

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10 (NRSV)

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So, he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

MONDAY 3.13.23 Be intentional about your worries Trusting in God's sufficiency Luke 12:8-34

Jesus used a simple, sobering parable to get his listeners (and us) to consider how far ahead our plans reach. For the rich fool hoarding his large crop, the sad answer was, "Not nearly far enough." Jesus no doubt appalled some hearers by saying, "One's life isn't determined by one's possessions." This life, and the material goods we enjoy in it, will end. Only God can (and does) offer us eternity.

- Jesus spoke sadly of "those who hoard things for themselves and aren't rich toward God." His story said what we work (maybe even fight) so hard for does us no good when we die. Has your desire for material goods ever damaged your relationships with people or God? What helps you make sensible material plans without letting the stuff you think you "own" actually "own" you?
- When Jesus called his followers a "little flock," they were. That wasn't cause to fear. God liberally "delights" in giving them (and us, a much larger "flock") the gift of God's eternal kingdom. That's why Jesus said we don't need to worry. How does worry differ from wise foresight or planning? Instead of worrying, what are more useful ways to meet life's demands?

Prayer: Loving God, in fall foliage or spring flowers, every morning and every evening, you delight in giving to me. Keep my generosity growing, even though it will never match the scale of yours. Amen.

TUESDAY 3.14.23 Limit distractions today About spiritual readiness Luke 12:35-59

Few of us want to be earthly "servants," but Jesus used that image for our relationship to God. Good servants were always ready to respond to their master. Bad ones lost their jobs (or, in Roman times, even worse). Jesus didn't endorse Roman cruelty. He simply made the point that choosing to serve God is a matter of eternal life or death.

- Jesus' words about bringing division rather than peace (12:51-53) may strike us as odd. Isn't Jesus "the prince of peace" (cf. [Isaiah 9:6](#))? Yes—but he knew his kingdom's principles (including peace) were so unlike the world's that at times they'd cause division. Have family members, friends or co-workers ever misread or criticized choices rooted in your loyalty to God?
- In verse 41, Peter asked, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" Jesus seemed to say that the parable was for all who wish to be "faithful and wise managers," which invited Peter (and us) to take it seriously. As we keep reading Luke, how can you ask about each passage you read, "Lord, what do you want me to hear in this passage"?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for equipping and calling me to serve. Make me a "faithful and wise manager," valuing myself and who you made me to be. Amen.

WEDNESDAY 3.15.23 What are you still holding back from God? How God reverses human judgments Luke 13:1-30

Speaking to the tragedy of Roman soldiers killing Galileans, Jesus rebutted the idea that bad things always showed God's wrath. He told a strange parable, one that left hearers to think about how the story might end. He relieved a woman's 18 years of suffering "at once," but upset the synagogue leader by doing it on the Sabbath. He defied the spirit that loved rules above people and kept moving toward Jerusalem (verse 22).

- We could call Jesus' story (13:6-9) "The Unfinished Parable." The gardener pleaded for one more year to help the tree bear fruit—but Jesus never said if the tree responded or not. 13:5 showed what kind of "fruit-bearing" was on his mind. What about you—how will you finish the unfinished parable?
- To an abstract question—"Lord, will only a few be saved?" (13:23)—Jesus' gave a personal reply. In *The Message*,* it reads, "Whether few or many is none of your business. Put your mind on your life with God. The way to life—to God!—is vigorous and requires your total attention." Which (if any) Lenten practices have most helped you move past abstract ideas to God's personal love?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you dig up the soil around me, water and fertilize, and watch eagerly for my life to show your fruit. Help me to respond so that my life may indeed bear fruit to your glory. Amen.

* Peterson, Eugene H. *The Message* Numbered Edition Hardback. Navpress. Kindle Edition.

THURSDAY 3.16.23 Seek out voices you haven't heard In God's world, everyone is invited in! Luke 13:31 – 14:24

Jesus spoke four "laments" in Luke over Jerusalem (verses 33-35; cf. also [19:41-44](#), [21:20-24](#) and [23:27-31](#).) Jesus "spoiled" a Sabbath dinner by healing—again. Pharisees loved to imagine God's end-time feast (verse 15, an image from [Isaiah 25:6-10](#)). Isaiah said it would be for "the whole earth;" the religious leaders

limited it to their own people. But Jesus said since the chosen didn't come God invited street people!

- Preacher Brennan Manning wrote, "After reading the entire Gospel of Luke for the first time, a post-Valley girl said: 'Wow! Like Jesus has this totally intense thing for ragamuffins.'" * We are all spiritually "poor, crippled, blind and lame." God's grace gives us seats at the "banquet." Can you see the ways that, before God, you are a "ragamuffin" who desperately, gratefully needs grace?

- Have you ever known (maybe even been) a person like the ones Jesus noticed who aggressively "sought out the best seats at the table"? In what ways can that attitude show itself in school, the workplace, family, even church? What's the difference between healthy boldness to make your gifts available to bless others, and the kind of self-promotion Jesus warned against?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, yes! I want to be a guest at your great end-time feast. Give me a heart that will rejoice in being there even if some of the other guests might surprise me at first. Amen.

* Manning, Brennan. *The Ragamuffin Gospel: Good News for the Bedraggled, Beat-Up, and Burnt Out* (p. 51). 1990/2000/2005: The Crown Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

FRIDAY 3.17.23 Imagine how much God loves you Joy when the lost are found Luke 14:25 – 15:32

One of the "costs" of following Jesus was hearing pious people grumble, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Jesus didn't even try to deny it. In three vivid stories, he told how finding a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost boy set off big parties, "joy in heaven." In the last story, he pointedly added a recognizable older son who thought it was wrong to welcome the lost son home.

- The Pharisees thought "bad people" don't change. Jesus saw people much more as "lost" (like the sheep, coin or boy), and said God tirelessly seeks hearts gone off course. When have you lost your way spiritually and needed finding? Jesus said God rejoiced at every return. What has most helped you see God as more eager to welcome you home than to punish you for getting lost?
- Jesus left the older son's story open, like that of the fig tree (cf. [Luke 13:6-9](#)). The father begged: "We had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive. He was lost and is found." But most "older brothers" who heard Jesus didn't want to welcome "sinners" home. It's your turn at the party of faith. How does the Father's appeal to welcome lost ones home shape your heart?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you always had "friends in low places." But you always sought to draw them to higher ground. Give me the heart and the wisdom to live out your redemptive example. Amen.

SATURDAY 3.18.23 Help provide for those who need it Uncomfortable stories for comfortable people Luke 16:1-31

Jesus told of a crook deftly buying off “friends” to help him when he lost his job. Jesus didn’t favor fraud, but asked, “If that rogue could plan ahead, shouldn’t you plan for eternity, not just earthly gain?” Then he told a parable about a rich man and Lazarus, a beggar. (The poor man, not the rich, got the dignity of a personal name.) The “rich man” ignored Lazarus “at his gate.” Jesus pictured the beggar with virtuous Abraham, while the wretched rich man (within shouting distance) begged him to warn his brothers to avoid his sad fate. Jesus wasn’t so much describing a literal afterlife as urging us to change our values in this life.

- Jesus said no one can serve two masters—it is impossible to serve both God and wealth (verse 13). Which “master” has your deepest allegiance? In his second story, Jesus said “Moses and the prophets” could show the rich man’s brothers (and the sneering, money-loving Pharisees —verse 14) a better way. What influences help you to build your values and actions (social, financial, and spiritual) on the principles of Moses and the prophets—and Jesus?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, deliver me from all the other masters that try to lure me to make them supreme in my heart. I surrender my life to your gracious and loving rulership forever. Amen.