

February 26, 2023 Lifting Up the Lowly

Scripture: Luke 1:51-53 (NRSV)

He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (from sermon 2.26)

MONDAY 2.27.23 A family tree

Note: We are reading the entire gospel of Luke during Lent. Some day's readings are longer than usual. We hope you'll have an extra cup of coffee, or use your lunch break, and read Luke's entire story of Jesus.

Amazing moments in the Temple Luke 1:1-2:52

Simeon and Anna, elderly servants of God, saw their hopes coming true in the baby Jesus. Simeon saw that Mary's life would hold pain as well as joy. Luke told about how Jesus showed precocious insight into his mission at his first Passover. Mary and Joseph felt the complex dynamics their unique son brought into their lives.

- Reflect on Simeon's words in verses 34-35. How did each phrase point to an aspect of Jesus' life and ministry? In what ways has your loyalty to Jesus brought challenges and adjustments in life? Has facing those challenges for Jesus' sake been worth it?
- Luke 2:41-52 is the only glimpse any of the gospels give of Jesus' boyhood. What does it show you about the unique challenges his parents faced in raising God's son? How did it foreshadow the power of Jesus' preaching and teaching some 18 years later?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for Mary and Joseph's courage, commitment, and sensitivity to your will. Shape me into a person committed to reflecting your love in all my relationships. Amen.

TUESDAY 2.28.23 Water: symbol of God's grace

Preparing the way for Jesus Luke 3:1-22

Israel had gone through a long period with no clear prophetic voice. John the Baptist's forceful preaching, calling people to change their hearts and lives, drew crowds hungry for a word from God. He baptized people as a symbol of cleansing and change. But he pointed beyond himself, and Luke said he had the privilege of baptizing the Savior whose way he'd prepared.

- John the Baptist showed a sense of urgency as he passionately called people to change their life's direction. To what extent do you feel a sense of urgency in pursuing God's path for your life?

What steps help you keep your commitment to God's call strong and focused?

- John prepared the way for Jesus by calling for generosity, integrity, and living out God's ideals.

Scholar N. T. Wright said, "John was doing what the prophet Isaiah had said: preparing a pathway for the Lord himself to return to his people....Rescue was at hand." * Lent is a time to prepare. How are you preparing the way for Jesus to work in your life? In the lives of others?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to hear your call on my life clearly. Give me the courage and conviction of John the Baptist in living out that calling and doing your will. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 34.

WEDNESDAY 3.1.23 Turn off voices that draw you away from God

Trying to derail the Messiah Luke 3:23-4:13

Unlike Matthew (cf. [Matthew 1:1-17](#)), Luke took Jesus' list of ancestors all the way back to "Adam, the son of God." That showed Jesus as the Savior for all people. All of the temptations tried to get Jesus to make his life easier by matching popular hopes of what the Messiah would do. But Jesus refused the urge to prove his identity in self-serving ways.

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- Our culture often toys with the medieval idea of an ugly, horned devil. Would a figure like that have actually appealed to Jesus? Are you tempted, not by a dark "devil" figure, but by an inner whisper urging you to ignore God's way? How can embracing your identity as God's child help you resist that whisper?
 - In Luke 4:10-11, the tempter quoted Psalm 91. Jesus didn't say, "A Bible verse? Must be right." Scholar Scot McKnight said we cannot "read the Bible as a collection of...sanctified morsels of truth." * How can you, like Jesus, learn the Bible's core principles to guide your life? How can it be spiritually unsafe to follow isolated Bible verses, as the tempter urged Jesus to do?

Prayer: Loving God, remind me to hear and apply the Bible's big principles to my life. Let me learn, not just fragments, but the Bible's overall message to empower me to resist temptation. Amen.

* Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008, pp. 46.

THURSDAY 3.2.23 Learning from early experiences

Early returns: some amazed, others furious Luke 4:14-44

Jesus defined his mission with the healing, liberating action words of Isaiah 61. In Nazareth, he met rejection and anger. The people in Capernaum wanted him to stay (verse 42). Jesus did not let either human rejection or popularity decide his actions, but steadily followed the course he and God chose.

- Jesus claimed Isaiah 61:1-2 as his “job description.” He later said doing what he did is the call for all his followers (cf. [John 14:12, 20:21](#)). Re-read Luke 4:18-19. Which parts of this work are you most passionate about? Will you accept Jesus' “job offer” and join him in actively carrying out God’s mission in our hurting world?
- Jesus was the ultimate “servant leader.” That included intentional soul care. In verse 42 (again in [Luke 5:16](#)), Luke said Jesus made a point of praying in solitary places. Solitude—just you and God—can be hard. How could you create some alone time on purpose each day? How could you find longer periods of solitude with God as needed?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, rejected or praised, you steadily lived out God’s purpose for your life. Guide me in nurturing the inner springs of life so that I, too, can live out your purpose for me. Amen.

FRIDAY 3.03.23 How we continue Jesus' mission

Calling, healing, and forgiving Luke 5:1-26

Luke (likely Paul’s friend, “the dearly loved physician” of [Colossians 4:14](#)) listed many of the ills Jesus healed. Awe-inspiring spiritual power was clearly at work in Jesus (verse 26). And because many people in that day saw all illness as a sign of God’s curse, Jesus' healing powerfully showed God’s forgiveness and love, not just raw power.

- the spiritual gift of healing is defined as “the divine ability to bring wholeness—physical, emotional or spiritual—to others.” * Do Luke’s stories suggest that Jesus healed in all these ways? In which way(s) do you most need healing? How can you more fully open yourself to Jesus' healing power?
- Sadly, many religious leaders watched Jesus with a critical spirit (verses 17-21). They didn’t like him helping “sinners.” Scholar Hans King wrote, “The Church must always dissociate itself from sin, but it can never have any excuse for keeping any sinner at a distance.” ** Are you fully aware that only a church that, like Jesus, welcomes “sinners” can truly welcome you?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for offering me your healing, restorative power. Guard my heart against ever thinking I am “too good” to associate with any of your beloved children. Amen.

* Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, *Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011, p. 42.

** Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*. New York: Doubleday, 1976, p. 507.

SATURDAY 3.4.23 Surprise a neighbor

A growing issue: “to save life or to destroy it?” Luke 5:27-6:11

Jesus’ challenge to the *status quo* made the religious leaders afraid and angry. Luke 5:36 was the first of 14 uses of the word “parable” in Luke. People in Palestine often used goatskins to hold wine and other fluids. As new wine fermented, it would burst a rigid old skin. Jesus said God’s new ways of working in the world would burst old cultural norms. The response to Jesus’ Sabbath healing was one sign of how his work and his message stretched old, rigid spiritual ideas to the breaking point.

- Old ways are neither necessarily bad nor necessarily good. In the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God was setting up new ways to pursue his eternal mission to bless the whole world. Israel had 12 tribes. Jesus chose, not 8 or 10, but 12 people as “apostles,” a word that meant “an emissary of God...with special authority and status in Christ for the sake of the gospel.” * It was a clear sign that his followers would embody God’s original mission for Israel (cf. [Genesis 12:1-3](#)). How has God transformed you from old ways of living to new ways? How does living out God’s mission to the whole world shape Resurrection’s international mission work?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to respect and value all that is good in tradition. And guide me to also value and respect the newness and fresh energy you keep bringing to human life. Amen.

* Robert Mounce, *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2006, p. 27.