

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
August 22 - 28

Monday, August 22 – Luke 19: 1 – 27

In Luke 19 we find the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a tax collector, which meant he was universally hated by everyone (notice how unhappy everyone is that Jesus goes to his house in verse 7). Tax collectors worked for the Roman government and often collected more tax than they were supposed to. Clearly Zacchaeus was involved in this type of dishonesty based on the promise he makes to Jesus in verse 8. If you remember in the reading two days ago, Jesus said it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter heaven. Here, with Zacchaeus, we see God work in his heart to bring him to the point of repentance and faith. We can see what repentance looks like because Zacchaeus not only says he will stop sinning, but he also offers to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay 4 times the amount he cheated. Repentance is more than being sorry for your sin. Repentance is turning from your sin and turning to Jesus.

In verses 11 – 27 Jesus tells the parable of the 10 minas, which is similar to, but not exactly the same as, the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. This parable points to the fact that while Jesus' coming has brought the kingdom of God to earth, the Kingdom won't reach its fullness until Jesus, the king, returns. In this parable Jesus teaches us how he expects us to live as we wait for his return. We are to be busy and active using all that he has entrusted to us so that his kingdom can grow. If we fail to use what he has entrusted to us, we should expect for Jesus to take away what he has given us and give it to those who are willing to risk everything for him.

Tuesday, August 23 – Luke 19: 28 – 48

These verses begin the account of the last week of Jesus' life before he was crucified. The week began with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a colt (donkey) as the crowds cheered him. His entrance and welcome into the city was like a victorious king would have received. The crowds thought that Jesus was ready to defeat the Roman Empire and usher in a new period of Jewish world dominance. While the crowd's thinking was wrong, their welcome was appropriate, because as Jesus rode into town he was on his way to the cross where he would defeat the power of Satan, sin and death. The Pharisees are afraid of what might happen if the Romans find out that the crowd wants to make Jesus king so they tell Jesus to silence the cheering crowd. Stop and think about Jesus' reply that if the crowds were silent the stones would cry out on his behalf. Even an inanimate object like a stone knows to praise the creator, shouldn't we also?

In verses 41 – 44 Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because he sees the destruction that is about to come upon it. In 70 AD the Romans completely destroyed everything in the city including the temple.

Luke's account of Jesus clearing the temple is very subdued compared to Matthew and John's, but this clearing of the temple was the last straw as far as the Pharisees were concerned. Jesus had to be dealt with.

Wednesday, August 24 – Luke 20: 1 – 19

As the Pharisees come to question Jesus about where his authority came from to do the things he was doing, Jesus turns the tables on them and asks a question of them. Jesus asks them if the baptisms that John the Baptist did were from heaven (meaning that he was baptizing on behalf of God), or from man (meaning he was working on his own). Jesus' questions traps the Pharisees. You can see how dark the Pharisee's hearts were because they were not interested in giving the right answer but rather in giving the answer that was best for them politically. John the Baptist's baptism was clearly from heaven, but the Pharisees refused to acknowledge it. They refused to repent and humble themselves. Just as John's baptism was clearly from God, so too Jesus' authority was also clearly from God. Just as the Pharisees rejected God's messenger John the Baptist, they also rejected God's son Jesus.

To illustrate this point Jesus tells the parable of the Tenants. In this parable God is the one who planted the vineyard (in fact the Old Testament frequently refers to Israel as God's vineyard.). In this parable the leaders of Israel are the workers who rented the vineyard. The servants whom the tenants beat and sent away empty handed are the prophets that God sent to warn Israel to repent of their sin. John the Baptist was the last of those prophets. Next, the owner of the vineyard sends his son, who of course represents Jesus, and the tenants kill him. The conclusion of the parable is that the owner, God, will then come himself and pass judgment on the tenants, by executing them and giving the vineyard to others (The Gentiles—us). Jesus concludes this parable by quoting from Psalm 118:22 that says, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone." This verse is quoted several other times in the New Testament and it is always quoted in regard to Jesus being rejected by man, but chosen by God as the chief cornerstone (foundation) and capstone of the beautiful new temple, the church.

Thursday, August 25 – Luke 20: 20 – 40

In today's reading the Pharisees set two traps for Jesus to try to catch him saying something that would allow them to be rid of him for once and for all. The first question they ask Jesus involves paying taxes to Caesar. The Jews hated paying taxes to a foreign ruler, Caesar, so if Jesus had said it was right the Jewish people would have turned on him. On the other hand, if Jesus had said they shouldn't pay taxes to Caesar the Romans would have dealt with Jesus by trying him for sedition. Jesus' answer is quite remarkable in its wisdom. Jesus tells them that if Caesar's picture is on the coin then the coin must belong to Caesar, so they should give to Caesar what belongs to him.

Next the Sadducees (Jewish legal scholars and politicians) ask Jesus a technical question that involved the Law of Moses and marriage. The Law of Moses (given by God) said that if a married man died without children his brother must marry his

widow. In the question that is posed to Jesus the poor widow had seven husbands die, and the question the Sadducees ask Jesus is in the resurrection who will be this woman's husband. The only problem is that the Sadducees didn't believe in the resurrection of the dead. Jesus blows their question to shreds by telling them that in heaven there is no marriage, because those who are resurrected are already part of a family, they are children of God. But Jesus doesn't stop with that. He also points out that the Sadducees are wrong in their belief concerning the resurrection, because in the Old Testament God continually referred to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who had all died a physical death years before. But Jesus points out that God is the God of the living, not the dead, so if God refers to himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob they all must still be alive, thus proving there is a resurrection of the dead.

Friday, August 26 – Luke 20: 41 – 21: 4

These verses are, at first glance, a little difficult to understand and follow the argument that Jesus is making. To prove that Jesus is the messiah, Jesus quotes from Psalm 110:1 where David says, "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." The Jews were rightly looking for a messiah to come from David's family lineage, so the messiah would be the Son of David, which was a title Jesus was sometimes given in the Gospels. But based on this verse from Psalm 110:1 the messiah, while being David's son, had to be greater than David, because David calls the messiah his Lord. What David was really saying was this, "The Lord (God) said to my (David's) Lord (Jesus) sit at my right hand..." Jesus' argument is that based on this verse, the messiah had to be more than just a physical descendant of David, the messiah also had to be the Son of God and if that was true then everyone should put their trust in him.

Next, Jesus shows the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They put on a good show of being righteous with their prayers and their robes, but they were hypocrites. They not only didn't do the very thing that God said righteous people do, take care of widows and orphans, they did the opposite--abuse them.

Today's reading ends with Jesus explaining true righteousness. A widow, the very person the Pharisees were known to abuse, puts just two small coins in the offering box, but in doing so she has given to God all she has to live on.

Saturday, August 27 – Luke 21: 5 – 28

In today's reading Jesus gives a prophecy concerning events that are going to happen at some point in the future. This passage is a parallel passage to Mark 13 and Matthew 24. Bible scholars argue over whether this prophecy, that Jesus gives, focuses on things in the immediate future, right after Jesus' death, or the distant future when Jesus comes again. It appears that strong arguments could be made for both views, and this should not be seen as unusual because many Old Testament prophecies had a near term fulfillment that occurred during the lifetime of those who heard and a distant fulfillment that would come many years later.

That seems to be the case here. The discussions starts with the disciples commenting about how magnificent the temple was, but Jesus says in verse 6 that a

day is coming when not one stone would be left on top of another. This happened in 70 AD when the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

Next, Jesus tells his disciples that many will come and try to deceive them saying that they are the messiah, and that there will be wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes and general upheaval on the earth. What Jesus was trying to teach his disciples was that even though he has come and brought the Kingdom of Heaven to earth, that kingdom won't reach its final fulfillment until sometime in the future. Jesus didn't want his disciples to hold to a false belief that since the Kingdom had come things were just going to get better and better. In fact Jesus is saying that until the Kingdom comes in its full glory things will go from bad to worse.

Jesus next tells his disciples that they too will be persecuted, but even in the face of persecution they should be confident that the Holy Spirit will give them the courage and the words to defend their faith, and that ultimately no one can harm them because they are protected by the power of Christ. That is not to say that they would not be hurt or even killed, but rather that no one can separate them from the eternal love of Christ. In verses 20-24, Jesus seems to be clearly talking about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but in verses 25-28 Jesus seems to be clearly talking about his second coming.

Sunday, August 28 – Luke 21: 29 – 22: 6

The parable that Jesus tells in verses 29 – 31 is actually a continuation of Jesus' prophecy concerning future events. Jesus is telling us and his disciples that just as the leaves coming out on a tree tell you that summer is drawing near, so these events that Jesus is telling us about will point to the fact that the time for his return is drawing near.

Verse 32 has caused a great deal of discussion. What does Jesus mean when he says this generation will certainly not pass away until all of these things have happened? Some commentators believe that with these words Jesus is saying that these events will happen within the life time of his listeners. Clearly the problem with this interpretation is that the generation Jesus was talking to has certainly passed away and Jesus has not yet returned. Other commentators think that Jesus was saying that when all of these events happen the end will be so close that the generation that lives through all of this upheaval will still be alive to see his return. Other commentators believe that the words "this generation" actually refer to the Jewish people who, even though they will be annihilated by the Roman Empire, will still exist and live on as a people until Jesus returns.

As you think about all of this don't miss the main point that Jesus is making in verses 34 – 36. No matter when Jesus returns we must be found ready for his return in the way we live our lives. Take those words to heart and spend more time thinking about that than the actual sequence of events that will mark Jesus' return. No matter what we deal with in this life, we can have faith because Jesus' words are trustworthy, eternal, and true (verse 33). This passage closes with Judas completely disregarding everything that Jesus has said as he betrays Jesus to the Jewish leaders.