

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
August 15-21

Monday, August 15 – Luke 16: 1 – 15

This is one of the hardest parables to try to understand, because in this parable it seems as if Jesus is exhorting his listeners to be dishonest. But rest assured that is not the case. By using an illustration that all too many people in his crowd could understand, Jesus shows how the world knows how to use money to their advantage, and his point is that Christians also ought to know how to use worldly goods for their advantage. The difference is that Christians should be using their worldly goods through acts of generosity to help others (verse 9). Think about what lies behind this parable. God has entrusted us with wealth, both material and spiritual. None of it is really ours, we are just stewards. What does God want us to do with this wealth? Use it. Use it to win friends and influence people for the sake of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The way we accumulate riches in heaven is by using what God has entrusted to us.

In verses 11 – 12 Jesus goes on to make the point if we can't handle worldly wealth in a trustworthy manner, we shouldn't expect God to trust us with spiritual blessings. Finally, Jesus makes the point that if we serve our worldly wealth we will not be able to serve God, because the two stand in opposition to each other. Therefore, we must learn to use our worldly wealth to serve our ultimate master, God. This was a hard lesson for the Pharisees who seemed to care more about worldly wealth than God. In verse 15, Jesus points out that all their "supposed righteousness" is self-righteousness and is detestable in God's sight. How often as humans do we value the wrong things?

Tuesday, August 16 – Luke 16: 16 – 31

In verses 16 – 18, Jesus stresses the continuity between the Old (the Law and the Prophets) and New Testaments (Jesus' preaching of the Kingdom of God). Even though people are flocking to hear Jesus and be part of the Kingdom, the Law still remains. Jesus illustrates this with his teaching on divorce in verse 18. The Pharisees had created many loopholes in the Law that allowed them to freely divorce their wives for any reason at all. Jesus makes it clear that the man-made loopholes mean nothing in God's eyes.

Then Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (not the same Lazarus Jesus raised from the dead in John 11). With this parable Jesus ties together much of his previous teachings. Notice that the man is rich, but he ends up in Hell, because he was so busy being rich, keeping his worldly wealth for himself, that he had no concern for anyone or anything

but himself. The poor man, Lazarus, though of no value in the eyes of the world, ends up by Abrahams' side, because he valued what matters most.

On a side note, notice what Jesus teaches us about hell through this parable. Hell is a place of extreme torment and anguish, a place no one can leave once they are there, a place no one can go to unless that is their eternal destiny.

Finally, at the end of this parable, Jesus makes the point that the Law and the Prophets should be enough to convince anyone of the truth concerning eternity. And if that is not convincing, then they will even ignore a man who has been raised from the dead.

Wednesday, August 17 – Luke 17:1 – 19

In these verses Jesus emphasizes several key points that should make us stop and think carefully about our lives. First, Jesus makes it clear that while we will all sin, it is important that we not lead others into sin. There appears to be special judgment reserved for those who lead others astray (verses 1-3). Second, Jesus emphasizes the importance of forgiveness, even if it means forgiving somebody for the same thing over and over again (verses 3-4), after all isn't that what God does for us? Third, Jesus teaches us the power of faith (verse 5-6). It doesn't take much faith to see God move in mighty ways. Fourth, in the brief parable that Jesus tells in verses 7-10, Jesus points out how even when we do everything we are supposed to do, we are still unworthy servants and undeserving of the special place we are receiving in the Kingdom. Finally, as Jesus heals ten men of their leprosy, we see only one of them (a Samaritan) come and offer thanks for the miracle that was done in his life. As you read this stop and think of the cure for sin that Jesus' death on the cross has brought into your life. How often do you say thank you for your spiritual healing?

Thursday, August 18 – Luke 17: 20 – 37

The central thought of these verses is that the end will come and Jesus will return at the least expected time, like when the flood came in Noah's day or the destruction came to Sodom and Gomorrah during Lot's day. Therefore it is important to be ready for the return of Christ. There will be no time for change or second chances when Jesus comes again. Notice what Jesus says at the beginning of this passage in verse 21. Depending on how the Greek is translated Jesus either could have said, "The Kingdom of God is within you," or "the Kingdom of God is among you." So Jesus was either saying that you can't see the Kingdom of God because it is a spiritual thing that happens inside of a person, or Jesus was saying the Kingdom was already there right in front of them and they were missing it. Either

translation is acceptable, and both are true statements. The Kingdom has come through Christ and is growing inside each of his followers.

Friday, August 19 – Luke 18: 1 – 14

These verses deal with the subject of prayer. In verses 1 – 8, Jesus tells a parable about an unjust and ungodly judge and a widow who was being denied justice. In Jesus' day, widows had no one to speak for them and were often the victims of injustice. But this widow won't take no for an answer. Even though the unjust judge denies her pleas, she keeps pleading. Eventually even though the judge cares nothing about the widow or justice, he gives in to her pleas just so he doesn't have to listen to her anymore. Jesus' point is if that is how an unjust judge would behave, how much more will a just and loving God be willing to listen to the pleas of those he loves. Notice all of this is done in the context of justice, not health, wealth and prosperity, so Jesus' point is to keep praying and living in faith, because the day will come when justice is finally given and all things are made right.

In verses 9 -14, Jesus tells a second parable about prayer regarding having the proper attitude of humility when we pray. In this parable the Pharisee is all puffed up with his righteousness, and the tax collector is broken by his sinfulness. To everyone's surprise, Jesus tells us that it was the tax collector who went home right with God, not the self -righteous Pharisee. God is looking for those who are broken and humble in heart.

Saturday, August 20 – Luke 18: 15 – 30

In today's reading we see the kind of hearts Jesus says we must have in order to receive the Kingdom of God. In verses 15 – 17, Luke tells us that there were many parents bringing their children to have Jesus bless them. Jesus' disciples thought Jesus was too important to be bothered with this so they tried to shoo the children away. Jesus rebukes his disciples because these children represent the child-like trusting faith that each of us must have if we want to receive the Kingdom of God.

In verses 18 – 30 Luke records the story of a rich young ruler who came and wanted to be a follower of Jesus. Notice that this man had lived an exemplary life. If what he said about himself was true in verse 21, he was certainly a man of good reputation. However, our hearts can often deceive us. Remember the 1st commandment tells us we are to have no other gods before the true God. Based on the man's reaction in verse 23 to Jesus' command to sell all that he owned and give the money to the poor, what god might this man have put before the true God? Clearly he worshipped his money and his things. Those were the things he found his comfort in. As much as he wanted God and wanted to follow Jesus, he wanted his

stuff more. That is why Jesus said it is so hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God. Only God can work in a person's heart and humble their heart enough to choose God over their possessions (verse 27), that is why salvation has to be a work of God and not of man (Ephesians 2: 8-9).

Think about this. The people of Jesus' day, thought the rich man was all that and children were nothing. They thought if anybody had a path to heaven it was the rich man, who at least on the surface seemed to be a good man. In fact, they mistakenly assumed that the reason he was rich was because God had blessed him for being good. That's why they thought he had a sure path to heaven. But the children hadn't done a thing yet to deserve heaven. But Jesus said the Kingdom belonged to such as these (the children), not the rich man. Why? Because the rich man trusted his wealth, the children could only trust Jesus—they were absolutely dependent upon him.

Sunday, August 21 – Luke 18: 31 – 43

In verses 31 – 34 Jesus predicts his death, but Luke tells us that at this time his disciples didn't really understand what he was talking about. It is easy to see why this would be true. At this point it would be hard for the disciples to understand that Jesus would be treated in such a way and then, after dying, would rise again from the dead.

Next, Luke records the account of Jesus giving a blind man his sight. Notice in verse 41 that Jesus asks the man what he wants Jesus to do for him. The answer seems obvious, but the man may have been looking for a handout rather than a healing. His faith in Jesus to heal him provided the means for the healing to take place, but the power for the healing came from Jesus.