

A Study in Luke

Week Eleven

Luke 6:43-7:23

Day One

43 "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. 45 The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

v. 43 – It is frustrating to expect Christian fruit from a non-Christian. What can you expect from a bad tree? Yet I hear people all the time complaining about non-Christian behavior from an unbeliever. A bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

At the same time, a good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit. If you are walking in obedience, yielding to the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit will empower you to bear fruit. What kind of fruit? Well, Paul wrote:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:22-25).

You cannot expect the fruit of the Spirit from someone who doesn't have the Spirit in his or her life. But you can expect them from someone who does. A Spirit-filled person may stumble and fall, but will develop these fruit over time if he or she yields to the Spirit's work.

v. 44 – If a person does not yield to the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, they will bear bad fruit and they will be known as a bad tree. This doesn't necessarily mean they aren't saved, but rather they haven't allowed God to do a work in their life that would enable them to be conformed to the image of Christ. How do you know if you fit this category? If you are asking this question or if this is a concern to you, relax! The very fact that you are thinking about whether there is fruit in your life is an indication that there is. If you are concerned that you are falling short, relax. That is proof that you are sensitive to God and that He is working on your will. Once again we look at something that Paul wrote:

For God is at work within you, helping you want to obey him, and then helping you do what he wants (Philippians 2:13 The Living Bible).

God gives you the will to serve Him and then helps you do what you want to do for Him.

v. 45 – An indication of what is in a man is what comes out of a man. How often do you sin with your mouth? The problem isn't your mouth, but your heart. The answer isn't to put tape over your mouth, but to put the Spirit to work in your heart.

Day Two

46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say? 47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. 48 He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete."

v. 46 – Talk is cheap when it comes to following Jesus. It is not enough to pay God homage and acknowledge His existence. The objective is to do what He commands.

"If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15-16).

"You are my friends if you do what I command" (John 15:14).

Is there anything that Jesus has told you to do that you aren't doing? What are you prepared to do about that today?

v. 47 – Jesus was an excellent teacher. Don't ever underestimate the spiritual power resident in teaching. Teaching is one of what's referred to as the five-fold ministry (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher) that will equip the saints for the work of service (see Ephesians 4:11). Here He gave an analogy to help the people understand obedience. If your heart is to understand the will of God, God will help you understand it because it is in His heart to teach His children.

vs. 48&49 – Jesus borrowed an example from the building industry. If you want a building to survive bad weather, you must dig a deep foundation that will enable the building to rest on solid ground. That is what it is like to obey God's commands. You are building your life on something solid and firm. If you choose not to obey God's commands, then you are building on something that will give way in stormy times.

I always think of this passage when some area in California encounters severe rains that cause mudslides. Often there are homes that are swept away with these slides. Most often these are beautiful homes, but they weren't secure enough to withstand the storm. Storms will come in your life—financial, relational, business and family. When they come, have you based your life on something that is solid? Have you built in obedience to God's word? If not, then what you think you have built may be swept away.

Maybe it's time to check your foundation today? Do you need to obey in any area? Are you behind on your giving? Have your priorities out of order where family is concerned? Cutting corners in your business at the expense of your integrity? If any of that is happening, then start digging deeper! Find the bedrock of God's commands and walk in obedience. It may not be easy, but it is definitely safer in the long run.

Day Three

7:1 When Jesus had finished saying all this in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion's servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, "This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue." 6a So Jesus went with them.

v. 1 – Jesus had just delivered a message to a crowd and returned to his adopted home village. I have been to Capernaum. It is a lovely area on the Sea of Galilee in northern Israel. I can see why Jesus chose this area as opposed to Jerusalem, which was much busier and hectic. It seems like the Galileans adopted Jesus as their own and took some measure of community pride in their famous rabbi. Most of Jesus most significant ministry took place in this area.

Do you have a sense of being rooted in an area? Is there certain scenery or conditions such as the beach or mountains that energize you and your ministry? Accept that as part of who you are and take every opportunity you have to connect with what releases your effectiveness or creativity.

v. 2 – The Roman army had a presence in northern Israel at this time of Roman occupation. It would appear that this centurion was stationed here. Jews had relations with friendly Gentiles, but it had to be on their terms. Gentiles could attend the synagogue and those who believed in the truth and simplicity of there being one God usually did. They could not enter into the life of the community fully unless they were circumcised and agreed to live a kosher lifestyle. But they were free to sit on the back rows and enjoy the proceedings. Those Gentiles are the ones that Paul so effectively reached when he first visited a synagogue in any area to which the Holy Spirit directed him.

Do you have any “Gentile” friends or relationships with whom you can share the gospel? If not, why not?

v. 3 – This centurion was a kind man, having concern for his servant. He also had a relationship with the Jewish leaders and asked them to intercede on his behalf with Jesus. There are many people who have heard of Jesus and want us to approach Him on their behalf. We should do that, but we should also make every effort to help them meet Him for themselves.

v. 4&5 – These leaders did intercede on the centurion’s behalf and they did so fervently. On behalf of whom are you interceding fervently? Why not make a list today of three people who are on your heart and commit to pray for them daily for the next seven days.

The Jews felt this man was worthy because of his love for Israel. He had shown his love by building the synagogue for the Jews. There is power in generosity. Consider these two examples:

Cornelius stared at him in fear. "What is it, Lord?" he asked. The angel answered, "Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God" (Acts 10:4).

The angel visited Cornelius because he had prayed and he had given to the poor. His giving had attracted God’s attention, so the Lord decided to send Peter to Cornelius to preach the gospel. Don’t minimize the importance of giving. Are you current with all your giving commitments? If not, write some checks and drop off some cash today. God is watching and your gifts ascend to Him as a memorial.

This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift! (2 Corinthians 9:12-15).

Some of your giving should go to meet and alleviate practical needs. When you do so, people will praise God for your gifts. So your generosity can generate worship. But then Paul wrote that people will thank God for you in their prayers, even if they don’t know who you are. So meeting practical needs does three things: 1) Increases worship; 2) Stimulates prayer; and 3) Alleviates suffering.

Are you motivated to give today? Who has a need that you can help meet?

v. 6 – The leaders made their case and Jesus went with them. This shows the power of intercessory prayer. They weren’t twisting Jesus’ arm to go, but He was more than willing to go when He saw their faith and love for this man and his servant. What a beautiful picture—we talk to Jesus and He goes with us as we reach out to others. Where do you want to take Jesus today?

Day Four

6bHe was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: "Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say

the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel." 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

v. 6b – I wonder how the centurion knew that Jesus was coming? Perhaps they sent messengers ahead to tell him. But this man for all his position and authority had great humility. He sent word to Jesus not to bother coming, but rather to just speak the word for His servant's healing. This man knew that Jesus wasn't just coming to pay a visit; Jesus was coming to heal. There was no question in his mind that his servant was going to recover because of Jesus' intervention. What faith!

v. 7 – The centurion didn't go personally to Jesus not because he was busy, but because he considered himself unworthy. What humility! He was a powerful man in the world system, but he saw his inadequacy before God.

Before his downfall a man's heart is proud, but humility comes before honor
(Proverbs 18:12).

Humility isn't a feeling, but a decision. Why choose to humble yourself today? Don't address when you're wronged; don't stand up for your rights. Put your trust in God to rectify the situation or simply endure the wrong, realizing that you have wronged others and now you can learn how it feels. That should make you more sensitive to the needs of those around you.

v. 8 – The centurion had authority because he was under authority. He fit into the overall scheme of the Roman army and that gave him authority. He also had those over him and he obeyed their commands. This is why He knew that Jesus' presence wasn't required, just His word. Your authority doesn't come from your giftedness and experience alone. It comes from being under Jesus' authority and the authority He has established in His church. Perhaps your lack of spiritual results speaks to your lack of being under authority and not a lack of knowledge or expertise.

v. 9 – Jesus was amazed. This is the only such reference to Jesus being surprised in any of the gospels. He didn't expect to find such faith in a Gentile. He was so impressed that He turned and commented to the crowd. I would like to "impress" Jesus with my faith, but all too often I get scared or feel like I'm just being presumptuous. Can you move Jesus with your faith today? How?

v. 10 – Jesus was "moved" by faith. How often He stated, "Be it done unto you according to your faith." If nothing happened, it wasn't due to Jesus lack of power or will; it pointed rather to a lack of faith. In response to the centurion's faith, Jesus healed the servant without being present. He just sent a word and the sickness was gone. I don't want to get strange here, but if Jesus could speak to a sickness like it was a person, then is

it? Does sickness have a life of its own that we can speak to and cut off? Or is this just another example of how God spoke the world into existence. Jesus spoke and the sickness left—case settled.

Day Five

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. 12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, "Don't cry." 14 Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. 16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said. "God has come to help his people." 17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

v. 11 – Jesus moved around quite a bit and a crowd usually went with Him. Where does Jesus want to take you as you follow Him?

v. 12 – This seemed like a chance meeting, but there is no such thing in the will of God. Jesus arrived at the precise moment that the funeral procession was leaving town. If this were a movie, it could have been called, "The Large Crowd with Jesus Meets the Large Crowd with The Widow." Jesus must have read the procession to understand that this woman was alone without her son. How aware are you of your surroundings? This will determine if you must be asked to do good works or if you see the opportunity and just do them.

v. 13 – Jesus was moved with compassion and told the woman not to cry before He raised her son. Jesus was so confident that He would raise her son from the dead that He began to order things according to the miracle that was about to happen. God's word will not return to Him without accomplishing what it set out to do. Do you have confidence in that? Can you act with the same confidence before it happens?

v. 14 – Jews bury their dead quickly, so this young man was probably dead only a day. But Lazarus was dead three days and the Lord raised him as well. One day, three days or a thousand years—it doesn't matter. We will all be raised from the dead at some point to live with Him forevermore. Jesus is Lord over death, if not now, then at the resurrection. Thank you, Jesus!

v. 15 – I can't even imagine this scene. What joy! What excitement and amazement! The funeral procession turned into a celebration! That is how it can be with the Lord. He can turn our mourning into dancing and our ashes into beauty. What situation are you in now that seems hopelessly dead and irreversible? If God touches it, it can still live. Can you believe that? This widow didn't even ask Jesus to do what He did. I had a pastor say one time that if you believe God, He will do "it." If you don't believe God, He may still

do it, whatever the “it” represents. My faith can move God to action, but my faith isn’t the only thing that can move God, otherwise my faith could somehow control God.

v. 16 – Isn’t it amazing that the people knew what was going on, but their leaders were trying to kill Jesus. Why do you think that leaders automatically know more than you? Why do you put down your revelation in comparison to that of someone who is a leader? I have often said that just because people are spiritual doesn’t mean they’re idiots. But sometimes leaders treat them that way. The people knew that God was helping Israel; the leaders felt that God was threatening the security of their position.

v. 17 - Word of mouth is a powerful communication medium. When something spiritual is happening, you seldom have to manufacture a press release. People will spread the word like a virus. Don’t ever worry about promoting God or His causes. God can take care of His own message and spread it far and wide without the help of media or technology.

Day Six

18 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" 20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"

vs. 18-20 – Jesus had everyone talking. Even John’s disciples brought a report to their teacher about what Jesus was doing. But the report seemed to confuse John the Baptist. It seems that Jesus’ ministry wasn’t quite what he expected. Remember, John is the one who declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God (see John 1:29). But now he questioned whether Jesus was really the One, the Messiah, the Anointed One. What was John expecting?

It is always good not to have too many expectations about who God is and what He will do. He always exceeds our expectations and even surprises us. Jesus did not fit any of the models that people had for the Messiah, not even John’s. There is no more confounded person than someone who thinks they understand God only to find out that He is incomprehensible.

Do you have God in a box in any way? Are you offended or confused by something He has done, or hasn’t done? It is best to release God from your expectations and let Him be God. It is in your best interests.

Day Seven

21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The

blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

v. 21 – What was John expecting? Would another come who would do greater things than Jesus? Had anyone ever done things as great as Jesus? I think that John was expecting a political figure who would ascend the literal throne of David. He did not expect a spiritual man such as Jesus.

v. 22 – Jesus honored John by interrupting what He was doing to answer John's questions. But Jesus didn't respond directly. The Father had to reveal to everyone who Jesus was. Jesus wouldn't do it for Himself. He told John what He was doing and let John draw His own conclusions. As stated in earlier studies, Jesus seldom did anything to clarify the confusion or misunderstanding around His life and ministry. You would do well not to spend time doing this either. People will believe what they want to believe and even miracles won't clarify their understanding.

I have found it rather fun to trust God for my reputation. Some people see my ministry and some don't. That's fine with me. I don't feel any need to defend or explain. How about you? If you've turned your reputation over to the Lord, are you distressed because He has taken it and done what you didn't expect?

v. 23 – There is a blessing for those who aren't offended by Jesus. And it almost seems like Jesus goes out of His way at times to cause offense. I am learning to trust Jesus in all things, whether I understand them or not. How about you? Decide today to trust Him and receive your blessing. Be steadfast and trust in God's love.