the father respond? What words would you use to describe this father's reception of his 'prodigal' son? How do these words parallel God's loving reception of you as his child through the cross?

PP: Rejoice in prayer that God has loved you with such remarkable, generous love. Acknowledge that apart from his great grace, you would be lost because of your sin. Pray that our church would receive lost, broken people with this kind of compassion and love.

Thursday, January 20 – Luke 15:11-31 Yes, it's worth reading several times!

TAI: How does the older brother feel about his father's generous love? Who is Jesus addressing with this story of the older brother? (Note: Jesus has made the point again and again that there is rejoicing in heaven when sinners repent, while this older brother refuses to rejoice!) What words would you use to describe the older brother's response to gracious love? How should we respond to the generous, gracious love of God to sinful, broken people?

PP: "O God, protect us from legalistic, narrow thinking about your grace and love to others! Forgive us for being proud, self-righteous people at times. May we be generously kind to needy people – our neighbors, co-workers, and hurting people in Sioux Falls and beyond."

Friday, January 21 – Luke 15:11-32 Why not read it one more time?

TAI: What does the father mean, "your brother was dead, and is alive"? Can you think of a time in your life when you were in the younger brother's shoes? The older brother's? When in your life did you truly understand the extravagant, generous love of God for you?

PP: Thank God that by his grace you, who were once spiritually dead in your trespasses and sins, are now alive together with Christ! Pray for our church to be fruitful in reaching the lost, and humble in doing so. Pray for the Evangelism Team in our Running Ministry Group to be wise in helping us be more effective in sharing the gospel, and for all taking the current Christianity Explained class during the J-term of Faith University.

Weekend, January 22-23 – Luke 16:1-13

TAI: This is a difficult parable to interpret. What do you think is the main point Jesus was making with this story of the manager? How are we to invest our lives, according to these verses? Give some examples of ways that people “serve money.” What does the Apostle Paul say about the love of money (I Tim. 6:10)?

PP: Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit, with wisdom to be faithful to Christ in the investing of your life. Ask God to help you keep your life free from trying to serve money.

Monday, January 24 – Luke 16:14-18

TAI: Another very challenging passage, particularly v. 16. But let’s focus on the simple statement, “God knows your hearts.” What is the implication of that, in this context? What is the implication of that in your life currently? Jesus honored the lifetime commitment of marriage, which stood out in his day and also stands out in ours. Is that your personal commitment?

PP: Honestly confess any sin which you have been harboring in your life, since “God knows your heart.” Ask God to help you take very seriously the truth of his word, including the teaching of Jesus about the lifetime commitment of marriage.

Tuesday, January 25 – Luke 16:19-31 We’ll devote two days to this crucial passage.

TAI: How does this passage relate to the past few days of readings from Dr. Luke? Which of the recent Luke readings is called to mind when you consider that the rich man is suffering upon his death and Lazarus is in glory? “Between us and you a great chasm has been fixed...” is the foundation for what key doctrine of Scripture?

PP: “Great God of grace, thank you for offering so great a salvation to us, not based on wealth or human achievement but rather for all who believe – including a poor, suffering man like Lazarus. Help me to take seriously the reality of eternal hell, and to boldly tell others that salvation is of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Wednesday, January 26 – Luke 16:19-31 Please read this passage again.

TAI: What grand event is being foreshadowed at the end of this passage? Did time prove Jesus correct, that even resurrection would not convince those who had already rejected the teaching of Moses and the Prophets? According to this passage, what can we expect hell to be like?

PP: Pray for the spread of the gospel to all the people groups on earth. Pray for missionaries taking the gospel to the nations which our church supports. Pray for a sensitive heart to care about lost people who apart from Christ will spend eternity in hell.

Thursday, January 27 – Luke 17:1-10

TAI: Today there are many people who for love of money (in the interest of profit) tempt people to all kinds of sin. What is their destiny? How forgiving should we be to those who repent? Do

we have a responsibility to rebuke those who are living in sin? What point is Jesus making about the mustard seed and our faith? What does God owe us (the point of vv. 7-10)?

PP: Ask God to give you boldness to rebuke a brother or sister who is living in persistent sin. Ask God to give you a forgiving heart toward those who repent. “Lord, give us bold, courageous faith. We are unworthy servants, but you are worthy, and you are able to do great things!”

Friday, January 28 – Luke 17:11-19

TAI: Why do you think we human beings are often guilty of not being thankful to God? Do you worship God wholeheartedly the way this one man who was healed wholeheartedly praised and thanked Jesus? Why does Dr. Luke record that this thankful man was a Samaritan?

PP: Take a moment before you pray to list at least 12 reasons for you to be thankful to God. Then pray a prayer of thanksgiving to God for his great, generous grace in your life. Ask God to help you live as a humble, thankful child of God, who worships him wholeheartedly.

Weekend, January 29-30 – Luke 17:20-31

TAI: The Pharisees were searching for the kingdom in the wrong place. They were looking for it *externally*, from above, with grand cosmic signs, while denying the reality that it had *already appeared* – in the person of Jesus Christ. What does Jesus say life will be like before his return? How are we to live until the time of his second coming?

PP: “Father God, help me to live a life of faithfulness to you. Help me not to be preoccupied with when you are coming, but rather to live boldly by faith because you are coming.” Ask God to give us boldness in living for Jesus Christ as a church family, especially boldness with the gospel.

Monday, January 31 – Luke 18:1-8

TAI: Dr. Luke gives us the main point of the parable in verse 1. What is it? What surprised the judge with regard to this widow? Are we to think that God is like this corrupt judge? Who are we to admire and emulate in this parable? Are you the kind of Christian who cries out to God in prayer “day and night”? In the final verse, we learn that (quoting Dana Olson) “the key to persistence in prayer is _____.”

PP: Ask God to help us be a church which is persistent in prayer. Ask God to give you faith to trust him so completely that you continue to pray no matter what comes your way. “Lord, help me always pray and not lose heart.”