

A Study of Luke's Gospel
Week Twenty-Six
Luke 18:21-19:10

Day One

21 "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

v. 21 – This man had kept the commandments that Jesus had listed all his life. The question is: Was he deceived or did he indeed keep those commandments? Had he ever lied? Stolen? My thinking here is that he had indeed kept the commandments perfectly, at least what we know to be the Ten Commandments. So I think he gave Jesus a truthful answer. But there was something bothering him. He didn't feel like he had done enough to gain eternal life and he was correct. That is why he came to Jesus. It isn't enough to be good; you must be renewed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

v. 22 – This man was invited to an exciting life of discipleship. Jesus was not endorsing poverty and lack of possessions in this case. This was a specific directive to this ruler. Jesus knew that his possessions owned him—he did not own his possessions. Jesus was telling this man that discipleship isn't something that can be fit into one's life, like exercise. Instead it required a total life commitment. Jesus can direct you to sell some or all of what you have, or to give it away. What would your response be if He did?

v. 23 – This man's response was sadness for he had a lot of stuff—he was wealthy. I was in Cuba once and was impressed by the commitment and lack of the believers there. I had a favorite shirt that I had obtained in Malaysia. We were all leaving our clothes behind for our brothers and sisters, but I struggled for days to give that shirt away. I didn't own that shirt; that shirt owned a piece of me. I finally left it there, determined that one shirt wasn't going to own me. Do you have anything that owns you instead of the other way around? What are you going to do about it?

v. 24 – Jesus looked at him and made a statement that it is hard for the rich to enter God's kingdom. He didn't say it was impossible, just difficult. When you are rich, you have to spend a lot of time and energy maintaining, protecting or increasing your wealth. That doesn't always leave a lot of room for God.

v. 25 – On my trips to Israel, I learned that a low doorway into a house was called the eye of the needle. This doorway was easy for a man to pass through, but impossible for

someone to ride through. In some ways, this was a means of security not to have a high doorway so that someone could not carry out your goods on horseback or with a camel. So this isn't referring to a camel passing through the eye of a sewing needle, but rather a camel passing through a low door.

v. 26 – The disciples were flabbergasted, because they thought that the rich had done something right, therefore they were closer to the kingdom of God. Jesus was telling them that the rich were actually farther away from the Kingdom. This shocked them into a question about who could actually be saved! Jesus will ruin your theology and your interpretations of how God operates, that's for sure.

v. 27 – Let's remember who first asked this question about being saved: It was a man who was hoping that he could do it with a minimum of effort while maintaining his lifestyle. No one, especially a rich person, could be saved doing that. But God could save such rich men if they would abandon their desire to be saved through their own efforts and do it through Jesus. The hardest case for salvation can be reached through God's power—it is possible for Him to do. So do you have any "tough cases" in your family or immediate associates? Don't give up—they can be saved through God's power, but never through their own (or your) efforts.

Day Two

28 Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life."

v. 28 – This was a statement of fact, so what Jesus had asked the rich young man to do wasn't so out of the ordinary. The disciples were already doing it! Discipleship cannot be a road of convenience, but one of obedience.

v. 29 – Yet look at the promise of Jesus. Look at what the rich young man missed when he sadly walked away in an effort to maintain his wealth. Jesus promised to replace what had been given up for His sake. I can attest to this fact. There was a time when my family and friends were not happy with my walk with Jesus. And, even though I was accepted to Harvard's Business School, I walked away from that opportunity to follow Jesus. But in both cases, God gave me close relationships and meaningful business and ministry opportunities to replace the ones I gave up.

You can never out-give God. I have often said that God has a big book and sharp pencil and He records everything you do for Him. He never forgets. One of my favorite images is the story found in Esther concerning her cousin Mordecai. Mordecai had helped foil a plot against the king. Then one night the king could not sleep:

That night the king could not sleep; so he ordered the book of the chronicles, the record of his reign, to be brought in and read to him. It was found recorded there

that Mordecai had exposed Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, who had conspired to assassinate King Xerxes. "What honor and recognition has Mordecai received for this?" the king asked. "Nothing has been done for him," his attendants answered (Esther 6:1-3).

"Go at once," the king commanded Haman. "Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended" (Esther 6:10).

It may seem like God has forgotten to reward you, but He hasn't. One day, probably when you least expect it, God will settle accounts with you and you will be blessed. And if that isn't enough, He will also reward you in the next age with eternal life. That's a good deal worthy of you investing your life in.

Day Three

31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32 He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. 33 On the third day he will rise again." 34 The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

v. 31 – Jesus told His closest disciples a secret that He didn't tell the crowds. He let them in on how He was going to die in Jerusalem. His death would be a fulfillment of Scripture according to the reports of the prophets. God's word will be fulfilled.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Don't look at circumstances, rather focus on God's word. Your senses can fool you, but God's word is sure and more reliable than anything you can see.

v. 32 – Jesus made a list of abuse that He was soon to encounter. Jesus knew how He would die and where, yet He continued to minister effectively and serve His purpose on earth. He gave Himself to the very people who would murder Him, leaving us an example of how to minister:

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and

detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:1-5).

v. 33 – The disciples had no framework that would enable them to understand what Jesus was saying. He had done nothing to deserve such treatment and they could not understand God’s larger plan in Jesus’ suffering. They were still focusing on an earthly kingdom, with Jesus as the head and them serving as His cabinet and advisers. So these words were beyond their comprehension. Plus Mark reported another reason why they didn’t understand:

But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it (Mark 9:32).

The disciples had freely asked Jesus to explain His difficult parables, but in this case, they did not ask Him anything. After all, if Jesus was going to die, what did that mean for them? So they made a strategic choice not to ask any questions and to move on, hoping that this would all “blow over.” Is there anything you are afraid to ask Jesus, for fear of what it may mean for you? Can the Lord tell you hard things—share His secrets with you—and you meditate on them and seek their meaning? Do you trust the Lord so that He can even reveal to you hard things you must go through?

I’m not sure why Jesus chose this point to reveal this to His disciples, but it was a privilege for them to be included in what God was thinking and His purposes. It is a similar privilege for you and me. Let’s endeavor to be trustworthy and close enough to Jesus so that He can share His heart. Then let’s be courageous enough to ask Him to clarify what He means, so that we can carry His secrets with real understanding.

Day Four

35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." 38 He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" 39 Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

v. 35 – I have been to Jericho, the city with the lowest elevation in the world. It is dusty and hot. This beggar didn’t have an easy job and of course there was no social infrastructure to help him with the necessities of life. How humiliating this must have been for him—he was reduced to sitting on a road every day and asking for money.

v. 36 – This man couldn’t see, but he could hear, and what he heard was out of the ordinary. There were seldom crowds passing by in Jericho unless something out of the ordinary was happening. The man used what he had—his hearing—and it brought him to an encounter with Jesus. Are you using all that you have at your disposal to come closer to Jesus, just like this man did? Not only did the man use his hearing, but he also used

his voice to inquire what was happening. Are you asking questions about what God is doing and where He is going? Are you humble in your blindness to use what you have to gain insight?

v. 37 – I wonder how the man knew who Jesus was? I suppose Jesus was a celebrity, even in Jericho. All the man had to hear was that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by and he knew that this was his opportunity. He could never have found his way to Jesus, but now Jesus was making His way toward the blind man. I love this story. The man did all that he could do—listen and ask—and then God did what the man could not do—find His way to where he was sitting and begging. Our God is a great and merciful God. He will meet you where you are in the condition that you are.

v. 38 – The man had a voice and he was determined to use it. He began to cry out, trying to get Jesus' attention over the noise of the crowd. How urgent is your prayer life? Are you praying polite prayers or are you trying to get the attention of the Master? If you see your need for God as critical, which it is, then you should be crying out with urgency and consistency. One of my favorite passages about persistence and urgency in prayer is found in Proverbs:

And **if** you call out for insight and **cry aloud** for understanding, and if you **look for it** as for silver and **search for it** as for hidden treasure, **then** you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:3-5, emphasis added).

You must seek God like you would hidden treasure. If you knew and had an absolute guarantee that there was treasure in your back yard, would you just dig one hole, not find it and give up? You would not! You would dig and dig, because you had a guarantee; you just had to find it. That is how seeking God is. You have a guarantee that you will find Him, but you may have to dig more than one hole, so to speak, to find Him. Are you willing to cry out and seek Him for your need?

v. 39 – Once again, as with the parents and their children, the ushers tried to keep the people away from Jesus instead of ushering them in. Here the parade organizers told the man to shut up. But to his credit, the man would not. In fact, he cried out all the more. I like that. You cannot listen to what others tell you about seeking God. You must go after Him with all your heart according to how it works for you. And notice what the man asked for—mercy! He came in humility, knowing that he wasn't worthy of seeking God. But he sought him anyway and cried out for mercy. This is a great story, from which we can learn much. Are you ready to be like the blind man today?

Day Five

40 Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 41 "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied. 42 Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you."

43 Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

v. 40 – Jesus now took control of the situation back from the “ushers” and parade organizers, ordering the man to be brought to Him. I think Jesus wants to do the same thing today: direct His workers as to who He wants to be brought to Him. There are people on God’s heart who may not be on our hearts. Consider how one of the most famous men in church history came to the Lord:

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength (Acts 9:10-19).

It is interesting to me that Saul was also blind and Ananias’ touch restored his sight. There are people who are spiritually blind and the Church and its members must find them and lay hands on them or else they will remain in their spiritual bondage. Is there anyone the Lord is directing you to seek out and touch today for Him? Anyone who is spiritually blind that needs your touch or else they will remain in their blindness?

v. 41 – I think this is an interesting question to ask. I would assume that the man wanted to see, but Jesus did not take this for granted. I have met some people who don’t want to ask for healing for whatever reason. They want strength to carry on. Some even get used to their infirmity and it becomes part of them, becoming a means of controlling others. So Jesus wanted the man to state specifically what he wanted. When I have a prayer line, I often ask, “What would you want Jesus to do for you?” Some people stumble and hesitate as they respond.

v. 42 – When the man got specific with Jesus, Jesus got specific with him and healed him on the spot! It doesn’t even appear like Jesus touched him at all. He just spoke the word and the man was healed. I am always intrigued by what Jesus often said: “Your faith has healed you.” He never said, “I healed you.” He acknowledged the role that the person had in their own healing.

Now this leads us to the question of why some are healed and others are not. I have heard many answers from people who claimed to know. I for one don't know. I believe God can heal, I have seen God heal, but I don't think everyone is healed. If nothing else, everyone will die of something. Plus God numbers our days. As you can tell, I am not an expert on healing, nor have I given it much time to study. But I am convinced of this: God does heal and I pray regularly for people to be healed. Sometimes they are and more often they are not. I am not ready to declare that when they are not, it is because they don't have faith.

v. 43 – The man was healed immediately! What a scene that must have been. He went on following Jesus and praising God, which is more than the 10 lepers whom Jesus healed ever did. This man followed God closely because of what God had done for Him. Are you doing the same? Or do you take your blessings for granted? I am writing this while in Hawaii. I am thanking God I am here and for all the doors He has opened for me. His goodness makes me want to follow Him all the more. An attitude of gratitude is a good thing to have when you follow Jesus, for He always does amazing things for us.

Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness; I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him" (Lamentations 3:22-24).

Day Six

19:1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

v. 1 – This is a great story, but then again I suppose that all the stories that involved Jesus are great. Jesus healed the blind man as He approached Jericho; now He was in Jericho, but only seemed to be passing through on His way to another destination. Don't ever be fooled by this; Jesus always has time to stop and touch you, even if He seems "distracted."

v. 2 – Zacchaeus was a hated tax collector. We have already discussed how the Jews despised these fellow Jews who collected taxes for Rome. Obviously business was good for Zacchaeus, for he was rich. He was also a supervisor, so he got a percentage of what all his staff collected. Perhaps he was the first multi-level sales marketing man (just kidding).

vs. 3&4 – This man wanted to see Jesus, but he was short. I have a question for you: if this man had been six inches taller, would he have met Jesus? Think of it. He got to the parade late to see Jesus and of course, no one would let him in front of them to see since they hated him so much. So he had no choice to do what he did—run ahead and climb

up a sycamore tree to get a better view. From there, Jesus spotted him and called him down.

Why is this important? I think because many people don't like who they are or some aspect of their physical makeup. We don't like our nose, ears, hair, hair color, legs, or skin color. Yet God made us just the way we are. I always think of a certain passage when I consider Zacchaeus, the short tax collector:

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:13-16).

How much time do you spend fretting over some physical characteristic over which you have no control? It is an exercise in futility. Ask God to help you accept yourself as you are. If you're good enough for God, shouldn't you be good enough for yourself?

Day Seven

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

v. 5 – I have another question for you. How did Jesus know Zacchaeus' name? Did He have a word of knowledge, where the Spirit whispered it to Him? Or had they met before? Perhaps Zacchaeus had been away on business and encountered Jesus, maybe engaging Him in conversation? Of course there is no way for us to know, but it is interesting to me that Jesus called him by name. Jesus knows your name, too.

v. 6 – Of all the people in Jericho, the crowd would have thought Zacchaeus the least likely to have some time with Jesus. Maybe that is why Jesus chose him. When Jesus called him, Zacchaeus came hustling down from his perch in the tree. There was no hesitancy on his part. While the Jews had ostracized him and hated him, he did not let that affect how he would respond to God. When God called, he went running.

And that is how it should be. When we sin, we should not run away from God, but rather to God.

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v. 7 – When you do God’s will, some people will “mutter.” Are people muttering about you right now? Why not? Remember what Jesus said:

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets (Luke 6:26).

v. 8 – Wow! Zacchaeus had an encounter with God and he was willing to prove it. He made restitution for his sins and proved that his repentance was real. I have seen many people weep, sorry for what they have done. But few actually get to the point where they go back and try to undo what they have done. I am sure those who knew Zacchaeus were shocked at this display of generosity and godly sorrow for his sins.

vs. 9&10 – Jesus reached down into this man’s heart and extracted the real Zacchaeus, the son of Abraham who had gone astray into shady business deals and greed. This was Jesus stated purpose: to seek and save the lost. Jesus never had to go looking for the lost; they came looking for Him. That is the power of your purpose. God wants you to fulfill it more than you do and will send the situations your way, without you having to go looking.

I am 54 years of age as I write and I have never looked for a job and never been unemployed a day in my life. My purpose is to create order out of chaos. The chaos always comes looking for me; I never have to go looking for it.

What is your purpose? If you don’t know, are you willing to find out? You can go to my website, <http://www.purposequest.com> and take advantage of the resources there that will help you find your purpose. If I can help you, please write and let me know.