

Reading Together
New Testament Daily Bible Reading
August 1 - 7

Monday, August 1 – Luke 9: 1 - 17

Much of this section of Luke's Gospel is about Jesus bringing the power of the Kingdom of Heaven to the world he was living in. We have already seen Jesus raise Jairus' daughter from the dead, heal a woman with bleeding problems that had made her unclean for 12 years, and heal a demon-possessed man. Now Jesus takes the power of the Kingdom of Heaven and sends out his 12 disciples with that Kingdom power, so that they too can heal the sick and cast out demons. By sending out the 12 with this power Jesus is extending the Kingdom of Heaven further out into the world around him, and people are beginning to take notice. Even King Herod wonders who Jesus is and wants to meet him.

As a result of all of this publicity large crowds start to gather around Jesus to see him work and hear him teach. Even when Jesus tries to withdraw for a time from the public eye, by going into the wilderness, the crowds still find him. This gives Jesus yet another opportunity to display his awesome power. As a crowd of over 5000 gathers and the day grows late, the disciples want Jesus to send them away so they can find food and lodging, but instead Jesus takes 5 loaves of bread and two small fish and blesses them and has his disciples distribute them to the crowd so that not only is all of the crowd fed, but they are satisfied, and there are even leftovers (verse 17). One of the things that we should notice as we read this account is how Jesus intentionally drew his disciples into the problem and then made them part of the solution. Jesus did this so that his power could be displayed through their lives, and he wants to do the same thing in ours.

Tuesday, August 2 – Luke 9: 18 – 36

The disciples have now seen enough of Jesus and his power for Jesus to ask them the question that he asks them in verse 20, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answers and says that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah) of God. This is a very pivotal moment for the disciples. It marks the first time that they seemingly truly understand that Jesus is more than a great teacher or a great man. Peter, speaking for all of the disciples, recognizes Jesus as the Messiah that the Old Testament prophets pointed to. But, as Luke's Gospel unfolds, we will see that while they recognized Jesus as the Messiah, they didn't exactly know what that meant. Like many of the Jews the disciples still thought of the Messiah in political terms as being the great king who would bring Israel

back to worldwide prominence. This is the Messiah that many Jews are still waiting for even today. The disciples would learn in time that the Messiah wasn't about a king who would rule Israel, but a king who defeated Satan, sin and death through his own death on the cross.

In fact, in verses 21-23, Jesus tells them this is what was going to happen to him, and that they too must follow his example of sacrificial living if they want to be a true follower. Verse 27 has caused some controversy, because it seems as if Jesus was saying that the Kingdom of God would come in his disciple's lifetime. In a sense it did, because when Jesus died and rose again the Kingdom of God was established and has been growing ever since. That is a possible explanation for what Jesus meant in verse 27, but more likely Jesus was referring to what was about to happen in verses 28-36 when Peter, John and James saw Jesus in his glory with Moses and Elijah, and the voice of God spoke and said, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him."

Wednesday, August 3 – Luke 9: 37 – 62

As we saw in yesterday's reading not all of the disciples went up on the mountaintop with Jesus, only Peter, James and John were there. The other disciples were left behind to continue the work they had been given to do. In fact, as Jesus and the three disciples come down from the mountain they are met by a man who is part of a large crowd of people. The man has a son who is demon possessed and Jesus' other disciples have been unable to drive the demon from him. In Mark 9, which is a parallel to this account, Jesus' disciples ask why they were unable to drive it out and Jesus tells them that some evil spirits are more powerful than others, and the only way they can be dealt with is with great faith through prayer and fasting. It is clear that a lack of faith was what kept these disciples from being able to drive this demon out.

The meeting on the mountain and the other disciple's inability to drive out the demon is probably what sets up the controversies that follow in verses 46-56. The first controversy centers around which of the disciples is the greatest, and Jesus tells them that the way to greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven is to humble yourself like a child. Next the disciples claim that there is a man who is driving out demons in Jesus' name who was not one of the 12. The disciples wanted to stop him, because they wanted to be the center of attention. By his answer, Jesus lets them know that he is at work in the lives of more people than just the 12. Jesus' power isn't just for the few who are closest to him, it is for all who choose to believe and follow him. Finally, when Jesus isn't welcomed in a Samaritan town (the Samaritans hated the Jews) James and John want to call fire down from heaven to destroy the town. But Jesus will have none of that. Now was not the time for judgment, now

was the time to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the final verses of this chapter there are many that want to follow Jesus half-heartedly, but Jesus tells each them that half-hearted won't get it done—to be a follower Jesus demands whole hearted devotion.

Thursday, August 4 – Luke 10: 1 – 24

Luke is the only Gospel writer who records this account of Jesus sending out 70 (or 72) to go ahead of Jesus and the 12 disciples to prepare the towns along the way for Jesus to come and visit them. They are ambassadors going ahead to prepare the way for Jesus, and the mission they are on is an urgent one; there are not enough workers to bring the harvest of lost souls into the kingdom. So Jesus sends this group of 70 and tells them that he is sending them out as lambs among the wolves. How would you like to be sent as a lamb among the wolves? This is a dangerous mission, and they are not to even make great preparations to go on this mission. They are not to move from house to house looking for the best accommodations, they are not to waste time on unnecessary greetings; if a town doesn't welcome them they aren't to waste any time there. They are to be about the mission of preparing those who are willing to hear the message of the Kingdom. In verses 13-16 Jesus predicts that there will be many who reject them, and by rejecting them, they will be rejecting Jesus and ultimately rejecting God. In the end though (verse 18) Satan and his kingdom will fall like lightning (Revelation 12). Luke ends this section of his gospel account by recording Jesus praising God that his disciples have been able to witness what prophets and kings longed to see (Abraham, Moses, David and all the prophets of the Old Testament).

Friday, August 05 – Luke 10: 25 – 37

People love this parable that Jesus taught because it appeals to the very best in our human nature—being willing to help someone in need. But to truly understand this parable we must understand the characters that Jesus uses to make his point about who our neighbor is. The first townspeople who pass by the injured man are a priest (a religious leader of the Jews), and a Levite (who would have assisted the priest in his duties). Neither of these men stop to help the injured stranger, even though the injured man was a fellow countrymen. In their minds they probably had good reasons not to be bothered helping the man. To stop and help him would have inconvenienced them and maybe made them late for pressing religious duties. Also if the man were dead or bleeding, to touch him would have made both of these men ceremonially unclean, and therefore unable to serve and carry out their functions in the temple. Instead, Jesus uses a Samaritan to be the hero

of this story. Samaritans had Jewish blood in them, but they had intermarried with other races and were therefore despised by the Jews. In this parable Jesus uses the worst of enemies to illustrate what it means to show love to your neighbor.

Saturday, August 06 – Luke 10: 38 – 42

Today's reading is very brief, but it very clearly illustrates the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus. Even though Martha was busy trying to serve Jesus, she wasn't taking time to be with Jesus. You can almost picture Mary sitting at Jesus' feet listening and soaking up every word he said, because she valued what was most important—knowing Jesus. Serving Christ is important, but trying to serve Christ without knowing Christ will never work—it is getting the cart before the horse.

Sunday, August 07 – Luke 11: 1 – 28

Today's reading deals with the subject of prayer. Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer is only slightly different from Matthew's, and this difference can be attributed to the fact that Jesus taught on the subject of prayer more than once and what he said on different occasions may have differed slightly. It also may be attributable to the way people remembered what Jesus said. Remember they weren't sitting there taking shorthand notes; they were listening and committing to memory what Jesus said. The framework of the prayer in Luke's Gospel and Matthew's Gospel is identical. It starts with praising God (hallowed be thy name), and petition for the Kingdom of God to come. Then a request for supply of daily needs (daily bread), which is followed by a request for forgiveness of sin and for strength to walk away from temptations. We often focus on the framework of the prayer that Jesus taught and forget some of the other things that Jesus said on the subject of prayer. Look at verses 5-13. In these verses Jesus emphasizes the importance of persistent and bold prayer to a Father who loves us and desires to give us good things.

Next, Luke records another account of Jesus casting out an evil spirit. As Jesus does this, the Pharisees accuse Jesus of using the power of Satan to cast the demons out, but Jesus points out that It is not the power of Satan that works against Satan's demons, but the power of God. The fact that Jesus is driving out evil spirits is proof that the Kingdom of God has come. Pay close attention to verses 21-22. In these verses Jesus uses a mini-parable to explain what it means that the Kingdom of God has come. Satan is the fully armed strong man, and Jesus is the man who is coming into Satan's house, binding him and taking what was Satan's and making it part of the Kingdom of God.