



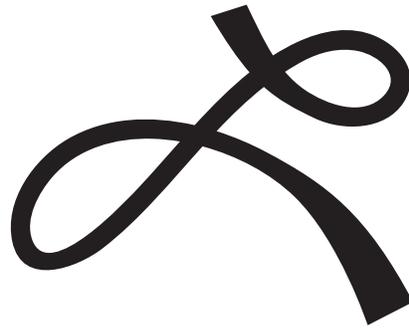
LEAP OF FAITH

Pushing the Boundaries of My Faith 2016

Leap of Faith Introduction + Daily Leap Devotional Guide

42 Days through Good News according to Luke

**JOURNEY
COMMUNITY
CHURCH**



LEAP OF FAITH

Pushing the Boundaries of My Faith 2016



Before February 8: Read the Introduction to find out all about our Leap of Faith.



Beginning Monday, February 8: Use this guide to jump into reading through the book of Luke in 42 days.

Leap of Faith Introduction + Daily Leap Devotional Guide

42 Days through Good News according to Luke



Concept and devotional guide developed by our friends at the Boston Vineyard. Reworked for Journey Community Church by Sara Patrick, Kristy Dees, Tic Long, Bill Yaccino, and Janet Hirata Stall.

Welcome to Leap of Faith!

We are beginning the season of Leap of Faith for Journey Community Church. This is the third year that we, as a church community, are joining together in prayer, scripture study, sharing our heart's desires and spiritual challenges with one another during the Easter season. Hopefully we will all be pushing the boundaries of our faith to a deeper level. If this is your first time you may ask, "Just what is Leap of Faith?"

Good question.

Leap of Faith is a 42-day adventure with Jesus. It's a deeper step into living as if God is not only real, but also Good. It's about realizing His goodness and discovering that He is *With you* and *For you*. It's about pushing back your own personal boundaries of faith to experience more of what God has for you. Leap of Faith may be new to you, but you are not in this alone. We believe that as we go forward, we are in this together as a community. We really believe God is going to meet us in amazing ways.

This year we are doing Leap of Faith in the middle of *I Live The Journey* where, as a church, we are praying, "Father show me what step of faith I can take as I Live the Journey?" Many of us followed God's leading by taking a step (or a leap) of faith to join what God is doing here at Journey in renewing this place. It's a leap within a leap and couldn't come at a better time! In *I Live The Journey*, as a church we have already been involved in pushing back the boundaries of our faith and have experienced many exciting breakthroughs. [For more information on *I Live the Journey*, visit ILiveTheJourney.com]

This introduction will walk you through everything involved for your Leap of Faith. After the introduction, you will find the devotional guide we will be reading together—but more on that later.

What if I did the Leap of Faith before?

This year's experience will be similar and unique in various ways. God is constantly at work transforming us to become the person He created us to be. So, your experiences this year may be completely different than before. The thought of jumping in again may make you feel excited, anxious or perhaps resentful. Maybe you had an awesome, life-changing experience before. Or maybe you feel like you are in the same place, still asking for God to show up for you or your Six. Perhaps you feel disappointed. There may be some things you need to work through with God. Bring these concerns to Him. Be honest. The Leap is just that — a leap. It's going to take some courage (and a lot of faith) to get started. We encourage you to lean into the experience, even if you may be feeling "stuck" at the moment. Ask God to show you where He IS working and go from there. If you made a financial pledge during *I Live the Journey*, keep bringing your commitment before him.

Continue reading through this introduction as it addresses what our hopes and expectations might be during this six-week experience.

Here is a good starting point. What are the goals of Leap of Faith?

Let us detail some goals for you personally and some for all of us together here at Journey.

Our goals for YOU during the Leap of Faith:

- That your faith will be expanded and energized
- That by spending these 42 days in the book of Luke you will draw closer to Jesus
- That you engage God about something really important to you
- That you experience at least one specific gift from God
- That you experience an even-deeper joy as you find your purpose in God's work here on earth

- That you grow spiritually more than you have in any other six-week period of your life
- That you see some of your friends and family experience God in new ways
- That you sense God speaking to you about your involvement in *I Live The Journey*

Our goals for JOURNEY during the Leap of Faith:

- That we come to a new level of spiritual maturity
- That we come to a new level of loving others in our community
- That more people who attend Journey will become deeply involved in our mission
- That we will see breakthroughs and real progress in our *I Live The Journey* projects and giving
- That God will take us to a new place of faith as a community
- That because of this six-week adventure together, we will become closer, more unified community
- That more and more of us learn that God is Good and For us

What does it look like to participate in Leap of Faith?

Okay, let's not kid ourselves: reaching these goals is going to take some faith.

Hebrews 11:6 says, "*Without faith, it is impossible to please God.*" Jesus said to a woman who's been healed by His touch, "*Your faith has made you well.*"

One of the central themes in scripture is that we worship a God who *acts*, that we should praise God *for all the things He has done*. We love this passage: Isaiah 64:4 "*Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.*" And yet even knowing that, it can be very scary to live a life with that kind of faith! Maybe it seems as if we've tried that before and He didn't come through. Maybe hard things have happened to us and God hasn't seemed to bail us out.

So much of a pursuit of God involves learning how faith *does* and *does NOT* work. What should we do when our expectations aren't met? The writers of the Psalms themselves are often in desperate situations as they call out to God—but they still *are* calling out to God (rather than cursing Him for allowing them to get into desperate situations in the first place), and they often experience His amazing answers.

This Leap of Faith has been designed to accomplish a slew of objectives in all of our lives—maybe too many! But very much at the heart of what we're hoping for, is that many of us will experience a revitalization of our trust and hope in the God who loves us, who laid down his life for us, who wants us to look to him to do awesome things in our lives. We think it will be a lot of fun—and will provide a lot of extra faith and support—for us all to do this *together*. Psalm 116 puts it this way:

*I love the Lord
because he hears and
answers my prayer
Because he bends down
and listens, I will pray as
long as I have breath!
... What can I offer the
Lord for all he has done
for me?
... I will offer you a sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord. (Ps. 116:1-2,12,17, NLT)*

We love God because He actually hears and answers our prayers. And our response to those direct and awesome answers should be that we'll thank Him—hopefully learning to make a habit of calling on Him and His goodness more and more.

Let us walk you through what that might look like for you during these next six weeks. We'll talk about **three concrete steps** that are at the heart of Leap of Faith, and then about **three *more* things** you might pursue in order to grow in your spiritual life and power.

THREE STEPS TO CONSIDER

- 1. GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOU.**
- 2. GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOUR SIX.**
- 3. GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR ADVENTURE WITH I LIVE THE JOURNEY.**

STEP 1: GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOU.

A heck of a lot of what you're hoping will happen in your life *can't* happen unless God gives it to you.

You need to learn—as we all do—what it looks like to look to *God* to give you the things you really need in life. If you don't directly and consciously look to Him in such a way that you'll know that *He did it* you might be tempted to look to other sources for your needs. And, even if we manage to get some neat things when we *haven't* looked to God to give them to us, they rarely pan out with the kind of joy and life we were hoping for from them. God likes to be the giver of all good things. When we learn how to take him up on that offer, it seems that He not only *gives* us those gifts, He also *fills* the gifts themselves with this sort of hyper-life—those things just work out great and they bring joy and encouragement with them. (See Proverbs 10:22 for example.)

So why not take these six weeks to see if that can be your experience on some key things you'd like to see happen in your life?

Here are two categories of things that we would like to see you ask God for during these six weeks.

1) Ask Jesus for something specific that He'd like to do for you during these six weeks to make your life better.

This is where you look at some *circumstance* in your life that you'd love for Jesus to address. For example, maybe you have a broken relationship that you have almost given up on seeing restored. You are asking Jesus to restore it in the next six weeks. Some of you are out of work or really want to change jobs. You are asking Jesus for a new job by the end of six weeks. Your living situation sucks. You are asking Jesus to provide a new place to live. You feel alone. You are asking Jesus for a significant new relationship. You are trying to write a book, you are asking Jesus for a breakthrough with a publishing or literary agent by the end of six weeks. You are a musician and you want to perform someplace. You are asking Jesus to give you that opportunity in the next six weeks. The thing you are asking for is specific to you.

So that's what we're talking about—something specific to ask about. Something you'd be stoked about Jesus doing for you by the end of the Leap of Faith.

Now why do this? First off, *what if it doesn't happen?* If it's actually something you really care about, you're risking major disappointment! But risking being disappointed is a hallmark of actual faith. Isn't the point of faith that we take real things we actually *care about* to God, things we don't claim to be able to pull off on our own?

Secondly, what if it doesn't happen IN SIX WEEKS? Some of the things that we really care about might take much longer than six weeks to see change or movement. But the important thing is that you've begun

to talk to God about it, you've maybe prayed a little more consistently, concretely and with more focus. Plus, if you are in any kind of Journey group, there will be other's praying with you. What's most important is that we are deliberately talking to God about what really matters to us

The reason to take this first step is to put yourself in a position to see that God is really *Good*; that He is actually *alive*; that He actually listens to your prayers and cares about you.

Again, that's no guarantee of anything. God can do anything He wants. But He does *like* it when we ask Him for things (Matthew 7:7-11). Some of us have been in a situation where we've asked God again and again to reveal Himself to someone we really love, and didn't see anything thing happen. And then we did—and it was pretty stunning. So we need to figure out how to ask in faith and—as Matthew 7:7 says directly—*keep* asking. But let's agree together that these six weeks will be a place to start!

So, before we go on, let's do it! **What good gift do you think Jesus would like to give you before these six weeks are done?** (If you've been asking him and don't have a clear sense, you may have to punt to option two and come back to this later.)

Write that here: _____

2) Ask Jesus for how He'd like to make your life feel better during these six weeks.

A surprising truth is that what makes or breaks our lives is not so much what happens to us as how our life *feels* to us. Isn't that a stunner? You might think, "I'm lonely and miserable because I'm 'X.'" (e.g. I'm single, I'm married, I'm unemployed, my job stinks, etc.) But a moment's observation will tell you that there are people experiencing "X" who are *not* lonely and miserable and some who ARE. In other words, as Jeremiah 29:11 tells us, God's *ultimate* work in us will be to give us a sense of an utterly hopeful future. We're not sure what the *circumstances* of that future will be (Jesus, for instance, promises His disciples a life of persecution!), but we *do* know what that future will *feel* like.

So how would Jesus like to make your life *feel* better during these next six weeks?

Maybe you feel disconnected from your family and friends and you are asking Jesus to give you a sense of connection. Maybe you feel like you don't matter and you are asking Jesus for a sense of feeling valued. Maybe you are discouraged and you are asking God to feel hope again or maybe for the first time. It can take all kinds of forms.

So... let's do it! **How do you think Jesus would like to make your life *feel* better over the course of this Leap of Faith?**

Now what?

First off, congratulations! You've done a key thing—you've crystallized in your heart and on paper what you want God to do for you, a very important thing. Having done that, can we encourage you to do a few things in order to take advantage of the Leap of Faith in reference to the things you've just written down?

First, ask God for these things every day during the Leap of Faith.

As you ask, He might speak to you about what you're asking for. Obviously, pay attention to that! But, in the spirit of Matthew 7, God gives good gifts to people who "keep on asking" Him for them!

Second, tell someone else (If you're married, tell your spouse, or someone in your Life Group or small group, and/or a trusted friend) **what you wrote down and ask *them* to pray for you about those things too.**

And it would be neighborly of you if you prayed about *their* things! Jesus says He's uniquely present and at work when two or more people come before Him with things (Matthew 18:20). Your chances of seeing something happen go way up when someone else is praying too—and they might even have more faith than you do, so you can leech off of them! Sometimes we need to borrow faith.

Third, when you see answers or real movement in either of these two things tell us!

Tell your story or hear other people's stories on our website: www.journeycommunitychurch.com/leap

You can also Email us at leapoffaith@journeycom.org or fill out and turn in the tear-off section of the weekend program.

This is a super-powerful and often-overlooked spiritual principle: when God answers our prayers, the proper response is to *tell* as many people as we can—most particularly "in the sanctuary," where God's people come to worship. Here are just a few Psalms that make this point:

Psalm 107:2—"*Has the Lord redeemed (done something good for) you? Then speak out! Tell others he has saved you from your enemies.*"

Psalm 108:3 (and Psalm 57:9)—"*I will thank you, Lord, in front of all the people.*"

Psalm 71:15-16—"*All day long I will proclaim your saving power, for I am overwhelmed by how much you have done for me. I will praise your mighty deeds, O Sovereign Lord. I will tell everyone that you alone are just and good.*"

Psalm 73:28—"*I will tell everyone about the wonderful things you do.*"

Psalm 40:10—"*I have not kept this good news hidden in my heart; I have talked about your faithfulness and your saving power. I have told everyone in the great assembly of your unfailing love and faithfulness.*"

The Psalms also teach us that, if we *don't* do this, if we don't speak out to God about actual things God does for us, then those things will fade in our memory and we'll ultimately *forget* them! It seems that God's one central purpose in the Bible is that his "name" would be known throughout the earth. His "name" here is, essentially, "the God who does great things for those who call on his name." (One representative scripture would be Habakkuk 2:14—

But the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord—everyone would know that He does great stuff for people who trust Him!—as the waters cover the sea.) So when we tell others—even the whole congregation on occasion—about whatever great thing God has done for us, we're then participating in His ultimate occupation on earth!

So, *whenever* God does something wonderful for you, always tell all your friends, and always tell *us* because we want in on all the good stuff God is doing.

STEP 2: GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOUR SIX.

Praying for your Six

The hope is that you know and love at least six people who live right here in the San Diego area, people that you'd really love to see experience Jesus' goodness and power in their lives in ways that really haven't, so far as you can tell, been true for them to date. We are not talking about your Aunt Betsy in Oklahoma or an old friend of yours who lives in Florida. We are talking about people right here. What a cool thing to pray for, people to experience more of God in their lives. Our hope is that everyone in each of our Life Groups and Campus Groups will be praying for their Six, often in pairs, each meeting. Some folks in our different groups are themselves not yet sure what they believe about Jesus. But our experience has been that those of you in that category actually like this part of things quite a bit! Who wouldn't want to see Jesus concretely bless Six of their friends or family if such a thing were possible?

In these six weeks, we'd love to up the ante a bit, in the whole spirit of taking a Leap of Faith together in this season. We know for some of you, Six might be a stretch, a good stretch. But say you can only come up with four, that's cool then pray for those four and ask God to provide two more people for you to be in relationship with. We've got two suggestions you might want to explore during this Leap of Faith.

1) Pray daily for each of your Six.

Ask Jesus to reveal himself to these great folks. Ask Him to concretely bless them in such a way that His name would be made great in their lives—*during* these six weeks. And ask Him to give you as much of the following “steps of faith” as possible for each of your Six during the Leap of Faith.

2) Believe God to bless each of your Six as much as possible with the “steps of faith.”

During this time, why not ask God to show you ways you can concretely hope He might use *you* to be a blessing to the folks included in your Six? In that spirit, we've got six “steps of faith” that you may want to use with your Six during these six weeks. Don't get freaked out by these six steps. We are not saying you do all six things for all Six of you people each week. Just use these ideas as a way forward.

1. Initiate social time with one of your Six.
2. Ask one of your Six for prayer requests.
3. Tell a story about how Jesus has blessed you.
4. Pray for one of your Six in person.
5. Invite them to weekend service or your Life Group or Campus Group.

We're sure you get the sense that these folks you're praying for are not just abstractions whom you're hoping *Jesus* will bless, but *you're* too busy for! If God would be so gracious, certainly it would be great if *you* could be part of the process, if you could be in on loving them in Jesus' name.

Take a few minutes and talk to God about who your Six could be. Write their names below. Maybe only a couple names come to mind right now but keep praying and thinking about who you could add to complete your Six, then come back and add their names here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

STEP 3: GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR OUR CHURCH AND OUR ADVENTURE WITH I LIVE THE JOURNEY

We are convinced that God has significant plans for us as a church. We know God is up to something! We sense God is moving in our midst. As a church we're believing God to help us love thousands of people in our community and around San Diego who feel far from God and who otherwise would have no access to all of his benefits and let them know and feel that they are welcome to come as they are and call this place home. We're believing him to bring people into our community who never thought they had a seat at the table and to find a spiritual family here.

We're believing God will create a deep connection among people who call Journey home, moving us to that place where truly "no one stands alone." We're believing Him to make us the kind of church that our neighbors are thankful for, that they see us as being FOR them. We're believing Him to help us love the poor at an entirely new level. We're believing him for an unprecedented number of people who call Journey home to invest more of their time, their talents and their treasure here, and that God will increase their sense of ownership and inspire them to step up into new levels of serving and volunteering in Journey's ministries.

"We're believing God will continue to makes us increasingly generous people. We have jumped headlong in an adventure to refresh and renew our physical space to advance the work God has called us. We're believing God will provide the funds for people to complete their commitments and for people new to Journey to join *I Live The Journey* (ILTJ). We're believing major steps will be taken in moving toward completion of the many projects on the drawing board. There's lots to do around here, but we are confident that a spirit of generous faith is going to awaken in us to get these things done.

We'd love it if you could *pray for our church* each day during the Leap of Faith! Pray that some of these dreams would come to pass, maybe even sooner than expected! **Pray about your role** in seeing these things come to pass! Your leap of faith may be a leap with **your time** or with **your talent**, committing to a deeper level of involvement and service. It may be a leap of faith with **your finances**. It may be all three!

To summarize, as you go hard after what you're hoping God will do for your church during these six weeks, we'd encourage you to do these things:

- 1) Pray each day for the dreams of the church and the vision of ILTJ
- 2) Ask God for inroads and favor with those who feel far from God.
- 3) Ask God about what steps you can take to join what God is doing through Journey.

What do you think God is saying to you about the three prayers above? What leap of faith do you sense God is calling you to take in regards to more investment of your time, talent or treasure here at Journey? You may not know these as you start Leap of Faith, but will find answers as we move forward. Add to the list as you sense God leading.

3 WAYS TO GROW IN JESUS' INTIMACY AND POWER

Here are the “three more things” we mentioned earlier — that you might pursue in order to grow in your spiritual life and power:

Wouldn't it be awesome if you came out of this Leap of Faith closer to Jesus than you've ever been? And obviously filled with more spiritual power than you've ever had? Our God **IS** a Good God and we want all of us to experience that goodness to an even greater degree! We have three ways that—we hope!—will dramatically help you accomplish this.

1) **Study the life of Jesus each day in the Daily Leap devotional guide through Luke's Gospel.**

The devotional guide following this introduction will be—we're hoping!—a pretty gripping, helpful and manageable way to walk through the gospel of Luke. It is a longer gospel than both of Mark and John so there will be a bit more reading than the last two years Leap of Faith, but will be totally worth it. The cool thing about this guide is that it seems to work pretty well for a wide spectrum of people. For the last two years, people who were new to the Bible told us they found it made reading the Bible accessible and interesting. Long-time Bible readers said that it made scriptures fresh and thought-provoking. We hope that this time, no matter where you're coming from, this devotional guide offers you an enjoyable, helpful, and meaningful six weeks in the Bible.

The daily readings cover all 24 chapters of Luke in 42 sections. That means you'll be reading a bit more than a half of a chapter a day.

We know for some of us, reading this daily study will be a leap of faith in itself. If you fall behind, don't give up, just jump back in the next day or next week. What better way to move into Easter than reading and praying through the story of Jesus! And we're thinking it will be a kick to do this **together**.

A couple thoughts about the devotional guide you will be reading. Each daily reading is divided into three parts.

The first part is the **SELECTED SCRIPTURE**. It may be as short as a half-page or as long as a page-and-a-half, depending on the logical ending point for the passage. All the scripture readings for each day are included so that we will all be reading the same version of the Bible together. We will be reading the New Living Translation (NLT) and we think you will find it very readable. You should, of course, feel free to read in your own favorite translation if you would rather.

The second part is called **POINTS OF INTEREST**. This part briefly explores aspects of the day's reading that might be especially interesting or potentially confusing. It offers some historical notes and references that might help to interpret the story, frame some of the issues or questions addressed, and gives suggestions of ways to look at the passage.

The third part is called **TAKING IT HOME**. It includes three suggestions as to how we might use this passage in our own lives. They might be spiritual exercises, or little life experiments. Most commonly, they're suggestions as to how to pray in response to the scripture of the day. Each day, we'll think about how the passage applies to three different sets of people:

- **For you**—what does this passage mean for you, your family, and your closest friends?
- **For your Six**—think of six local friends who don't seem to have much of a direct relationship with God, and for whom you wish the very best in life. What does this story have to do with these six people and your friendship with them?
- **For our church / ILTJ**—how is this passage relevant to our church as a whole and our *I Live The Journey* project?

Family Friendly Materials are again included this year:

To make the Devotional Guide more inclusive of families with children, we're offering family-friendly elements:

A time or two a week, on the days when we consider the passage a little easier for kids to digest, we have a section called the **FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION** for you and your family. It will be designed for families to do together, perhaps as part of your morning, dinnertime, or bedtime routine. We think it will also work great for all kinds of different households doing life together. We think these sections should serve as interesting conversation-starters with roommates, extended family, or whomever.

Parents, we hope you feel free to use the Devotional Guide as it best serves your family. One option for families with kids might be to opt in for only the family-friendly passages each week. Don't feel bound by the dates; use these passages on any day that works best for your family.

These are designed to be conversation starters for your family with a reinforcement activity. Family God-conversations can take patience and practice. You don't need to be an expert to have a conversation, just a willingness to listen, to share and maybe even agree to disagree. Sometimes these conversations can be super fun and other times feel like a total disaster. Please know that every conversation you have or attempt to have is a win for you and your family and opens doors for future talks. We pray that you can celebrate the great conversations and activities and have the strength to try again another day when they don't go as you hoped or planned. Your perseverance will be so worth it.

As a church community, we will also be talking about what we are learning in these readings in all of our Life Groups and Campus Groups during the 42 days of our Leap of Faith.

There are several options besides this booklet for using the devotional guide:

- **Read the daily devotional online**
- **Use our audio recordings**
- **Subscribe to receive the daily reading in your inbox via email**
- **Use a downloadable PDF version**

Visit journeycommunitychurch.com/leap for these resources.

2) Consider fasting in some way.

You might have noticed that when people really wanted something from God in the Bible, they almost always fasted.

What does fasting do?

Fasting tells God and our own spirits that we really are desperate for *God* to meet some need or hope that we have. As you've picked up, here in the Leap of Faith, we're really hoping for God to do a *lot*, for you personally, for your Six and for all of us as a church. That sounds like "fast territory" to us.

Though fasting—in any fashion (and we'll talk about some options in a minute)—is, by definition, *hard*, it's actually meant to be a *joyous opportunity*. Suddenly we're really serious about something with God; we're really expecting him to come through; we aren't just playing around. That can often be exhilarating! Think of fasting as a form of feasting on God Himself!

What are options for fasting?

Well, first off, fasting often involves abstention from food in some way. In shorter fasts, that can be a total abstention from food. These are usually called "**liquid fasts**," because liquid is the only thing going into us. For the most part, we don't recommend these at any length beyond a few days for those who haven't fasted before or have any health issues, because after that, health problems can ensue. (Clearly God can speak and call you into anything—but we'd just like you to be aware of the risks if you liquid fast for more than a week. Also if you are feeling called to do that, touch base with a doctor first.)

Also, WE DO NOT RECOMMEND LIQUID FASTS IF YOU'VE EVER SUFFERED FROM ANY EATING DISORDER.

Forgive the stern words and printing, but this is a biggie. Those in our midst who've suffered from eating disorders historically have a difficult time separating this sort of fasting from the very motivation that drove them to the disorder, and thereby risk serious health problems. There are other great fasts that will do you a lot of good, if you've been in this situation, can we ask that you'd pursue those?

Other food-abstention fasts involve imposing some sort of **conditions** on our eating over a period of time. This can involve anything from giving up some beloved food item for a time (desserts being a popular favorite) to something more challenging, like the so-called "**Daniel fast**," which involves (as it did for Daniel in the biblical book bearing his name) abstaining from everything but vegetables.

For longer fasts, we've sometimes done a "**miss a meal**" fast. It's pretty much what it sounds like. Just skip lunch or dinner for the term of your fast.

Are there any non-food-related options?

You bet! The idea of fasting can be helpful when applied to almost anything. Fasting from television or any music or radio while driving is a popular choice for folks who aren't fasting from food.

This option can really involve, under God's direction, doing without *anything* that feels costly to give up for a season. We've even heard about fasts from criticism or from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or any non-work required Social Media!

The point of fasting is to really focus on God, our dependence on Him and to put our whole body and attention toward an end that He is leading us to.

What does it mean to fast "for" something?

Ultimately we fast "for" God. We want more of Him and all that He has for us. But it's also helpful to fast and pray in conjunction with an end that we are convinced is something God wants to do for us. Prayer with fasting can help us receive what God wants to give us.

Other benefits of fasting:

Although some argue that there are certain health benefits of fasting, try to stay focused on the main thing. For the most part, fasting from food isn't a great strategy for weight loss according to most reputable sources. It's not about developing self discipline, although you may find you like some of the simplicity that you experience in being less focused on food, media, or whatever else your fast includes.

3) If you haven't already, join a group (even if it's for just the six weeks).

This whole Leap of Faith will be a more powerful experience in community. By joining a group you will be encouraged by other's stories and hearing about what God is up to in their lives. Your experience will enrich their lives as well. You can compare notes and gain a fuller understanding of what you are reading and what is being taught in the weekend services. It's not too late to get into a group. We have Life Groups all over the area as well as Campus Groups. If you have never been in a group, maybe it's time to take that leap. Remember all you are committing to is six weeks.

How to join a group for Leap of Faith

If you need a group, you can sign up after services on the weekend of January 29/31 or February 5/7 or use the Group Finder on our website:

journeycommunitychurch.com/find-a-group.

You can also email lifegroups@journeycom.org if you have any questions.

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

First, congratulations! You've made it through the whole road map for the Leap of Faith!

Now, of course, there's *doing* the Leap of Faith!

How long might it take to do this stuff each day?

We, of course, couldn't really say, not being you. We'd think these spiritual exercises could take less than a *half an hour each day*. Or they could take as much time as you choose to give them.

We think you will love it. You'll love learning more about Luke's Gospel and reading the points of interest to help you understand what is going on—not to mention that you'll love just spending some time immersed in Jesus' story each day. You'll love praying and believing God. You'll love talking about it with people in your group. You will love joyful financial giving—something that carries more promise of joy in scripture than almost any other act of faithfulness.

So, hey, if it's going to be a half hour a day, at least it will most likely be one **awesome** half hour each day!

Could you possibly summarize the steps so that I can post them on my refrigerator and be sure to do them?

Before we do that, let us just close by reiterating how excited we are for this season, and how eager we are to see what God does for all of us. We're praying for you!

Leap of Faith Summary

Our goals for YOU during the Leap of Faith:

- That your faith will be expanded and energized
- That by spending these 42 days in the book of Luke you will draw closer to Jesus
- That you engage God about something really important to you
- That you experience at least one specific gift from God
- That you experience an even-deeper joy as you find your purpose in God's work here on earth
- That you grow spiritually more than you have in any other six-week period of your life
- That you see some of your friends and family experience God in new ways
- That you sense God speaking to you about your involvement in *I Live The Journey*

Our goals for JOURNEY during the Leap of Faith:

- That we come to a new level of spiritual maturity
- That we come to a new level of loving others in our community
- That more people who attend Journey will become deeply involved in our mission
- That we will see breakthroughs and real progress in our *I Live The Journey* projects and giving
- That God will take us to a new place of faith as a community
- That because of this six week adventure together, we will become closer, more unified community
- That more and more of us learn that God is Good and For us

THREE STEPS TO CONSIDER

STEP 1: GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOU.

Ask Jesus for something specific that He'd like to do for you during the Leap of Faith to make your life better.

Ask Jesus for how He'd like to make your life feel better during these six weeks.

- Ask God for these things every day during the Leap of Faith.
- Tell someone else what you wrote down and ask *them* to pray for you about those things too.
- When you see answers or real movement in either of these two things tell us! Tell your story or hear other people's stories on our website: www.journeycommunitychurch.com/leap. You can also Email us at leapoffaith@journeycom.org or fill out and turn in the tear-off section of the weekend program.

STEP 2: GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOUR SIX.

Pray daily for each of your Six.

Believe God to bless each of your Six as much as possible with the "steps of faith."

- 1) Initiate social time with one of your Six.
- 2) Ask one of your Six for prayer requests.
- 3) Tell a story about how Jesus has blessed you.
- 4) Pray for one of your Six in person.
- 5) Invite them to weekend service or your Life Group or Campus Group.
- 6) Invite them to get together to talk about Jesus.

STEP 3: GO HARD AFTER WHAT YOU'RE HOPING GOD WILL DO FOR YOUR CHURCH.

- 1) Pray each day for the dreams of the church and the vision of ILTJ
- 2) Ask God for inroads and favor with those who feel far from God.
- 3) Ask God about what steps you can take to join what God is doing through Journey.

THREE WAYS TO GROW IN JESUS' INTIMACY AND POWER

- 1) Study the life of Jesus each day in the Daily Leap devotional guide through Luke's Gospel.
- 2) Consider fasting in some way.
- 3) If you haven't already, join a group.

Handy Dandy Leap of Faith Reading Schedule

Week 1: February 8 – 14 (Monday – Sunday)

Monday, February 8: Luke 1:1-25—The Birth of John the Baptist foretold
Tuesday, February 9: Luke 1:26-56—Mary
Wednesday, February 10: Luke 1:57-80—The birth of John the Baptist
Thursday, February 11: Luke 2—Jesus' birth and a glimpse of his childhood
Friday, February 12: Luke 3—John the Baptist prepares the way
Saturday, February 13: Luke 4:1-30—Jesus tested, rejected & shows his power
Sunday, February 14: Luke 4:31-5:11—Jesus heals many & calls the first disciples

Week 2: February 15 – 21 (Monday – Sunday)

Monday, February 15: Luke 5:12-32—More healing & calling of Matthew
Tuesday, February 16: Luke 5:33-6:11—Discussions on Fasting & the Sabbath
Wednesday, February 17: Luke 6:12-26—Chooses Apostles & The Beatitudes
Thursday, February 18: Luke 6:27-49—Words to live by
Friday, February 19: Luke 7:1-23—Unexpected Faith & Raising the dead
Saturday, February 20: Luke 7:24-50—Jesus affirms John the Baptist
Sunday, February 21: Luke 8:1-21—A Sower, a Lamp & True family

Week 3: February 22 – 28 (Monday – Sunday)

Monday, February 22: Luke 8:22-39—Storms and Demons
Tuesday, February 23: Luke 8:40-56—Faith & Healing
Wednesday, February 24: Luke 9:1-17—Now this is a big dinner party
Thursday, February 25: Luke 9:18-36—Who is this Jesus?
Friday, February 26: Luke 9:37-62 —Healing, Death, Opposition & Cost
Saturday, February 27: Luke 10:1-24—Sending out Disciples & Praise
Sunday, February 28: Luke 10:25-42—What matters most!

Week 4: February 29 - March 6 (Monday – Sunday)

Monday, February 29: Luke 11:1-28—Teaching on prayer
Tuesday, March 1: Luke 11:29-53 —Signs, Light & Calling out Pharisees
Wednesday, March 2: Luke 12:1-21 —A Warning & a Parable
Thursday, March 3: Luke 12:22-48 —Money, Stuff & Staying ready
Friday, March 4: Luke 12:49-13:17 —Division, Repent, Healing & Conflict
Saturday, March 5: Luke 13:18-35 —Parables and Jesus grieving
Sunday, March 6: Luke 14 —Healing, Humility, Feasting & Cost

Week 5: March 7 – 13 (Monday – Sunday)

Monday, March 7: Luke 15 —Parables of Lost Sheep, Coin & Son
Tuesday, March 8: Luke 16:1-18 —Parable of the Shrewd Manager
Wednesday, March 9: Luke 16:19-17:19 —Parable & Teaching
Thursday, March 10: Luke 17:20-18:14 —Parables & Kingdom Come
Friday, March 11: Luke 18:15-43 —Encounters with Jesus
Saturday, March 12: Luke 19:1-27 —Zacchaeus & Parable of 10 servants
Sunday, March 13: Luke 19:28-48 —Jesus' BIG entrance

Week 6: March 14 – 20 (Monday – Sunday)

Monday, March 14: Luke 20:1-26—Jesus challenged
Tuesday, March 15: Luke 20:27-21:4 —Resurrection, & Identity,
Wednesday, March 16: Luke 21:5-22:13 —Jesus foretells the future
Thursday, March 17: Luke 22:14-46 —Plotting, Communion & a Prediction
Friday, March 18: Luke 22:47-23:25— Betrayal, Denial & Trial
Saturday, March 19: Luke 23:26-56 —Crucifixion, Death & Burial
Sunday, March 20: Luke 24 —Resurrection, Reconnection & Ascension

Week One of 42 Days through the Good News according to Luke

Over the 42 days of Leap of Faith, we will walk together through the entire story of the ministry of Jesus, at least as it is told by Luke. Luke was an outsider, a Gentile in the all-Jewish cast of New Testament writers. He is telling the story for those on the outside...us. He is letting “outsiders” know they are welcomed in by none other than Jesus. He has good news He wants to share

Each day’s guide is broken into three sections:

- 1. THE STORY FOR THE DAY.** For your convenience, we’ve included the text of the story in the New Living Translation (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996). For this guide, we’ve found this translation to be in fresh, modern language that has really helped us to do what we most want to do: enter into the story ourselves. As you read the passage, try to read it from the perspective of the disciples and the other people who interact with Jesus. Really get inside the story. What is it like to go through this experience with Jesus?
- 2. POINTS OF INTEREST.** This section briefly explores aspects of the day’s story that might be especially interesting or potentially confusing. It offers some historical notes and references that helps interpret the story, frames some of the issues or questions addressed, and gives suggestions of ways to look at the story and what it might mean for us.
- 3. TAKING IT HOME.** In this section, we offer some suggestions for how the day’s reading might apply to you, to your Six, and to our church.

INTRODUCING THE BOOK OF LUKE

The book of Luke is one of the four biblical gospels. *Gospel* is a word from Old English, which simply means “good news.” The gospel writers told their stories in order to share the good news about Jesus’ coming, His life, His teaching, His death, and His resurrection.

The book of Luke is part of a two-volume set with another biblical book, the book of Acts, which goes on to tell the story of the early church after Jesus’ death. The author never gives his own name, but from very early in church history the book of Luke and Acts have been ascribed to (no big surprise here) Luke, a traveling companion of Paul, a famous early follower of Jesus who was largely responsible for spreading the good news of Jesus to Europe. Luke was part of a small company who worked with Paul, sharing the good news and starting churches throughout the Mediterranean world. Luke was a medical doctor by profession, and he was almost certainly the only non-Jewish author of the New Testament (and quite possibly of the entire Bible). The audience for Luke may have been cultured, highly-educated Greeks (Greek was the dominant culture of the eastern Roman empire): he writes in the same formal historical style that was fashionable in Greek society at the time. There is some evidence that Luke intended his writings for wide publication: the Gospel of Luke and Acts are almost exactly the same length, which happens to be the length that was common in scrolls used for publication (*IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* 187: InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, 1993).

Luke’s gospel was probably written after Mark’s gospel, another of the four biblical gospels, and is apparently based upon it. Luke follows the same basic storyline as Mark, and about 40 percent of the material is drawn directly from Mark. But Luke also has much material that isn’t found in any of the other gospels. Luke’s unique contributions show up particularly in his stories about Jesus’ birth and the teachings of Jesus he shares with us. Perhaps because he is outside of Jewish society himself, he also shows a particular concern for Jesus’ interaction with people who would be outsiders in ancient Jewish society: non-Jews, women, and the poor.

Monday, February 8

Luke 1:1-25 —The Birth of John the Baptist foretold

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. 5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both well advanced in years. 8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside. 11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.

22 When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home. 24 After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. 25 "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.1) "Many have undertaken"—Luke is not the only or the first person to write the stories of Jesus. It seems that one of Luke's motivations for his own writing is to collect everything he has been taught into a single, orderly history.
- (v. 3) "I myself have carefully investigated everything"—like any good historian today, Luke relies on primary sources and careful research. For instance, the very intimate tone of the stories involving Mary make it probable that Luke heard some of the early stories directly from her, or from someone who knew her well.
- (v.3) "most excellent Theophilus"—The aptly named Theophilus ("god-lover" in Greek) was probably his patron and sponsor. "Most excellent" is a technical title indicating that Theophilus is part of the Roman nobility (*IVP Bible Background Commentary* 187)
- (v.5) "was also a descendant of Aaron"—Elizabeth is from a priestly family. Jewish priests were all descended from Aaron, the brother of Moses. The priests were in charge of the worship ceremonies at the temple in Jerusalem.

- (v.7) “But they were childless”— Elizabeth is part of a small but significant group of devout women in scripture who are not able to have children until long after all natural hope of becoming pregnant is gone. The first among these women is Sarah, Abraham’s wife, who, like Elizabeth, does not have a child until she is beyond child-bearing years. Other members of the club are Rachel (Genesis 29 and 30), Hannah (I Samuel 1 and 2), and the unnamed mother of Samson (Judges 13). The stories of these previous miracle mothers will be referred to numerous times during Luke’s account of the pregnancies of Elizabeth and Mary.
- (v.15) “He is never to take wine or other fermented drink”—this is just like the instructions given before Samson’s birth (Judges 13:4)
- (v.17) “in the spirit and power of Elijah”—Elijah is a great prophet from Israel’s history, known for calling the people of Israel back to the worship of God when they had turned away to other gods. He will be like Elijah in his calling and in the power he receives from God to pursue it.
- (v.23) “taken away my disgrace”—Elizabeth is quoting her predecessor Rachel (Genesis 30:23). Finally, the stigma has been erased; there will be no more lurking suspicions that she is being punished by God.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Luke’s hope for Theophilus was that reading Luke’s history would give Theophilus greater certainty in his belief in Jesus. As you begin your own reading of this history, ask God that it would be a faith-growing experience. Are there particular ways that you need assurance about Jesus? Consider mentioning those things specifically to God. Ask that you would get the assurance you need sometime in the next forty days.
- **For your Six:** Do any of your Six have a deep desire that has long gone unfulfilled? Ask God to show His care for them by satisfying their longing.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Zechariah is performing an old religious ritual when it suddenly and surprisingly takes on new life. Pray for our church to encounter Jesus in our services instead of a religious ritual. Ask that the spiritual practices that we do habitually would come alive with fresh and vibrant new connections with Jesus.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** “*Your prayer has been heard*” – I wonder how long ago Zachariah prayed the prayer asking God for a child. Zachariah had a hard time believing this prayer was now finally being answered. One of the hardest things to do is trust that God hears our prayers, especially when it seems like they aren’t being answered in the way we want or as fast as we want. But, we can trust that even if our specific prayers aren’t answered in our preferred timing or in the way we think they should be, *they have been heard by God*. We know for sure they can’t be answered if we don’t ask.
- **To Do:** For this first day of Leap of Faith, have each person in your family take a piece of paper and write down or draw a picture of a specific prayer request. Tape them up someplace where you can see them and say a prayer every day for 42 days for that request. Start now by saying a prayer together for what you have written on your papers and thank God that, like Zachariah’s, your prayers have been heard.

Tuesday, February 9

Luke 1: 26-56 — Mary

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, 40 where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! 43 But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

46 And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

53 He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors."

56 Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.26) “a town in Galilee”—Judea and Galilee were the two Jewish regions in Roman Palestine. The prophet Isaiah—writing hundreds of years earlier—predicted that despised Galilee would become a place of honor (Isaiah 9:1).
- (v.27) “a descendant of David”—David was the Jewish national hero, famous as a warrior, a king, and a worshipper of God. David’s reign was Israel’s golden age. David’s family still retained some respect, both out of reverence for the glorious past and out of the hope that David’s kingdom would one day be restored.
- (v.31) “You will conceive and give birth to a son”—another of Isaiah’s prophecies says, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel [which means, ‘God with us’]” (Isaiah 7:14). This humble, young Galilean woman would play a part in, not just a miraculous birth, but in God himself living among his people.
- (v.32) “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David”—yet another of Isaiah’s prophecies is referenced here (see Isaiah 9: 6-7). Luke is painting a picture for us of a people who have been waiting for a very long time for God to come and intervene in their circumstances. His story begins at the indescribably exciting moment when God finally begins to put his new rescue plan into action.
- (v.33) “the house of Jacob”—another name for the Jews. The forefather of the Jews was Jacob, also known as Israel.
- (v.34) “How will this be?”—just like Zechariah, Mary responds to Gabriel with a question, but her question is quite different. Amazingly, she doesn’t express any doubt at all that her child will be the promised son of David, and will reign forever; she merely wonders how God will overcome the practical barrier of her virginity to bring it about.
- (v.41) “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”—the Holy Spirit is the essence of God, sent to interact with human beings, conferring on them supernatural powers or abilities. Here, the Holy Spirit inspires Elizabeth with supernatural knowledge about Mary’s child and with words of blessing and praise.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** When the angel calls Mary “highly favored,” she’s initially confused. She doesn’t think of herself as special, and she’s surprised that God would take such notice of her. But the whole point of Mary’s story is that God is willing and able to do astounding things for and through humble, ordinary people. Today, try on for size the idea that God notices you, likes you, and has big plans for you. Imitate Elizabeth by proclaiming God’s favor over one another, maybe just by saying something like, “You know what, God really likes you,” to someone else in your house at least once today.
- **For your Six:** Mary and Elizabeth’s recent experiences are made all the more meaningful by the fact that they are able to share them with one another. Pray for the friendships of your Six. Pray particularly that God will provide them with friends with whom they can talk about their spiritual experiences. Pray that God will help you to be good spiritual friends for your Six. Ask God to make you a source of support and encouragement in the lives of your Six, just like Elizabeth is for Mary.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** In this passage, God begins a new era of great things for the people of Israel. God is going to be at work among them in ways they haven’t seen for hundreds of years. ILTJ has been a launching point for new things in our church in the past year. Pray that ILTJ would be fully completed this year and a half. Pray that God will give us excitement and anticipation for the “great things” still to come for our church.

Wednesday, February 10

Luke 1:57-80— *The Birth of John the Baptist*

57 When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, 60 but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

61 They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

62 Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. 63 He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 The neighbors were all filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. 66 Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

67 His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

68 “Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,

because he has come to his people and redeemed them.

69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David

70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),

71 salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—

72 to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,

73 the oath he swore to our father Abraham:

74 to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear

75 in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

76 And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,

78 because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven

79 to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

80 And the child grew and became strong in spirit; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.64) “Immediately his mouth was opened”—the very next words out of Zechariah’s mouth after his doubting question nine months earlier are words of praise!
- (v.69) “a horn of salvation”—horns are symbols of strength and power.
- (v.73) “the oath he swore to our father Abraham”—Zechariah is probably referring to God’s promise in Genesis 15 that he would free Abraham’s descendants from slavery and give them their own land.

- (v.74) “to rescue us from the hand of our enemies”—it would be natural to assume that these enemies are the Romans. Just like he once freed them from the Egyptians, he would now free Israel from the Romans. This political interpretation was, in fact, very common in Zechariah’s time. However, it doesn’t seem that it is what Zechariah has in mind. The specific enemies he mentions are sins and death.
- (v.79) “to shine on those living in darkness”—another reference to Isaiah 9: “The people walking in darkness/have seen a great light” (Isaiah 9:2).

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** There’s something fun and powerful about praising God out loud. I know that when I choose to speak out loud about God’s goodness (even when I’m just talking to myself), I almost always find myself feeling better, and I have a feeling that more of God’s goodness is being unleashed in my life. Think of something today that you are grateful for and try thanking God out loud. You could use your own words, or use Mary’s song from yesterday or a psalm like Psalm 100 as a guide.
- **For your Six:** Elizabeth and Zechariah’s faith causes them to do something unusual in naming their child. This strange choice intrigues their friends, provoking wonder and curiosity. Elizabeth and Zechariah’s willingness to do the unexpected seems to open everyone up to the possibility that God might do something extraordinary. Have you made a strange faith choice recently? Do any of your Six know about it? Pray that as you follow Jesus into His next step for you, wonder and curiosity would be stirred up in your Six.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** This supernatural birth is not just a private affair. The whole neighborhood is celebrating Elizabeth and Zechariah’s good fortune, debating together about what the child should be named, and discussing together what all of these things might mean. It’s one of our hopes for our church that we would be known widely as a place where supernatural things happen. Already, we’ve seen some pretty remarkable things: people being healed of sicknesses, unexpected provision of money or jobs, and all sorts of other things. Pray that our church would continue to see more of God’s supernatural activity, and that it wouldn’t just be our own private experience but the talk of the town.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To talk about:** Zechariah couldn’t talk for a really long time. Imagine what it must have been like for him to not communicate for all that time. You can imagine it was a little bit like playing charades – maybe he drew lots of pictures or wrote things down.
- **To Do:** Try doing that right now – everyone write a sentence on a sheet of paper. Put them in a bowl and then play a game where all you can do is communicate with drawn pictures to guess what the sentence says. That may be a little fun to do in a game for a while, but Zechariah lived that way for probably almost a year. That doesn’t sound fun to me. Take a few minutes to thank and praise God for the use of words to communicate with each other and with God.

Thursday, February 11

Luke 2 —Childhood

1 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

21 On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. 27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then had been a widow for eighty-four years. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. 40 And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

41 Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Festival, according to the custom. 43 After the Festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. 44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. 46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" 50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. 52 And as Jesus grew up, he increased in wisdom and in favor with God and people.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.4) "to Bethlehem the town of David"—Bethlehem was David's home town, and Joseph is of David's family; but that wouldn't be reason enough for Joseph to go to Bethlehem for the census. People were required to pay tax where they owned property, not in their family's ancestral home; so Joseph must have owned property in Bethlehem (*IVP Bible Background Commentary* 193). (See also Micah 5:2). All of Israel's hopes for a glorious restoration are coming together in this child.
- (v.8) "there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby"—shepherds were outsiders, and considered a bit uncivilized (*IVP Bible Background Commentary* 194). They might be a surprising choice as the first to hear the great news that the Savior has arrived. It's worth noting that the Bible holds shepherds in higher esteem than society in general: Moses, the great deliverer of the Israelites from Egypt, was a shepherd; so was king David; and the ruler who is to come from Bethlehem is called a strong and majestic shepherd (Micah 5:4). So, maybe the shepherds are told the good news about Jesus first because he himself will be, like David, a shepherd as well as a king.
- (v.11) "he is the Messiah, the Lord"—*Messiah* means, "anointed," or, "commissioned by God for a purpose." It's the term the Jews came to use for God's special agent, sent to restore everything to the way it should be.
- (v.12) "the baby, who was lying in the manger"—Jesus' birth is a disorienting mixture of overwhelming majesty and humble simplicity. On the one hand there are angel choirs proclaiming universal peace; on the other hand, there's a poor girl's baby, lying in a feeding trough in a stable.
- (v.23) "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"—this ceremony is to remember that God spared the Israelites when he brought a plague on the firstborn of Egypt during the exodus (Exodus 11, 13).
- (v.24) "a pair of doves or two young pigeons"—they offer the birds because they are too poor to offer a lamb (Leviticus 12:8).

- (v.44) “Thinking he was in their company”—they were probably traveling with an entire caravan of people who had gone up to Jerusalem for the festival. It might be easy to assume that Jesus was amongst the other older boys in the group.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Simeon and Anna are graceful examples of something that’s very hard to do: wait well. There’s a long gap for them between God’s promise and its fulfillment, and they live in that gap without bitterness and without giving up. They seem to draw closer to God and to hold more firmly to his promise as they wait. Is there something you are waiting for? How has your experience of waiting gone? What would it look like to wait well? Is there anything you need from God in order to help you wait? Consider using this period of uncomfortable waiting to draw nearer to God, even if it’s simply by telling him how it feels to wait.
- **For your Six:** The shepherds were simply going about their business when the supernatural broke into their routine, in the form of an angelic choir. This supernatural interruption brought an extra dose of joy and of meaning to their night. Pray that the lives of your Six would be similarly seasoned with the supernatural. Ask God to speak to them in dreams, or to bring strange coincidences their way, or to answer a prayer when they’re not expecting it.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** The end of this passage speaks of Jesus increasing in wisdom and “in favor with God and people.” We love being a church that is involved in serving our community and city. Pray that we would experience favor in our efforts to connect with those who are far from Jesus. Pray for our church to have a good reputation in our community and for positive interactions with local officials and community providers.

Friday, February 12

Luke 3—John the Baptist prepares the way

1 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracōnitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 4 As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
 ‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
 make straight paths for him.
 5 Every valley shall be filled in,
 every mountain and hill made low.
 The crooked roads shall become straight,
 the rough ways smooth.
 6 And all people will see God’s salvation.”

7 John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father.” For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 9 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

10 “What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

11 John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

13 “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

14 Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

15 The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. 16 John answered them all, “I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” 18 And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

19 But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, 20 Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

21 When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened 22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

23 Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, 24 the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, 25 the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, 26 the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda, 27 the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, 28 the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, 29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, 30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, 31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, 33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, 34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, 35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, 36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, 37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel, the son of Kenan, 38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.2) “in the wilderness”—the wilderness is a place of spiritual preparation. Moses spent 40 years in the wilderness, as did the people of Israel on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. The prophet Elijah also went out into the wilderness, to separate himself from corrupt politics and to hide from a king who was trying to kill him. John may be imitating his predecessor Elijah, or fulfilling his role as “the voice of one calling in the wilderness” (Isaiah 40).
- (v.3) “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins”—repentance is recalibration, or turning around.
- (v.4) “the words of Isaiah the prophet”—Isaiah 40: 3-5. It’s John’s job description. He prepares the path for God’s salvation, by warning people to get rid of anything that would get in God’s way. This is why John is calling people to repent: not to condemn them, but to help make them ready for the good things God wants to give them.
- (v.7) “coming out to be baptized by him”—baptism was a ritual cleansing performed by gentiles who wished to convert to Judaism, but John is baptizing people who are already Jews. By baptizing these Jewish listeners, John is demonstrating that the Lord is coming to rescue those who make an active choice to welcome him, not to rescue by default anyone who happens to have the right religious or family background.

- (v.16) “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit”—John has been immersing people in mere water, but the one who is coming will immerse them in the very presence of God, a substance far more rare and valuable. Before now, only a handful of prophets had ever been filled with the Holy Spirit in this way. But what Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, and Simeon have experienced is just a small taste of what is to come. Soon, many people will be positively drenched in the Holy Spirit.
- (v.22) “you are my son”—one way to think of Jesus’ baptism is that it is his formal commissioning into the role of Messiah. Remember that *Messiah* means, “anointed.” Among the kings of David’s line, rather than a coronation ceremony they would have an anointing ceremony, in which a priest or a prophet would pour oil over the new king’s head. The oil symbolized God’s favor on the king and his authority being given to the king. At Jesus’ baptism, God himself anoints Jesus with the Holy Spirit rather than oil, and directly proclaims his favor.
- (v.22) “with you I am well pleased”—everyone else repents of their sins as they are baptized. At Jesus’ baptism, God proclaims that he has no need to repent.
- (v.38) “the son of Adam, the son of God”—genealogies were cited in histories in order to connect the subject with well-known heroes. In this genealogy, we do indeed see that Jesus is in the lineage of David, and of Abraham. However, the genealogy doesn’t stop with either of these great men. Instead, it extends all the way to Adam. It’s as if the point of this genealogy is not to connect Jesus to the heroes of the past, but to connect them—and all of us—to him: everyone is in Jesus’ family. His story is our family history.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** In today’s passage, John calls his listeners to go through the steps of becoming Jews, even though they’re already Jews. It’s quite a humbling thing. In fact, God seems uncomfortably willing to ask us to do things that are very humbling all the time. Has God put something humble in mind for you? I’m not talking about simply feeling more humble, but about actually taking an action that seems embarrassingly basic. Maybe it’s admitting that you don’t understand something, or confessing that you’ve done something stupid, or re-learning a lesson that you really should know by now. Ask God for the boldness to take that humble action, and the faith to believe that when you do; he will raise you up.
- **For your Six:** Just like Herod, out of pride or even out of fear, we can be tempted to defend our bad choices and mistakes. Doing so only ever makes it worse. Pray for your Six, that they would be quick to acknowledge when they’re in the wrong.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** If John is right, then good things happen in a place where people are generous, honest, and fair. Pray that these qualities would characterize our church.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** This section of scripture ends with a look at Jesus’ Family Tree. From Joseph to Adam, there are a lot of names in there – some we recognize and others not so much, but they are all in the Bible and each person has a story.
- **To Do:** How far back can you draw your family tree? Grab a sheet of paper and start drawing your family tree. Are there any fun, heroic or memorable stories you can share about some of the people on that tree? Not all of our stories are happy, but we can thank God for the good parts, getting us through the hard parts and loving us all along the way. Thank Him that you are here at this time, in this place, and doing life with this family.

Saturday, February 13

Luke 4:1-30—Jesus tested, rejected & shows his power

1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

3 The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘People do not live on bread alone.’”

5 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

8 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

9 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written:

“ ‘He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;
11 they will lift you up in their hands,
so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

12 Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.

23 Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

24 “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “prophets are not accepted in their hometowns. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah’s time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.1) “led by the Spirit”—Jesus himself is guided by the Holy Spirit. God gives Jesus the Holy Spirit because Jesus will need power and wisdom in order to fulfill his mission.
- (v.2) “for forty days he was tempted by the devil”—just like Adam and Eve in the garden, Jesus faces temptation from the devil. The devil is an evil spiritual being, the enemy of God; and his primary weapons throughout the Bible are lies, accusations, and temptation. Luke is the only gospel writer that tells us about the grand finale. Jesus sees through the deceptions, and decides to wait for God to give him the real thing, rather than trying to grab the copy for himself now.
- (v.4) “People do not live on bread alone”—Jesus is quoting Moses, who goes on to say, “but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus is, in fact, choosing to live here by God’s word, rather than by bread.
- (v.10) “For it is written”—the devil is clever. Since Jesus has been turning to the Bible for his answers, the devil decides to try to use the Bible for his temptation.
- (v.24) “prophets are not accepted in their hometowns”—from Jesus’ reaction, you get the sense that they’re being patronizing. They’re amazed, but their amazement is amusement and disbelief that Joseph’s son could speak so well. It’s not amazement at the wonderful thing that is being offered to them, or amazement that prophecy is coming true right in front of their eyes. They are too familiar with Jesus to treat him seriously. Jesus seems to go so far as to say that a total stranger, a foreigner even, might have a better chance of clearly seeing who he is than these people who think they know him so well.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** The devil will try to fool you sometime today into accepting less than God wants to give you. He’s clever, and what he offers can often seem pretty good. Ask God to give you the eyes to see through the devil’s deception.
- **For your Six:** Jesus has good news, freedom, healing, and favor available today for whoever needs them. Pray that your Six would get a taste of each of these things today.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus used some verses from the Bible to help Him stay connected to the truth when He was being attacked. Pray that our church would be a place where we can confront lies and connect to truth. Pray that we would grow in our understanding of the Bible and the power it holds for our daily lives.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** In this passage we see the devil quoting scripture in an attempt to fool and trick Jesus. Jesus knows this and responds with the truth of God’s Word. Memorizing scripture helps keep us from being fooled by the devil too. Do you find it easy or hard to memorize scripture? What are some reasons you think it might be a good idea to memorize God’s Word?
- **To Do:** Pick a verse this week to memorize as a family and help each other learn it. Write the verse on an index card or piece of paper. Keep it with you or maybe leave it on your table to read and practice during each meal. Matthew 4:4 may be a good one to use “*Jesus answered, ‘It is written, Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’*” As you work at memorizing it, remember to talk about what the verse means to you and trust God to help you remember it someday when you need it.

Sunday, February 14

Luke 4:31-5:11—Jesus heals many & calls the first disciples

31 Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. 32 They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, 34 “Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

35 “Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

36 All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!” 37 And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

38 Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. 39 So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

40 At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. 41 Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

42 At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. 43 But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” 44 And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

5:1 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. 2 He saw at the water’s edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.” 5 Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.” 6 When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” 9 For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, 10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” 11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.32) “because his words had authority”—the main difference between Jesus’ words and the words of other teachers is that his words are powerful. They don’t just add knowledge, they cause action: people are rescued from the clutches of evil spiritual beings or healed of diseases when he speaks.
- (v.34) “I know who you are”—demons are evil spiritual beings associated with the devil and constantly on the lookout to do people harm. Perhaps this demon knows who Jesus is because he’s heard about Jesus’ showdown with the devil. Or maybe he can just tell somehow by looking at him. In any case, sadly, this demon recognizes him but the people of Nazareth could not.

- (v.42) “Jesus went out to a solitary place”—maybe he snuck out early just to beat traffic, but it sounds to me like he went to find a quiet place to pray. It’s quite possible that, just as he started his ministry being led by the Spirit into the wilderness, he started his day by being led by the Spirit to a quiet place, to receive instructions from God for the day.
- (v.2) “taught the people from the boat”—to avoid being mobbed, and to use the water to help him project his voice.
- (v.8) “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!”—Simon realizes that he’s in the presence of someone very special, and it’s a little hard for him to grasp. Maybe he’s afraid that, being so near someone so holy, he will be burned like chaff, to borrow a phrase from John.
- (v.10) “from now on you will fish for people”—Simon is not going to be destroyed or punished. He’s going to be transformed. Because of his humble response, Simon is raised up and given a new mission – he is called to the people business!

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus wants to show you that he cares about you. What do you need from Jesus today? Do you need something encouraging to happen at work? Do you need a sick relative to start feeling better? Do you just need him to assure you that he’s not angry at you? Ask Jesus for that thing you need.
- **For your Six:** We’re not really used to thinking about demons, and most of our images of demonic possession come from horror movies. It’s kind of hard to take something like that seriously, or to imagine that such a creature might actually be affecting your Six. But look at it this way: do any of your Six seem to be consistently trapped by negative thoughts or compulsions? Maybe these are even things that don’t seem to fit with the rest of what you know of the person’s character. Ask Jesus to free your friend from anything evil that may be attacking them.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus loves to heal people, not just spiritually but physically. Pray that those in our church with cancer or other life threatening diseases to be miraculously healed. Pray that those who come up for prayer after service or to our healing class would leave feeling better.

Week Two of 42 Days through Good News according to Luke

Monday, February 15

Luke 5:12-32 — More healing & calling of Matthew

12 While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

13 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

15 Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. 18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. 19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 23 Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? 24 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” 25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. 26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, 28 and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 30 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

31 Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.13) “reached out his hand and touched the man”—Jewish ritual cleansing rules (what we now know as kosher laws) prohibited contact with lepers (Numbers 5:1-3). People with leprosy were considered ‘unclean,’ or ritually impure, and required to wear a special uniform, to live outside of town, and to warn people who approached them not to touch them (Leviticus 13:45-46). Anyone who touched someone with leprosy was also considered unclean until it could be demonstrated that they had not caught the disease. So, Jesus’ choice to touch the man is unusual, bold, compassionate, and could be considered reckless. By healing through touch, Jesus addresses the man’s need in two ways: he physically heals the man of the disease, and he welcomes the man back into society; this is likely the first human contact the man has had since he caught the disease. Touching the man also turns the normal rules on their heads: usually when an unclean person

touches you, you become unclean; but when Jesus touches an unclean person, the unclean person becomes clean. With Jesus, instead of an ever-spreading uncleanness, an ever-spreading cleanness becomes possible.

- (v.14) “show yourself to the priest . . . as a testimony to them”—the priests were responsible for officially inspecting people and declaring them clean or unclean (Leviticus 13 and 14).
- (v.17) “Pharisees and teachers of the law”—these are the religious experts. They’re probably here to check out the new rabbi in town: to see how Jesus measures up and to figure out whether he’s on their side.
- (v.24) “the Son of Man”—this becomes Jesus’ preferred title for himself. To a certain extent, it’s a very humble title, simply meaning, “human being.” By using it, he’s identifying himself with all of us. But it is also a subtle reference to one of the more famous Messianic prophecies, in which Daniel predicts the coming of a holy king who would be ‘like a Son of Man’ (Daniel 7:13-14)
- (v.31) “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick”—Jesus has been doing a lot of healing of people who are physically sick. He’s been healing them out of a genuine desire to see them well, but also as a metaphor for an even more primary mission: to forgive sinners. Just like doctors heal sick people, Jesus forgives sinners. He’s a sin doctor. This puts Peter’s exclamation, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” in a new light. By calling Peter to follow him, Jesus is not saying, “Oh, Peter. Don’t get down on yourself; you’re not that bad.” Rather, he’s saying, “Of course, you’re sinful, Peter. That’s why I’m calling you. If you come with me, I can help you with that.” The Pharisees think of sinners as people to be avoided. Peter fears that he will be punished for his sins. But Jesus draws near to sinners, for the sake of healing them, not punishing them (and us!).

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus looks at our faults and mistakes as sickness he wants to heal, rather than as failings that must be punished. Ask Jesus to take care of your sins today. Jesus is a sin doctor. Ask him to point out any sin-sickness in you, to diagnose the cause of the sin, to heal you, and to give you the prescription you need to stay in good spiritual health.
- **For your Six:** Jesus shows the leper that He is both willing and able to heal his sickness. In other words, Jesus is both good and powerful. Do your Six have a harder time believing in His goodness or His power? Try asking Him to demonstrate whichever one they need most, just like He did for the leper.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** In this passage we see Jesus caring for people who are left on the outside of society. Pray for our church to be a welcoming space for any in our community who are feeling isolated. Pray specifically today for our Hope for the Homeless outreach. Ask that all whom they encounter would feel a tangible sense of the love of Jesus.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Life can get busy, which Jesus totally understood. He was a very busy man. In this section alone he was healing the sick and the paralyzed and also preaching. In verse 16, however, we see that it says, “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” This is such a great example of Jesus taking care of himself. Do you have a quiet place you like to sit and rest?
- **To Do:** Set a timer or stopwatch for five minutes (shorter for younger kids – maybe longer for older kids) and each person pick a spot to just practice sitting quietly and praying. If just sitting is challenging, take paper and pen and you can draw or write what comes to your mind while you are praying. Come back together and share what it was like to just intentionally sit quietly and pray.

Tuesday, February 16

Luke 5:33-6:11— Discussions on Fasting & the Sabbath

33 They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

34 Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? 35 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

36 He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. If they do, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. 37 And people do not pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. 38 No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. 39 And none of you, after drinking old wine, wants the new, for you say, ‘The old is better.’ “

6:1 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. 2 Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

3 Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 4 He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” 5 Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

6 On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. 7 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. 8 But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there.

9 Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

10 He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored. 11 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.33) “disciples”—*disciple* means, ‘follower.’ It’s the term used for the students or trainees of a teacher.
- (v.34) ‘Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?’—It would be inappropriate, insulting even, to fast at a wedding; when a bride and groom invite you to celebrate with them, go through all the trouble of planning their reception, and spend \$50 a plate, you don’t tell them, “None for me, thanks; I’m saving my appetite for later.” Similarly, it is out of place for Jesus’ disciples to fast. It makes sense that the Pharisees and John’s disciples would fast. Fasting is an expression of a strong, unsatisfied desire. The Pharisees and John’s followers fast because they are waiting for something to happen. That’s not true for Jesus’ followers; rather than waiting for something to come, they’re celebrating someone who has. It would be silly for them to fast to express their longing for a savior, when they can just eat with the savior instead.
- (v.37) “people do not pour new wine into old wineskins”—new wine expands in volume as it ferments, but old skins have already been stretched to their limits. So, if new wine is put into old skins, the skin breaks and the wine spills. Jesus is saying that he is new and different, and to try to fit him into the old categories just doesn’t work. In the Old Testament, wine is often used as a sign of God’s blessing on and abundant provision for his people (*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* 951-952. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998). So, by calling himself new wine, Jesus is saying that he is a gift from God of abundance and celebration.

- (v.39) “The old is better”—Jesus doesn’t see much hope that the Pharisees will ever accept him. It’s not just that they’re making the honest mistake of putting new wine into old skins; they’re trying to force new wine to be old wine, because the very idea of new wine is distasteful to them.
- At one time, the Pharisees were actually the bringers of new wine. When the people of God had completely forgotten about God’s law, the Pharisees were an exciting new reform movement, drawing people back to the law as a source of blessing. Over time, though, they’ve become rigid, like an old wineskin, unable to accept anything new. The problem with drinking only old wine is that, eventually, you run out. If you want to keep having wine, at some point you’ve got to drink new wine. The Pharisees’ insistence on old wine leaves them in the place of eventually having no wine at all.
- (v.9) “do good or to do evil”—to the Pharisees and the teachers, the Sabbath is more or less about not doing much at all. To Jesus, the more important question is whether you are doing something helpful or harmful. Jesus is doing helpful on the Sabbath, by healing the man’s hand. Meanwhile, the Pharisees and teachers are planning harm to Jesus. The lack of compassion and the amount of pure hatred the Pharisees show here is astounding. They see someone with a withered hand, and they think, “Oh, good. This is a perfect opportunity for us to catch Jesus doing something wrong.” They are glad the man is healed, but only because it gives them the excuse they need to work against Jesus.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus seemed to have a knack for offending the religious leaders of the day. His behavior did not fall in line with their lists of moral “shoulds” and “should nots.” Ask Jesus today to show you an area of your life where you function from “should.” Pray that his voice and his presence will be your guiding motivation for any actions you take.
- **For your Six:** It takes a new wineskin to hold new wine. Ask God to give your Six the containers they need for the blessings He has for them. Pray that they would be open to new things from God.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that our church would be able to see Jesus for who He is, rather than try to force Him into whatever categories we already have for him.

Wednesday, February 17

Luke 6:12-26 — Chooses Apostles & The Beatitudes

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

17 He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

20 Looking at his disciples, he said:

Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

21 Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

22 Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.

23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven.
For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

24 But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received your comfort.

25 Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.

26 Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.13) “whom he also designated apostles”—*apostle* means “sent out one” or “commissioned one.” Jesus has been commissioned by God, and He is now commissioning these twelve people to share in His work. More than likely, He chose the number twelve in honor of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- (v.20) “Blessed are you”—these are the famous beatitudes, so-called after the Latin for “blessed.” It might be worth considering for a moment what exactly “blessed” means. Some synonyms for *blessed* are *favored*, *fortunate*, or even *happy*. Perhaps the closest common equivalent to *blessed* is *lucky*, if you add in a sense that the luck is God-directed. So, what Jesus is saying here is, “When you’re poor, or hungry, or sad, or hated, that’s when you are really lucky!” When I look at it that way, it takes the beatitudes out of my “Top 10 Beautiful Sentiments Expressed by Jesus” list and moves it straight to the top of my “Top 10 Unsettling and Bizarre Sayings of Jesus” list instead. It gets even stranger when you add in the second half of the teaching, where Jesus says, “I feel sorry for you if you are rich, or satisfied, or laughing, or well-received.” Jesus is making the claim here that our usual measures for when things are going well and when they’re going poorly are 180 degrees off. When we think we’re doomed, we might be in exactly the right place for something great to happen. When we think things are heading in the right direction, we might actually be missing out on something. Of course, it takes a lot of faith in Jesus to trust this advice. It’s helpful to remember that the person who said these things is the same person who healed the leper: He is both willing and able to do wonderful things for people who have faith in Him.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Do you find that your efforts toward happiness are often disappointed? Perhaps you need some recalibration. Ask God to point you in the true direction of happiness, and ask him for the faith to keep walking that way.
- **For your Six:** Jesus wants to bring satisfaction where there is hunger and laughter where there is sorrow. Ask him to fill the empty places in the lives of your Six with good things.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** In today’s passage, Jesus’ message starts to spread beyond the people who had heard it before. Pray that our church would be a welcoming space for those who are unfamiliar with His message. Much of ILTJ is aimed at helping us do just that. Pray that people who have never met Jesus before would hear good news from Him, and experience healing and freedom from Him.

Thursday, February 18

Luke 6:27-49 —Words to Live By

27 “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

39 He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 Students are not above their teacher, but all who are fully trained will be like their teacher. 41 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in someone else’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 42 How can you say, ‘Friend, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from the other person’s eye.

43 “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. 44 Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. 45 Good people bring good things out of the good stored up in their heart, and evil people bring evil things out of the evil stored up in their heart. For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.

46 “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? 47 As for those who come to me and hear my words and put them into practice, I will show you what they are like. 48 They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. 49 But those who hear my words and do not put them into practice are like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.31) ‘Do to others as you would have them do to you’—this is another of those teachings of Jesus that packs a bigger wallop than you think it does at first glance. It’s not just about being a nice person: turning in lost wallets to the lost and found, not hitting your little sister, etc. What Jesus is actually saying here is, ‘Treat your enemies just like you’d hope your friends would treat you.’ This seems crazy! And even if it’s not crazy, it certainly is unfair. That might very well be Jesus’ point. Jesus is calling people beyond fairness to generosity and mercy.
- (v.35) ‘Then your reward will be great’—Jesus is really into reward maximization. He’s not recommending being ‘good for goodness’ sake’—as Santa Claus would say. He’s not criticizing his listeners for trying to get the best deal they possibly can. His problem with people who only have reciprocal relationships (‘I’ll treat you well if you treat me well.’) is that the strategy will never get anywhere: if you only give what you get and get what you give, you only end up breaking even. Jesus is giving us investment advice here: if we want big profits from our relationships, we should give more than we get. It’s an investment in God’s economy, and he pays very big dividends.

- (v.37) ‘Do not judge, and you will not be judged’—our treatment of others signals the treatment we will get. It’s as if we have a choice between two different systems: a system of judgment and condemnation, and a system of forgiveness and generosity. We opt into a system by our attitude toward one another. If we choose to judge others, we’ll be surrounded by judgment—from others, from God, probably even from ourselves. If we choose to treat others with generosity, we will find ourselves in an environment completely filled with generosity toward us.
- (v.45) ‘out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks’—in Jesus’ analogy, our heart is a tree and our words are the fruit. We can test the state of our hearts by paying attention to our words.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Try creating a judgment-free zone in your house and at your workplace today. Avoid judging your family, coworkers, and even yourself. Check in at the end of the day. How does it feel? Do you notice a difference?
- **For your Six:** Pray that God would reward your Six extravagantly for any acts of kindness they perform, especially when they are kind to people who do not stir up kind feelings in them.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray for an economy of abundance to be unleashed in our church. Ask God to give us all the ability to treat others as we would want to be treated. Pray that our whole community would be changed, for the better, as a result.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** In today’s reading there is a lot to unpack – loving our enemies is hard, loving our friends and family is sometimes hard, following Jesus can be hard – which is why we need our foundation to be strong and firm. We can’t do this Jesus-life on our own, we need Jesus to be that foundation that keeps us strong so when “the storms of life” hit (a.k.a. hard times, challenges, troubles), we remain standing firm with and in Him. Talk about what it means to love your enemies, to not judge family and friends and to stay strong with Jesus when life is hard. This can be really difficult – and that’s ok – that’s all the more reason to keep building our foundation on Jesus.
- **To Do:** Grab some dominoes or building blocks or playing cards and head outside today. We are going to build two towers. Find a place where you can build up one tower on a hard concrete surface and build a second tower on some sand or loose dirt. I think you’ll find that the one built on the firm foundation will be the sturdier tower. This is a great picture of building our lives on Jesus. He is the firm foundation and the BEST option.

Friday, February 19

Luke 7:1-23 — Unexpected Faith & Raising the Dead

7:1 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. 2 There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. 3 The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. 4 When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, 5 because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” 6 So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

9 When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” 10 Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

11 Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.

12 As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”

14 Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” 15 The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

16 They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” 17 This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

18 John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?’ “

21 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 23 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.2) “a centurion’s servant”—a centurion is a Roman army officer, more or less equivalent to a modern captain.
- (v.5) “he loves our nation and has built our synagogue”—in other words, whether or not he’s actually heard the sermons of John and Jesus, he’s been living by them: he’s not taking advantage of his position to gain at the expense of someone else; instead he’s loving his enemies and doing good to those who hate him.
- (v.9) “I have not found such great faith even in Israel”—the friends of the paralytic were willing to dig through a roof to get their friend into Jesus’ presence, but the centurion has utter confidence that a simple word from him will suffice. He recognizes that Jesus is more than a healer: he is a ruler, who can command others to do his bidding. This centurion probably wasn’t even looking for a Messiah, like the Jews were, but he recognizes one when he sees him.
- (13) “his heart went out to her”—All of the other miracles Jesus has done so far have been in response to a request; but this time, Jesus decides to do this one on his own, out of deep sympathy for the suffering of this widow. In Zechariah’s song in chapter one, he looks forward to forgiveness of sins and rescue from the shadow of death. Now, we’ve seen Jesus bring both. He showed his authority to forgive by healing the paralytic, and now he demonstrates his power over death by raising the widow’s son.
- (v.16) “God has come to help his people”—the people recognize that something very special is happening. Everyone recognizes that Jesus is a great prophet such as hasn’t been seen in a long time, but some go so far as to think that God himself has come to them.
- (v.22) “The blind receive sight”—Jesus is referring to Isaiah 35, where Isaiah predicts that just such miracles will happen in the time when the Lord comes to replace sorrow with joy.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** In this passage, we see Jesus answer a prayer from a distance, and raise someone from the dead! God is capable of doing much more than you might imagine or think of asking. Try increasing the boldness of what you ask him for today. Who knows what might happen?
- **For your Six:** Ask Jesus to show your Six what they need to see in order to know he's the one they've been waiting for.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Ask God to sustain anyone in our church who is about to lose hope. Specifically pray for protection against discouragement for the ministry leaders in our church.

Saturday, February 20

Luke 7:24-50 — Jesus affirms John the Baptist

24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written:

'I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

29 (All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. 30 But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

31 Jesus went on to say, "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

"We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not cry."

33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, "He has a demon." 34 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." 35 But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

41 "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

48 Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

50 Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.26) “and more than a prophet”—John held a privileged place among the prophets, being the one given the opportunity to introduce the coming Lord.
- (v.34) “Here is a glutton and a drunkard”—the Pharisees are impossible to please. They dismissed John as a madman, and they dismiss Jesus as a party animal.
- (v.35) “wisdom is proved right by all her children”—John and Jesus are both wisdom’s children, even if they show the family resemblance in much different ways. They both behave in ways that are appropriate to their time, their place, and their mission. John’s more severe lifestyle was in accordance with his message of repentance and of desperate longing for something new to come. Jesus’ propensity for partying fits well with both the exhilaration that the day has finally come, and with his mission to go wherever he can find sinners.
- (v.40) “Jesus answered him”—The Pharisee is silently skeptical about whether Jesus is a prophet, and Jesus responds as if he was talking aloud. The Pharisee assumes that if Jesus were a prophet, he would know of the woman’s sinful life, and therefore not have anything to do with her. The woman’s past doesn’t seem to matter to Jesus at all, except to lead him to remark on how much gratitude she expresses.
- (v.44) “You did not give me any water for my feet”—Although the Pharisee invites Jesus to dinner, he is somewhat lacking in courtesy. He doesn’t do any of the things that would express warm welcome or honor. Maybe he feels that Jesus should be grateful just to be invited. The woman more than makes up for the Pharisee’s lack of courtesy with her lavish care.
- (v.50) “Your faith has saved you”—this woman is so confident that Jesus will forgive her that she extravagantly thanks him before it ever happens. It is just such faith in Jesus’ goodness and power that leads to her being forgiven.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** You can be utterly confident that Jesus will forgive your sins. After all, it’s what He came to do. Spend a moment today praising Jesus for his forgiveness. Consider imitating the woman from today’s passage, by figuring out some special way to thank Jesus. Perhaps you could write a letter to Him, or give a gift in His honor to express your gratitude.
- **For your Six:** John served as a forerunner for Jesus. He helped smooth the path so that it would be easier for people to recognize Jesus when He came to them. Ask God to help you to be the same kind of help for your Six. What are the things that get in the way of your Six being able to receive the good things Jesus might have for them? Ask God to open a door for you to play a role in helping them remove those barriers.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** In this story, Jesus again provides a vivid picture of a God overflowing with love and grace. Pray that the values of God, love, and grace would be obvious and visible in our church.

Sunday, February 21

Luke 8:1-21 — A Sower, a Lamp & True family

1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

4 While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5 "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. 6 Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown."

When he said this, he called out, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

9 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10 He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

'though seeing, they may not see;

though hearing, they may not understand.'

11 "This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. 14 The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. 15 But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

16 "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. 17 For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. 18 Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Those who have will be given more; as for those who do not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them."

19 Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. 20 Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

21 He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.2) "and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases"—the followers of Jesus are not all men. We now hear of these women who play a crucial role in Jesus' work. They, like the woman from the previous passage, willingly give out of gratitude for Jesus' rescue; and by their sacrifice, they make it possible for Jesus to go on to rescue others.
- (v.11) "The seed is the word of God"—when he speaks, Jesus is sowing word-seeds. Just like the seeds of plants, these words he is sowing have the potential to grow and multiply in the lives of their hearers; but it's also possible that something could get in the way of their growth. Then it would be just as if the words were never sown at all: though they had ears, they would never really have heard.
- (v.15) "by persevering"—it takes some work for these seeds to grow. You have to try to hear these words, if you really want to have the words fulfill their true potential. Jesus' disciples are a perfect example in this passage of persevering to produce a crop. Everyone in the whole crowd hears Jesus' parable, but to them it

probably just ends up being a semi-interesting agricultural story. The disciples actually put in the extra time and effort to ask Jesus what the parable means. Because they ask, the secret is unlocked, and the meaning of the words is able to grow in their lives.

- (v.18) “Those who have will be given more”—in the end, a farmer is looking for crops. He will plant more seeds where He has seen seeds grow, and He knows it’s a waste to plant seeds where they don’t grow. Jesus is the same way. He wants to see His words grow, and multiply, and have an effect; so, He’ll always give more words to those who listen well. And He’ll stop giving more words where they don’t have any effect: it does neither Him nor the hearer any good.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** In this passage, the disciples ask Jesus to help them understand some of things He had been saying. Is there anything from this week’s reading that has been confusing to you? Let Jesus know. Ask Him to help you have “ears to hear” as you read.
- **For your Six:** Ask God to help your Six to be good soil for Jesus’ words. Pray that any words of Jesus that land in their lives would grow and produce some positive effect in their lives.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** The good soil Jesus talked about in this parable provided an environment which resulted in incredible growth. In the same way, pray that our ILTJ projects (solar panels, worship center renovation, children’s facilities, campus updates) will result in an environment of good soil and incredible growth.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Jesus is using stories to help the people understand what He is talking about. There’s a pretty good chance many of us today do not spend a huge amount of time farming or gardening. Regardless, this parable Jesus told and explained is such a great one to talk about and think about. Good soil – that’s the goal right? People with noble and good hearts, who hear the Word, retain it and by persevering, produce a crop. What are some ways you can help cultivate good soil in your life?
- **To Do:** Get some paper and draw a picture of each of the following: (You can each draw all of them or assign one to specific members of the family)
 1. A photo of the farmer planting his seed (the word of God)
 2. Seed on a path being trampled and eaten by birds (the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved)
 3. Seeds landing on rock and the plants withering because of no moisture (the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away.)
 4. Seeds among thorns or weeds being choked by them (for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life’s worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature.)
 5. Seeds planted in good soil growing up and producing a huge crop (for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop)

Talk about the different pictures and what Jesus said each meant. Is there one that concerns you or bothers you more than another? How can you help each other as a family to grow seeds (God’s Word) in good soil (in your life).

Week Three of 42 Days through Good News according to Luke

Monday, February 22

Luke 8:22-39 — Storms and Demons

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Master, Master, we’re going to drown!”

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 “Where is your faith?” he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, “Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.”

26 They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don’t torture me!” 29 For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

30 Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“Legion,” he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. 33 When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus’ feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 “Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.25) “In fear and amazement”—Jesus calms the storm, but not the disciples. They start out afraid of the storm, and they end up even more afraid of Jesus. Through this incident they gain a new level of respect for Jesus: the storm was powerful enough to kill them, and Jesus is powerful enough to kill the storm. That’s impressive, and a bit scary.
- (v.27) “had lived in the tombs”—an evocative, if creepy, image. It simultaneously communicates loneliness—cemeteries were placed outside of the city limits—and a sort of living death.
- (v.30) “Legion”—a Roman military division.

- (v.31) “they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss”—these demons are surprisingly frantic at Jesus’ arrival. Maybe they’ve heard stories of Jesus’ confrontations with evil spirits on the other side of the lake, but they didn’t expect Him to come into this non-Jewish area. The Abyss is apparently some kind of prison for demons.
- (v.35) “and they were afraid”—they respond just like the disciples did when the storm was calmed. They start out afraid of the demon-possessed man, and end up even more afraid of Jesus—so afraid of Him that they ask him to leave. It’s seeing the man in his right mind that they can’t handle. They’d grown used to the idea that the man’s situation was hopeless, and it’s unsettling to them to see that reality change.
- (v.39) “tell how much God has done for you”—all the man knows about God is that He rescued him when he seemed beyond help, but that’s enough. In fact, in this regard the man has an advantage over many of Jesus’ Jewish listeners, whose centuries’ worth of history with God and prophecies about the Messiah give them a lot more knowledge about God.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Even a small word from God can make a big difference for our lives. Ask God to help you notice today when He is speaking to you. Ask him for the faith to hold on to those words. If listening to God is a new thing for you, consider giving it a try. Say something to God or ask him a question; then listen for an answer. You probably won’t hear an audible voice, but you might get an impression that feels sort of like when you mentally form a sentence before saying it. Remember that anything destructive to yourself or others is against the nature of God, so you can rule that out as not from Him. If you are still confused, find someone that you think hears from God regularly and share your experience with them.
- **For your Six:** Have any of your Six had a good experience with God recently? If so, consider suggesting that they share their story. It’s a great way to move forward in their relationship with God, and it could be very helpful to the people they tell as well. It doesn’t matter if they don’t know much about God. If all they know is the good thing God has done for them, it’s enough—in fact, it might be better that way.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray for any “storm moments” that our church will go through this year. Pray for those individuals in our church who are experiencing a storm right now. Pray for the power of Jesus to overcome these storms and that His presence will be thick around us in any moments of fear.

Tuesday, February 23

Luke 8:40-56 — Faith & Healing

40 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 41 Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come to his house 42 because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. 43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. 44 She came up behind Him and touched the edge of His cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

45 “Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you.”

46 But Jesus said, “Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me.”

47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched Him and how she had been instantly healed. 48 Then He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.”

49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is

dead,” he said. “Don’t bother the teacher anymore.”

50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.”

51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus, He did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child’s father and mother. 52 Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. “Stop wailing,” Jesus said. “She is not dead but asleep.”

53 They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But he took her by the hand and said, “My child, get up!” 55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. 56 Her parents were astonished, but He ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.40) “they were all expecting him”—a crowd is even gathered to greet him as he steps off the boat. Jesus has reached rock star status. The people can’t get enough of him.
- (v.41) “a synagogue leader”—he’s what we’d call “a pillar of the community.” He’s probably wealthy and well-respected. Given his place in society, it might take quite a bit of humility to ask for Jesus’ help; it might even cause something of a society scandal. But Jairus doesn’t seem to hesitate; his desperation for his daughter and his faith in Jesus’ power compel him to ask for Jesus’ help.
- (v.48) “Daughter”—Jairus would be wondering at this point why Jesus wasn’t in more of a hurry. By calling this woman ‘Daughter,’ Jesus is saying, ‘I feel for this woman exactly the way you feel for your daughter. I’m as desperate to see her healed as you are to see your daughter healed. I had to stop.’

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus is able to save Jairus’ daughter even when it looks like she’s beyond help. Are you in a situation that seems hopeless? It’s still worth bringing it to Jesus. While we’re not guaranteed of the results, He may very well surprise you by what he will do.
- **For your Six:** Just when it looks like the woman’s sickness is something that would never go away, Jesus heals her. Pray that God would save your Six from problems and troubles they’ve begun to think of as permanent.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Sometimes it can be hard to accept the idea that God would intervene in supernatural ways. Pray that our church will be full of people seeking God for more of his supernatural power.

Wednesday, February 24

Luke 9:1-17 — Now this is a big dinner party

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them.” 6 So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, 8 others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9 But Herod said, “I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?” And he tried to see him.

10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then He took them with Him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11 but the crowds learned about it and followed Him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to Him and said, “Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here.”

13 He replied, “You give them something to eat.”

They answered, “We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd.”

14 (About five thousand men were there.)

But He said to his disciples, “Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each.” 15 The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. 16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, He gave thanks and broke them. Then He gave them to the disciples to set before the people. 17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.1) “He gave them power and authority”—Jesus makes the Twelve into his deputies. He passes along to them His own mission, and the power and authority He uses to accomplish it.
- (v.5) “shake the dust off your feet”—By shaking the dust off their feet, they’re making clear that they and this town have nothing to do with one another. The Twelve are basically filling the role of John. They’re going ahead of Jesus to announce His coming, giving people the chance to prepare to welcome Him. If a town doesn’t welcome the disciples, they also won’t be ready to receive Jesus.
- (v.9) “I beheaded John” John has been executed since we last saw him. For some reason, Luke decides not to tell us the story of his death, as his source Mark does (Mark 6:14-29). It’s pretty rare that Luke gives us fewer details than Mark. Perhaps Luke decides to leave out the details of John’s death so that the readers last picture of him is when he is hearing the evidence that the Lord has come; like Simeon, he can then die in peace.
- (v.9) “he tried to see him”—is Herod intrigued, or does he just want to make sure that John is indeed dead? It’s hard to know.
- (v.11) “He welcomed them”—the getaway doesn’t last long. Somehow, the crowds find out where they are and follow them. These people are very good soil. They hear the apostles’ message about Jesus’ kingdom, and they immediately set out to find this kingdom. Just as He promised in the story about the soils, Jesus gives them more words: ‘Those who have will be given more’ (Luke 8:18).

- (v.12) “Send the crowd away”—meanwhile, the Twelve treat the crowd like unwelcome guests. They take a very conspicuous glance at their watches and say, ‘Well, it’s getting to be about dinner time ... you’ll have to be moving along.’ Hospitality is a very important feature of the culture of Jesus’ day. In fact, hospitality remains a hallmark of Middle Eastern culture to this day.
- (v.16) “he gave them to the disciples to set before the people”—Jesus asks them to do the impossible, but He also supernaturally provides them with the ability to do it.
- (v.17) “all ate and were satisfied”—earlier, Jesus said, ‘Blessed are you who hunger now,/for you will be satisfied’ (Luke 6:21). These crowds are hungry, both spiritually and physically. Jesus sees that they are satisfied on both counts.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** The disciples are tired, and the needs of the crowd are overwhelming. They just want to send the crowd away so that they can rest, but God asks them to care for the crowd instead. Caring for others can be disruptive, inconvenient, and overwhelming; but Jesus promises that we can never out-give God. When we give to others, God gives even more to us. Pray that God would give you what you need to go beyond your limits in caring for others—whether what you need is more compassion, more faith, or just the actual things you need to care for them well. As you care for others, ask God to also care for you. Look for him to provide for you in surprising ways today.
- **For your Six:** Ask God to fill a practical need for your Six in an unexpected way some time in the next week.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus comes where He is welcome. On behalf of our church, tell Jesus that He is welcome here, and invite Him to come with more of His kingdom, more of His good news, and more of His healing. Then pick two other churches in our area or city and pray that they would also experience more of Jesus’ presence and kingdom.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Jesus’ example of hospitality here is something we can all follow. We see Jesus welcome the people who are interested in spending time with him. He feeds this huge crowd dinner – even though they don’t technically have enough food. Jesus prayed for God to provide for their needs and He did even more - they had leftovers!
- **To Do:** Look around your kitchen – literally, walk into the kitchen and count the number of food items you have in the fridge, freezer, pantry, etc. Lots of time even when it feels like we have nothing to eat, we usually have something – and maybe even something we can share with others. As a family talk about the ways God has provided food, shelter and clothing and then see if there are things you can give away that could help bless the crowd around you. Maybe even intentionally bring a few of those food items in your pantry to Journey and place them in the Food Bank Bins.

Thursday, February 25

Luke 9:18-36 — Who is this Jesus?

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, He asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?”

19 They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life.”

20 “But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.”

21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And He said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”

23 Then He said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self? 26 If any of you are ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when He comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

27 “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As He was praying, the appearance of His face changed, and His clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, 31 appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about His departure, which He was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. 32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to Him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.)

34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to Him.” 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.18) “Who do the crowds say I am?”—the disciples list off the same possibilities Herod had heard about in yesterday’s passage. This seems to be the question that’s on everyone’s mind: who exactly is Jesus?
- (v.20) “God’s Messiah”—Peter recognizes that Jesus is even better than one of the great prophets of the past: Jesus is the one the prophets were hoping for.
- (v.21) “warned them not to tell this to anyone”— Though He hides his identity, it’s not meant to be a secret forever; Jesus actually wants it to be known, but He doesn’t want people to be told. Maybe Jesus wants people to discover He is the Savior because they’ve followed Him, rather than following Him because they’ve heard He is the Savior.
- (v.22) “The Son of Man must suffer many things”—here’s another reason Jesus might want the disciples to remain quiet for the time being on the topic of the Messiah. He wants them to understand the Messiah better first. Jesus wants them to understand how His suffering and rejection will ultimately fit into His mission before they start telling others that He is indeed the Messiah. (see Isa.53)

- (v.22) “and on the third day be raised to life”—though His mission involves suffering and rejection, it ends in life: ‘After He has suffered/He will see the light of life and be satisfied’ (Isaiah 53:11). Mysteriously, the Messiah’s apparent defeat and death is His path to even greater glory, and the means by which He accomplishes His rescue of others. “On the third day,” may be a reference to a prophecy of Hosea (Hosea 6:2).
- (v.23) “take up their cross daily”—this teaching is hard enough to understand now, after Jesus’ crucifixion, but Jesus is saying it before He is killed. In fact, it’s the first mention of a cross in the story. At this point, the cross is not at all a religious symbol, but just a means of execution. Jesus is saying here, ‘If you want to follow me, you ought to know that something has to end up on death row.’
- (v.35) ‘This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him’—the Father last spoke from heaven at Jesus’ baptism, when he said to Jesus, ‘You are my son’ (Luke 3:22). Now, he directs similar words to the disciples, saying, “This is my son.” At this crucial moment, when Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, He starts to make His way toward the cross, and He invites His disciples to follow Him to death, God the Father speaks from heaven to confirm Jesus’ identity and corroborate His words.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** This passage makes it look like Jesus’ prayer times were pretty exciting: flashes of lightning, transformed appearance, conversations with long-dead heroes of faith, a voice out of the clouds. Could your prayer time use a little livening up? Ask God to give you visions, words from him, amazing experiences, or whatever else he’d like to give you.
- **For your Six:** Pray that your Six would grow in their curiosity about Jesus, and that He would reveal Himself to them.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that God would open up new pathways for our church to “lose and give away”, so that we can receive and hold on to what is most important. Pray today for those who “lose and give away” by volunteering in our church, including anyone helping with our kids programs, guest services, and community outreach. Pray that God would give them a specific moment of encouragement this week as they serve.

Friday, February 26

Luke 9:37-62 — Healing, Death, Opposition & Cost

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”

41 “You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”

42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44 “Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered over to human hands.” 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask Him about it.

46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For whoever is least among you all is the greatest.”

49 “Master,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.”

50 “Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”

51 As the time approached for Him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And He sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for Him; 53 but the people there did not welcome Him, because He was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then He and his disciples went to another village.

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

58 Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

59 He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

61 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.”

62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.40) “but they could not”—from Wednesday’s passage, we know that they have the power and authority to do this. Nonetheless, they can’t do it this time.
- (v.41) “unbelieving and perverse generation”—Even with all of the miracles Jesus has performed, everything quickly reverts as soon as He leaves to the way it was before. This is of especial concern for Jesus because He knows that He doesn’t have much time left. *Perverse* in this situation means “crooked.” Jesus is finding it hard to get through to people, because the path to their hearts is winding and complicated.
- (v.46) “An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest”—they’re probably thinking about the Messianic kingdom. When they ride into glory in Messiah Jesus’ wake, who will get the top jobs? Who will be prime minister? Who will be general? Who will get to rule his own small kingdom?
- (v.49) “we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us”—This man is casting out demons in Jesus’ name. It’s one of the primary signs that Jesus has brought God’s kingdom to earth—and it’s something that the disciples were recently unable to do—but they stop him, because he’s not part of their club. The Twelve may disagree about which one of them is greatest, but they’re in complete agreement that it’s going to be one of them—not some outsider. For Jesus, who is doing it isn’t important; what’s important is that people are being freed from demonic oppression.
- (v.52) “a Samaritan village”—after the reign of Solomon (about 1000 years ago), David’s kingdom divided in two: Judah, with Jerusalem as the capital; and Israel, with Samaria as the capital. The two kingdoms spent much of the next 300 years fighting one another, like two siblings squabbling over their father’s inheritance. Israel was eventually conquered by the Assyrians, who scattered the Israelites and re-settled the area with other conquered people. The Samaritans (so named after their capital) retained some of the culture and religion as the Jews, but mixed with lots of outside influences. The bitter sibling rivalry continued to the time of Jesus, and was mixed with fights about the purity of their religion: the Jews criticized the Samaritans for their syncretism, and the Samaritans responded defensively. The Jews lived in Judea and Galilee, and Samaria lay in between the two; so Jesus is cutting through Samaria to get from Galilee to Judea.
- (v.54) “do you want us to call fire down from heaven?”—The disciples are trying to model Elijah when he called down fire from heaven to show God’s power. But Jesus didn’t come to bring fire; He came to bring freedom and healing. His followers are called to bless those who curse them (Luke 6: 28), not burn them.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus invited his disciples to be followers of him in every way, including healing the sick and freeing people from spiritual oppression. It is easy to feel frustrated or even not good enough when trying to follow Jesus into some of these areas. Maybe you have had an experience like the disciples where you felt like a failure in a spiritual situation. Pray that Jesus would step into that situation this week and bring His healing and freedom. Pray for confidence and boldness to act like Jesus when it feels high-risk.
- **For your Six:** Many people have a great deal of respect for Jesus' teaching, but they have a hard time understanding His death or believing in His resurrection. Is Jesus' death or resurrection something getting in the way of any of your Six believing in him? Pray that your Six would have the faith, the interest, and the boldness to ask their questions about the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus makes a point by welcoming the children around him and obviously sees their encounters with him as significant. Pray today that God would do something amazing in our next generation. Pray for our giving to complete all the upgrades in the kid's area so that any child who comes to our church would feel welcome and personally experience the love of God.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Sometimes God's Word is hard to understand – maybe even these verses are confusing. I take comfort that Jesus' disciples got confused too and they were with Him in physical person. It also says they were afraid to ask Him about what confused them. I think we can learn a couple things from this: 1. What is something that confuses you about God or His Word? 2. Are you afraid to ask God about that? Be encouraged that God is not surprised that you are confused or maybe afraid to talk to Him. He already knows that you are and He wants you to bring your questions to Him.
- **To Do:** Do it now – share with each other some of the things that confuse or frustrate you about God. Then pray together and ask the Lord to help give you clarity to understand some things better and peace about those things you don't or may never understand.

Saturday, February 27

Luke 10:1-24 — Sending out disciples & Praise

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

5 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 If the head of the house loves peace, your peace will rest on that house; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for workers deserve their wages. Do not move around from house to house.

8 "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

16 "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."

17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

18 He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

22 “All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

23 Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.3) “I am sending you out like lambs among wolves”—this isn’t an unfortunate necessity, but a purposeful strategy on Jesus’ part. He actually strips them of provisions so that they will seem even weaker and more defenseless.
- (v.6) “if not, it will return to you”—you don’t lose any peace by trying to give it away; it either multiplies, or simply returns to you. There’s no harm done if you try to bless someone who doesn’t want to be blessed.
- (v.7) “eating and drinking whatever they give you”—Jesus twice commands them to eat what they are given. At the feeding of the 5000, Jesus made clear that He expected His followers to be good hosts. Here, He adds that it’s also important for them to be good guests. Eating whatever is set before them could be difficult for the disciples for a couple of reasons: they don’t want to be a burden to their guests; or they won’t like what their guests offer. But Jesus tells them to accept whatever hospitality is offered. Here are a few reasons this might be important.
 1. To honor their hosts—by graciously accepting whatever is offered;
 2. To meet their own needs—without bread or money, it’s the only way they’re going to eat. Besides, they are offering something very valuable to these people; it’s reasonable to expect that they might receive something in exchange;
 3. To build a friendship—eating with someone is a great way to get to know them.
- Jesus’ repeated command to eat whatever they are given becomes particularly meaningful if they are actually being sent to non-Jews, who wouldn’t necessarily be serving kosher food. If it’s not relevant now, it will be in Luke’s sequel, the book of Acts.
- (v.13) ‘Woe to you, Bethsaida!’—Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum are all Jewish towns in Galilee, places where Jesus has spent much of his time. Tyre and Sidon are famous nearby Gentile cities. In the end, it may be a little surprising which towns welcome Jesus’ coming and which do not.
- (v.18) “Satan”—*Satan* is a name for the devil. It means, “enemy.”
- (v.20) “but rejoice that your names are written in heaven”—it’s exciting to have played a part in such great supernatural events, and it’s a good thing to see Satan defeated. But Jesus reminds them here that they haven’t been chosen because of the wonderful things that they can do. They are with him because they are sick with sin, and he is a sin doctor. As Jesus said in Thursday’s passage, ‘What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self?’ They need to beware of getting so wrapped up in the powerful deeds they can do that they neglect being healed by Jesus themselves.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus tells us that there are huge spiritual rewards in being a good host and in being a good guest. Which role comes more naturally to you? For the next few days, try to pay attention to issues of hospitality. Consciously make an effort to stretch either your hosting muscles or your guest muscles. As you do so, are you experiencing any rewards? What are they?
- **For your Six:** Ask Jesus to give your Six more peace. Pray that they would be able to accept the peace that He gives them.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus sent out seventy-two of His followers ahead of Him, even into towns and places unfamiliar to them. He asks us to work with Him in bringing the kingdom of God near, not just in our hometown but all over the world. Pray today for our church missions program and global strategy. Pray for those from our church who will be sent out to El Salvador, Haiti, Swaziland, Turkey and Tecate. Pray that Jesus would also send us out into some new places this year.

Sunday, February 28

Luke 10:25-42 — What matters most!

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

27 He answered, “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

28 “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

36 “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

37 The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to Him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to Him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!”

41 “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.26) “What is written in the Law?”—The very Law in which this man is an expert holds the answer to his question. So, Jesus wants to know what the man has found. The man picks out two commandments that seem to summarize what the Law is all about: love God (Deuteronomy 6:5), and love people (Leviticus 19:18). That these two commandments would be the most significant ones is not entirely obvious; the one from Leviticus particularly is sort of tucked away amongst many seemingly random, detailed instructions. So, the man shows some insight.
- (v.29) “But he wanted to justify himself”—the simplicity of, “do this and you will live,” embarrasses the man. He needs to show Jesus that the question is a lot more complicated than Jesus indicates.
- (v.31) “he passed by on the other side”—this is not as callous as it sounds. To touch a dead man would make them ritually unclean, which would make them temporarily unable to do their jobs. Of course, the chance of saving someone’s life is worth such a temporary disruption. As Jesus said regarding the Sabbath, “Is it better to do good or to do harm?” (Luke 6:9).
- (v.33) “But a Samaritan”—Jesus compares the most spiritual Jews—the priests and Levites—to a heretical Samaritan. The priest and Levite might know the Law better than the Samaritan. But that’s not the point. Doing it is what leads to life.
- (v.34) “and took care of him”—this Samaritan is an illustration of doing good to those who hate you. He’s a Samaritan who goes out of his way to help a Jew.
- (v.40) ‘Martha was distracted’—it’s possible to take hospitality too far. Martha gets so embroiled in her duties as a hostess that she spends no time with Jesus and she gets angry at her sister—that’s pretty far away from loving God with your whole heart and loving your neighbor as yourself. Jesus accepts people’s hospitality because it’s a great way to spend time together. It doesn’t work if Martha is so intent on throwing the perfect party that she’s busy and worried.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Make sure that you go out of your way to love someone else today (or tomorrow if you don’t read this until late in the day). At the end of the day, share your stories with your family, your roommates, or a friend. Jesus says that loving the people around us is a way to experience eternal life. Do you feel like your life is more abundant, more real, or just plain better in some way because you loved a neighbor? Whether or not that’s true, talk to Jesus about your experience.
- **For your Six:** Pray for your Six to also be able to love someone this week with an expanded capacity, and that God would give them better, more rewarding lives as they go out of their way to love other people.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Ask God to free our church from busyness and worry. Pray that our church services on Friday/Sunday would be free from distraction and that each person who attends will experience the only thing really needed, the presence of Jesus.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Who is your neighbor? Maybe a better question is, who isn’t your neighbor? We see in this story of the “Good Samaritan” the least likely person to help someone in need is the one who actually does it. He allows another person’s needs to interrupt his day, his travel plans and affect him financially. Yet, he is the one who Jesus says is showing love for God and others in a way that brings eternal life.
- **To Do:** Can you think of a time that you showed love toward a neighbor? Maybe you gave up time to hang out with a family member or friend in need, cancelled plans to help someone out or gave up some money to bless someone. This week, be on the lookout for someone, a neighbor, who you can show love to like the Samaritan did toward the man who was robbed. It may require giving up time, plans and/or money to help that person – whether you already know them or not – but we can trust God that it will be worth it.

Week Four of 42 Days through Good News according to Luke

Monday, February 29

Luke 11:1-28 — Teaching on prayer

1 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

2 He said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.

3 Give us each day our daily bread.

4 Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation."

5 Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; 6 a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.' 7 And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.' 8 I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

9 "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

10 For everyone who asks receives; those who seek find; and to those who knock, the door will be opened.

11 "Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? 12 Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? 13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

14 Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed. 15 But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, He is driving out demons." 16 Others tested Him by asking for a sign from heaven.

17 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. 18 If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul. 19 Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 20 But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

21 "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. 22 But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

23 "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

24 "When an evil spirit comes out of anyone, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' 25 When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. 26 Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first."

27 As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

28 He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.1) “Lord, teach us to pray”—His followers have seen Jesus go off alone to pray many times, and they’ve been invited to accompany Him a couple of times now. It’s cultivated in them a desire to pray like He prays.
- (v.2) “Father”—the prayer starts out very simple and direct, and it’s based on an intimate relationship with God. There are no flowery phrases and no flattery of God involved. This prayer comes out of a confidence that the ones praying are privileged children of the one to whom they are praying.
- (v.2) “hallowed be your name”—in other words, “May your name be holy.” *Holy* means, “set apart.” It essentially means, “May You be recognized for how special You really are.”
- (v.3) “Give us each day our daily bread”—a reference to the Israelites when Moses led them through the desert. There was not enough food for all of them; but each day God would send them manna, a sort of miracle flour out of which they made bread. Jesus is suggesting that we ask God to provide for us everything we need each day, just like He did for the Israelites in the desert.
- (v.4) “lead us not into temptation”—we can depend on God not only to forgive us our sins, but to give us the strength to avoid them in the future.
- (v.19) “By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, He is driving out demons”—it’s unclear exactly who Beelzebul is. It could be another name for the devil, or another high-ranking demon. It seems that it’s even possible that they make him up right here on the spot as a plausible explanation for Jesus’ success (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* 164). There’s also some disagreement about what the name means, but it might mean, “master of the house,” an interpretation Jesus may be picking up on in his story about the house being plundered (*Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 154).
- (v.28) “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it”—it’s true that Mary is blessed. Both the angel Gabriel and Elizabeth, inspired by the Holy Spirit, exclaimed how blessed she is at the beginning of our story (Luke 1:28, 42). But here Jesus stresses that her blessing is not exclusive; it’s available to anyone who, like Mary, takes the word of God seriously.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Try praying Jesus’ prayer aloud today—if possible, with your family or roommates. For some of you, it might be a completely new experience. For others of you, it brings up bad memories of rote prayers you didn’t really understand or believe. For yet others of you, it’s a familiar, meaningful practice already. Regardless of your previous history with the Lord’s prayer, ask the Holy Spirit to give you a fresh and lively connection with God as you pray. Take some time to put your words into Jesus’ phrases, making the language your own and your requests more specific.
- **For your Six:** Are you aware of something that one of your Six needs? Ask Jesus to give you what you need to meet that need. Jesus loves to help us love our friends.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Ask Jesus to teach us to pray often and with faith. Pray for record participation in all of our prayer events. Pray for special insight and Holy Spirit leading for those praying for people after our services and our pastoral prayer team. Pray for hundreds of people to be part of the week of prayer in a couple weeks and the Prayer vigil on March 18 & 19.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** We start today with Jesus teaching us how to pray and end the day with Him saying, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.” One way we can start this is by copying Jesus and praying the way He showed us how to pray.
- **To Do:** Take some time as a family to pray the Lord’s Prayer out loud today. For younger kids, you can say it and then repeat it a line at a time. I would encourage memorizing this one as a family. Maybe print out a copy and put it on the fridge or bathroom mirror as a reminder to pray it often.

Tuesday, March 1

Luke 11: 29-53 — Signs, Light & Calling out Pharisees

29 As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. 30 For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. 31 The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon’s wisdom; and now one greater than Solomon is here. 32 The people of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now one greater than Jonah is here.

33 “None of you lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead you put it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light. 34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. 35 See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. 36 Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be just as full of light as when a lamp shines its light on you.”

37 When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. 38 But the Pharisee was surprised when he noticed that Jesus did not first wash before the meal.

39 Then the Lord said to him, “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? 41 But now as for what is inside you—be generous to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.

42 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.

43 “Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces.

44 “Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which people walk over without knowing it.”

45 One of the experts in the law answered him, “Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.”

46 Jesus replied, “And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

47 “Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your ancestors who killed them. 48 So you testify that you approve of what your ancestors did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. 49 Because of this, God in his wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

52 “Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”

53 When Jesus went outside, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose Him fiercely and to besiege Him with questions, 54 waiting to catch Him in something He might say.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.29) “none will be given it except the sign of Jonah”—Jonah was an Israelite prophet whom God sent to preach to Nineveh, a powerful enemy city. Jesus is contrasting the Jews of His own day with Jonah’s Ninevites. Jesus’ listeners are asking for a sign to prove that He is from God; but the people of Nineveh—though they didn’t know God, didn’t have any reason to respect an Israelite, and were so wicked that God had decided to destroy them—believed Jonah’s words without any miracles and immediately declared a fast to show their humility and repentance. If the Ninevites believed Jonah without any signs, why should Jesus—who’s actually done very many miraculous signs already—have to continue to do miraculous signs to prove Himself to his listeners?

- (v.31) “The Queen of the South”—this is the fabled Queen of Sheba. Sheba may have been Ethiopia, or it may have been a kingdom in the far south of the Arabian peninsula; either way, it was the farthest known civilization to the south of Israel. The Queen of the South heard that God had blessed Solomon with supernatural wisdom, and she traveled all the way from her own faraway land to hear what Solomon had to say. If this stranger would travel so far to hear Solomon’s words, why won’t Jesus’ fellow Jews—people raised on the Law and Prophets that testify to him—listen to Him?
- (v.42) “You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone”—Jesus doesn’t criticize them for their scrupulousness in giving God a tenth; it’s a good thing that they want to give proper thanks to God. However, it doesn’t mix well with the fact that they don’t show much concern for the larger things God cares about—or even for showing genuine love toward God himself. It seems like what they love is following the rules.
- (v.51) “from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah”—Abel’s death at the hand of his jealous brother (Genesis ch. 4) was the first murder in the Jewish Bible, and Zechariah’s martyrdom at the hands of an angry mob (2 Chronicles 24:20-22) was the last—the standard order for the books of the Bible was a little different in Jesus’ day from today. So, Jesus is saying they have a share in every murder of God’s people, from the first to the last. It’s just a happy coincidence that in English it works out as going from A to Z.
- (v.52) “You yourselves have not entered”—apparently, the experts enjoy teaching the Law of Moses more than doing it. Also, the complexity of their teaching made it more difficult for others to follow; so, the net result of all of their attention to the law is that no one was actually performing it.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Ask God to give you good eyes. Pray that you would be able to easily spot and welcome good things God is doing for you. Ask God to help you to see clearly what is good and what is harmful.
- **For your Six:** Ask God to give your Six good experiences with the Bible. Pray that they would encounter life-giving guidance from the Bible, rather than joyless and oppressive rules.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus was critical of religious leaders in this passage because their efforts to look like they had it all together were actually blocking people from moving toward God. Pray that our church would help people take steps toward Jesus. Pray that God would wash us clean from the inside out and remove anything that will hinder us.

Wednesday, March 2

Luke 12:1-21 — A Warning & A Parable

1 Meanwhile, when a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were trampling on one another, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples, saying: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. 2 There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. 3 What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs.

4 “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him. 6 Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. 7 Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

8 “I tell you, whoever publicly acknowledges me, the Son of Man will also acknowledge before the angels of God. 9 But whoever publicly disowns me will be disowned before the angels of God. 10 And everyone who speaks a word

against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

11 “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”

13 Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

14 Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” 15 Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.”

16 And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. 17 He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’

18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. 19 And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’”

20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’

21 “This is how it will be with those who store up things for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.1) “the yeast of the Pharisees”—a very small amount of yeast affects an entire batch of dough. Sadly, the thing the Pharisees add which affects the entire environment, is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is living by a set of rules different from the one you teach. It’s more than just failure to live up to your principles; it’s possible to fail sincerely. Hypocrisy takes it a step further: it’s purposefully setting up a standard for others you don’t expect to keep yourself, or treating your own failure more lightly than the failures of others, or pretending you are living up to standards you are not. Jesus warns his followers to be vigilant about hypocrisy. If they let even a little in, it will affect their entire lives.
- (v.7) “you are worth more than many sparrows”—God values life, even the life of a sparrow and all the more the lives of human beings. Fortunately, the one who has the power to do us real damage wants to do us good instead.
- (v.10) “anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven”—Jesus may be referring back to Monday’s passage when the Pharisees accused Jesus of defeating demons with demonic power. Blasphemy is saying that something holy is evil, which is exactly what the Pharisees did: they called the Holy Spirit (by whose power Jesus was casting out demons) the prince of demons. If someone thinks the Holy Spirit is the devil, they won’t welcome the Holy Spirit into their lives. But as John told us in his sermon (Luke 3:15-17) the Savior has come precisely to bring the Holy Spirit to people; it’s by being baptized in the Holy Spirit that we are freed from our sins. So, by refusing the Holy Spirit, they are refusing the power to be rescued.
- (v.13) “tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me”—according to the law set up by Moses, the older brother would receive twice as large an inheritance as the rest (Deuteronomy 21: 17). It’s unclear whether this man is saying that his brother hasn’t giving him his share at all, or he’s hoping that Jesus would say that the inheritance should be divided equally. In any case, Jesus is not interested in getting involved.
- (v.19) “eat, drink and be merry”—this phrase has become somewhat well-known, as a sort of cheer for partying, but in context it’s tragic: it’s the last thing the man says before dying. He doesn’t actually get the chance to be merry. “Eat, drink, and be merry,” is probably a reference to the biblical book of Ecclesiastes, in which Solomon comes—at least temporarily—to the cynical conclusion that the most a human being can expect out of life is to eat, drink, and be proud of their work (2:24 and 3:13).

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Ask God to save you from hypocrisy. Pray for the faith to be honest, sincere, genuine, and fair as you apply the truth to your own life.
- **For your Six:** Pray that your Six would begin to know how valuable they are to God.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that God would protect us from envy, greed, and ambition. Pray that as we “live the journey” this year, we will store up richness toward God with all of our actions and giving.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Jesus tells us that nothing can be hidden from God. He sees all, hears all and knows all – right down to the number of hairs on your head! That can bring both comfort and fear. I am comforted to know He is always with me and I can totally be myself with God. I fear the things I do, say and think that I wish God didn't know. I wonder if rather than be discouraged by this it can actually motivate us to think before we speak and act, not because we are afraid of God, but because God loves us and we love Him. Being motivated by love is so sweet.
- **To Do:** Pick one person in your family whom you can try counting the hairs on their head. Maybe just pick a section of hair and try counting those. I find that it's pretty impossible to do. I love that our God is the God of the impossible. Thank God for knowing everything about us, loving us when we make great choices and loving us when we mess up. Ask Him to help us love Him and others confidently and boldly.

Thursday, March 3

Luke 12:22-48 — Money, Stuff & Staying Ready

22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”

27 “Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

35 “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. 37 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. 38 It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the middle of the night or toward daybreak. 39 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. 40 You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

41 Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”

42 The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? 43 It will be good for that servant whom the master

finds doing so when he returns. 44 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 45 But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the other servants, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk. 46 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

47 "The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. 48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.31) "seek his kingdom"—we have more important things to pay attention to than mere survival. It's God's strong rooting interest, not just to take care of our basic needs, but to give us His abundant and joyful kingdom. We can be so confident about this that, not only do we not need to worry, but we can afford to give to others freely.
- (v.36) "like servants waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet"—while the master is out partying, the servants stay at home to make sure that the lights are on and the fire is warm for the master when he returns.
- (v.37) "he will dress himself to serve"—this is a strange turn of events. The master wants the servants to stay up and alert not so that they can serve him when he returns, but so that he can serve them. He puts on his butler uniform and throws them a little party.
- (v.39) Jesus changes scene: in one scene, He is the master of the house and we are the servants; in the other, the devil is the owner of the house, and Jesus is the thief. The very same event—Jesus' coming—is looked at very differently, depending on your perspective. For those who are faithfully waiting (like Simeon and Anna from earlier in our story), Jesus' coming is the wonderful return of a generous master bearing gifts. For the greedy and the oppressive, of whom the devil himself is the leader and primary example, it's a catastrophe. Those who wait well and are on the lookout for it will be amply rewarded. Those who get tired of waiting and try to meet their needs by taking advantage of other people . . . well, it will be a bit awkward for them when God's help arrives.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Let's say for a minute that what we spend money on indicates where our heart will be. If that were the case, what would your recent purchases tell you about your heart? Does it feel true that you've invested some of your heart in the things you've recently bought? If so (and it may not be), how do you feel about that? Where would you like your heart to be? How could you use money to help point your heart in that direction?
- **For your Six:** Pray that Jesus would free your Six from the power of worry.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that we would be faithful with our finances, ILTJ, and everything we have been entrusted with this past year. Pray that God would pour out financial blessing on our church in this next year.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Jesus talks about the affect of worry on our lives. What do you worry about or what do you fear?
- **To Do:** Grab a backpack or bag today. Put a heavy book or big rock in the bag for each of the worries or fears of each member of your family. Then, have each person put the backpack on for a few seconds to feel how heavy it is. Our worries and fears can really weigh us down and even be impossible to carry. But Jesus says that He will take care of our needs and worries. Sit in a circle with the backpack in the center. Have each person take an item back out of the backpack and pray about that worry or fear. Ask Jesus to take it from you

and help you trust He is bigger and stronger than the worry or fear. Then thank God for loving you so much and taking all those fears and worries so you don't need to hold onto them anymore.

Friday, March 4

Luke 12:49-13:17 — Division, Repent, Healing & Conflict

49 “I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! 51 Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. 52 From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. 53 They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

54 He said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. 55 And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. 56 Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?”

57 “Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? 58 As you are going with your adversary to the magistrate, try hard to be reconciled on the way, or your adversary may drag you off to the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

1 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 Jesus answered, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? 3 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. 4 Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

6 Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. 7 So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’

8 “‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’ “

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, “Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.” 13 Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

14 Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, “There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath.”

15 The Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Doesn’t each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? 16 Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?”

17 When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.49) “I have come to bring fire on the earth”— In the Bible, God is often associated with fire in both its liberating and its destructive aspects. For instance, when God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, He took the form of a pillar of fire which went ahead of them through the wilderness to the Promised Land; but God also sent fire from heaven to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness.
- Like fire, the Holy Spirit is powerful, but not entirely safe. It’s dangerous to ignore the Holy Spirit or take Him for granted; but, treated with respect, He can bring great benefits to your life.
- (v.51) “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth?”—Jesus did come to bring peace. Nonetheless, as we’ve seen, Jesus’ offer of peace seems to provoke strong reactions: positive ones from those who are being freed and blessed with peace and negative ones from people who refuse peace or resent the way Jesus brings it. As we’ve also seen, Jesus is not too concerned with smoothing over these differences. He has something of a take-it-or-leave-it attitude about himself and the good news he brings: ‘I’m bringing peace, whether you like it or not.’ Many people don’t.
- (v.4) “when the tower in Siloam fell on them”—these people may have died dramatically and suddenly, but their sensational deaths don’t fundamentally matter. What matters is not how they died, but whether or not they were ready for death. While not everyone’s death makes the news, the sober truth is that we do all, in fact, die; and for us too, the important thing is to be ready for that moment.
- (v.8) “leave it alone for one more year”—it’s not as if the owner of the vineyard doesn’t care about getting fruit from his trees. He’s not lenient; He’s patient. He’s willing to give the tree every chance to bear fruit before cutting it down. Likewise, God is looking for fruit from us, namely loving God and loving our neighbors. If we haven’t yet been punished for our lack of love, it’s not because God doesn’t care; it’s because He’s giving us as much an opportunity as possible to recalibrate and grow in love.
- (v.14) “So come and be healed on those days”—the synagogue leader goes beyond accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath, and accuses the woman he healed of breaking the Sabbath. It’s hard to see what work she is doing; it doesn’t even seem like she goes as far as asking for healing. All she does is straighten up and praise God. Perhaps the man is afraid to criticize Jesus—who’s been a little sharp with his critics recently—so he bullies the woman instead.
- (v.17) “his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted”—as opposed to the experts of the law, who make the law an impossible burden, Jesus actually makes the path to a good life from God more attainable.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Spend a moment today thanking God for His patience with you. Thank Him for the fact that He is rooting for you to succeed. And ask Him if there is some particular sign of growth He is looking for from you. Ask for His help in that area.
- **For your Six:** Pray that the Holy Spirit would introduce your Six to a life more wonderful than they ever thought possible. Pray that they would experience a genuine connection with a real, active, powerful, and loving God.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** One of the hardest parts of being in community can be sticking around when people are rubbing you the wrong way or you are experiencing conflict. Take a moment today to pray for someone in our church community who you find difficult to be around. Ask for Jesus to give you a glimpse of his heart toward that person this week. Pray that the unity at our church would be so strong that people far from Jesus would recognize that something supernatural is happening.

Saturday, March 5

Luke 13:18-35 — Parables and Jesus grieving

18 Then Jesus asked, “What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? 19 It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches.”

20 Again he asked, “What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? 21 It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

22 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”

He said to them, 24 “Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

26 “Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

27 “But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’

28 “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. 29 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.”

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.”

32 He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ 33 In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

34 “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.19) “It is like a mustard seed”—The kingdom of God: it is both already and not yet. On the one hand, Jesus said in His sermon in Nazareth, ‘Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing’ (Luke 4:21), more or less proclaiming that with his coming the kingdom of God had also finally arrived—the kingdom of God is already here. On the other hand, Jesus instructed us in His teaching on prayer (Monday’s passage) to pray that the kingdom would come, as if it has not yet arrived. This little parable offers the key to understanding that paradox. We already have the kingdom of God, but only in seed form. Even the seed is pretty good; the seeds of the kingdom Jesus has been spreading bring tremendous amounts of healing, freedom, forgiveness, and abundance to the lives where they are planted. But what we’ve seen so far is insignificant in comparison to what the kingdom of God will be like when it grows to full-size.
- (v.32) “Go tell that fox”—as far as we know, calling someone a fox in Jesus’ culture didn’t carry the connotation of cleverness (nor of being good-looking, for that matter). It more or less meant “untrustworthy,” as in “there’s a fox in the henhouse” (*Bible Background Commentary* 228).
- (v.34) “you were not willing”—Jesus has a maternal instinct toward the people of Jerusalem. He desperately wants to care for them, even despite the fact that Jerusalem has rejected so many of God’s messengers. It’s not animosity on Jesus’ part but rejection on Jerusalem’s part that keeps Him from being able to show them the love he wants to.

- (v.35) “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”—Jesus is quoting Psalm 118, which is a song of thanksgiving for God’s rescue of his people. Jesus seems to be saying that, despite the fact that they are currently unwilling to receive His care and that they will in fact kill Him, there will indeed come a time when they will welcome Him and accept His help.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Has God placed any opportunities in front of you recently? That opportunity won’t be there forever; at some point the door will close. What do you need from God to walk through that door?
- **For your Six:** Pray for whatever seeds of God’s kingdom there are in the lives of your Six. Pray that those seeds would keep growing until they’ve brought an unimaginable amount of joy, peace, and abundance into their lives.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that people would come to Jesus in great numbers from unexpected directions. Pray that the reality of the kingdom of God would come alive in every program, ministry, service, and outreach happening in our church.

Sunday, March 6

Luke 14 — Healing, Humility, Feasting & Cost

1 One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched.

2 There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. 3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” 4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

5 Then he asked them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?” 6 And they had nothing to say.

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 “When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. 11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

12 Then Jesus said to his host, “When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed are those who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

16 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered

his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.'

22 " 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.'

23 "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.' "

25 Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: 26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even life itself—such a person cannot be my disciple. 27 And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? 29 For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, 30 saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.'

31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.

34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out.

"Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.5) "will you not immediately pull it out"—Jesus is saying, "I just figured you'd think it was a great idea to help this person on the Sabbath, since you helped your ox out of trouble last Sabbath." If they, strict as they are about the Sabbath, wouldn't leave their child—or even their ox—in a well for an extra day, then why should God leave his children in the clutches of Satan, or disease, or sin one day longer than necessary? Jesus continues to reinforce the fact that the Sabbath is not a day to do nothing, but rather a day for God's kingdom, which involves healing and rescuing people.
- (v.7) "noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table"—apparently, there's something of an undignified scramble for the best seats. Similar to so many other instances already in our study, Jesus doesn't criticize their desire for honor, but their methods of obtaining it. First of all, it's not really honor if you seize it, rather than having it given to you. Secondly, by trying to seize honor for yourself, you leave open the strong possibility of receiving humiliation instead, if your own sense of your honor is higher than your host's.
- (v.33) "those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples"—following Jesus is a life-altering decision. It makes life better, but it has a definite affect on your entire life. Following Jesus can't just be a side project or something you get to when you have the time.
- (v.34) "if it loses its saltiness"—salt has a distinctive flavor, and that's what makes it useful. Likewise, following Jesus should make an actual difference in your life. Otherwise, what's the point?

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Would you like to be more respected or honored? Don't be afraid to be honest; Jesus doesn't seem to think there's anything wrong with wanting honor. According to Him, the best way to get it is to find someone more unnoticed than you and honor them. Who could you show some honor to today?
- **For your Six:** In this passage, we get the picture that God is throwing a huge party. He's inviting everyone He can. All He wants is for that party to be full. Pray that your Six would hear of God's invitation, say yes, and step into the party He has for them.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that we would be good salt, bringing some of the distinctive—and pleasant—flavor of the kingdom of God into our church. Ask God to give us wisdom about the next step ahead for us as we are being God's salt in our city.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Letting others go first or have the best of something can be really hard. It seems our natural instinct is to want to be first in line, have the largest piece of cake, sit in the front seat of the car, be the favorite, etc. Jesus challenges us that really the place of greatest honor is when we step back and let others go first or have the biggest piece of cake.
- **To Do:** Who is someone you can honor this week by simply letting them go first in line at school or the grocery store? Maybe noticing someone who needs help around you and offering that person something of yours? Being ok with going last or sitting in the back seat? All without complaining or drawing attention to yourself? Ask God to show you opportunities to honor others this week in ways that may even surprise them and you.

Week Five of 42 Days through Good News according to Luke

Monday, March 7

Luke 15 —Parables of Lost Sheep, Coin & Son

1 Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

8 “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn’t she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.’ 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

11 Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

17 “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ 20 So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

21 “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

25 “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

28 “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

31 “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ “

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.2) “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them”— Do you get the feeling that the Pharisees and teachers are a broken record? Their tune hasn’t really changed since their earliest interactions with Jesus. Over and over again, they comment on the fact that He is eating with sinners and doing what’s unlawful on the Sabbath, even though it’s exactly what He’s been doing all along.
- (v.5) “he joyfully puts it on his shoulders”—the shepherd isn’t angry or annoyed at the lost sheep. He doesn’t scold it. He’s simply glad that the sheep is safe and has been found.
- (v.12) “Father, give me my share of the estate”—inheritances usually don’t come until after your parents are dead, but this son wants to hurry up the process. He’s essentially saying, ‘Look, Dad, can we go ahead and act as if you were already dead?’ Amazingly, his father agrees to his request.
- (v.24) “But the father said . . . this son of mine was dead and is alive again”—the son’s speech was supposed to end with, “make me like one of your hired servants,” but before he can finish, his father interrupts to call him his son.
- (v.28) “refused to go in”—in these three stories (the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost child), Jesus establishes a clear pattern: 1) something valuable is lost; 2) the lost thing is found; 3) the finder celebrates; 4) the finder invites friends and neighbors into the celebration. Here the pattern is broken. We determined earlier that, because they aren’t celebrating with Jesus, the Pharisees and teachers aren’t Jesus’ friends. Now, we see who they are: they are the angry older child.
- (v.29) “you never gave me even a young goat”— As far as the father knew, he was giving his older child the best: relationship with him, and the chance to work together to build up the older child’s inheritance. He thought it’s what his child wanted too, but all along the child was secretly bitter and resentful. It’s the same thing with the Pharisees and God’s law. By muttering about Jesus’ relationship with the tax collectors and sinners, they’re essentially saying, “Look, we’ve been following God’s law all along. When are we going to get anything out of it?” The Pharisees and teachers, in theory at least, always had the better life within their grasp; but because they had the mentality of slaves rather than of children, they missed out too.
- (v.31) “But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead”—The big question, left hanging at the end of the story, is: will the older son join the party? Will he join the family, or remain a slave? It’s up to the Pharisees—and to any of us who identify with the older brother—to decide how the story will end.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Who are your “tax collectors”? Who is it, in your heart of hearts, you think is hopeless—or, at least, that they should have to do a lot of proving how sorry they are before God should welcome them. All God wants is for them to be safe at home with Him. Ask God to rescue you from muttering, from envy, and from suspicion. Pray that He would give you what you need to step into the party.
- **For your Six:** Pray that your Six would increase in their knowledge that they are valuable to God and He misses them.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray for the worldwide church today. Pray that churches in every country of the world would be filled with the joy of being God’s children. Ask God to protect and give special moments of joy to churches experiencing persecution.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Tax collectors and sinners came to Jesus and He welcomed them and ate with them. Don’t you love that Jesus welcomed people who didn’t know God and had dinner with them. It’s so great how He showed the people He loved them by simply welcoming them to hang out with Him and eating together. Sweet conversations can happen during meals.

- **To Do:** Is there someone you can just invite over for a meal this week – maybe a neighbor, classmate or friend? Enjoy getting to know someone new and see where Jesus takes the conversation and a possible new friendship. Maybe even someone you could invite to Easter Services at Journey this year? It’s not too early to invest in new relationships and see what Jesus can do with them.

Tuesday, March 8

Luke 16:1-18 — Parable of the Shrewd Manager

1 Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’

3 “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— 4 I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

5 “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

6 “ ‘Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’

7 “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“ ‘A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied.

“He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’

8 “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

10 “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?

13 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”

14 The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. 15 He said to them, “You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.

16 “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and people are forcing their way into it. 17 It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.

18 “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.8) “The master commended the dishonest manager”—any indignation he might feel at being cheated is outweighed by how impressed he is with what the manager pulls off. If the manager had shown this shrewdness previously, the owner probably wouldn’t have fired him.

- (v.13) “No one can serve two masters”—eventually the two masters will make competing demands, and you’ll have to choose which one to obey. The two masters here are God and Money. God and Money both offer the same thing—life—but they have contradictory instructions for how to get it. As Jesus said earlier, ‘Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions’ (Luke 12: 15).
- (v.17) “than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law”—announcing the kingdom of God has replaced preaching the Law and Prophets, but that doesn’t mean that the Law has been made obsolete. Jesus has come to complete the Law, not overturn it; loving God and loving our neighbors is still the way to find life (10: 27-28). Jesus simply brings new power to make it possible.
- (v.18) “Anyone who divorces his wife”— Perhaps this is an example of how Jesus plans to uphold the Law and the Prophets. In the Law, Moses says very little about divorce. He neither specifically promotes it nor prohibits it, but instead assumes its existence and tries to manage it to avoid the worst abuses, such as spurious claims of adultery as grounds for divorce (Deuteronomy 22:13-19 and Deuteronomy 24: 1-3). In the Prophets, God is a bit more forthright: “I hate divorce,” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate it when people clothe themselves with injustice” (Malachi 2:16). What God hates about divorce in Malachi is that it provides an easy way to get rid of your wife (in most ancient cultures only the man had power of divorce) when you get tired of her. In other books of the Bible (Matthew, Mark, and I Corinthians), Paul and Jesus himself add a few more details and a bit more nuance regarding divorce, allowing for some situations in which divorce may be an appropriate course of action. Both Jesus and Paul make it quite clear, though, that divorce is never God’s desire for a marriage and that it should only be entered into with extreme caution in rare circumstances. Perhaps Jesus speaks so strongly against divorce because most of the time divorce is antithetical to the picture of relationships He has been trying to form. Jesus has been promoting relationships characterized by forgiveness, mercy, generosity, and servanthood; but divorce is often characterized by bitterness, judging of others, rejection, and selfishness, from at least one party, if not both. Jesus steers us away from divorce because it is a tempting choice, but there’s almost always a better option.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** this passage makes the startling claim that our relationship to money is one of the most powerful determinants in bringing us closer to or farther from the kingdom of God. Pray that God would break any negative spiritual power money has in your life, and ask God to give you shrewdness with money. Pray that God would help you to get the best eternal bang for your buck.
- **For your Six:** Pray that your Six also would have a godly shrewdness with their money. Pray that God would reward them for the generosity they show, and that their generosity would increase.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that God would bless the marriages in our church with generosity, forgiveness, and love. Pray for an outpouring of grace on marriages that are in crisis. Pray against the temptation to make marriage our first answer to fulfilling our deepest longings and needs, instead of connection with Jesus.

Wednesday, March 9

Luke 16:19-17:19 Parable & Teaching

19 “There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. 20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores 21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’

25 “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus

received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. 26 And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

27 “He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

29 “Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

30 “ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

31 “He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’ “

17:1 Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. 2 It would be better for you to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around your neck than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble. 3 So watch yourselves.

“If a brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. 4 Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive them.”

5 The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

6 He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

7 “Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, ‘Come along now and sit down to eat’? 8 Won’t he rather say, ‘Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink’? 9 Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? 10 So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’ “

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”

14 When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.

15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

17 Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?” 19 Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.20) “a beggar named Lazarus”—in reality, the rich man’s name would be known and the homeless man would be nameless; but in Jesus’ story, we know the beggar’s name, but not the rich man’s.
- (v.22) “carried him to Abraham’s side”—this is sort of like our pop culture picture of St. Peter welcoming us at the pearly gates.
- (v.26) “a great chasm has been set in place”—Abraham doesn’t say that he won’t send Lazarus, but that he can’t, because a chasm has been put in the way. He doesn’t say exactly who put the chasm there. A good argument could be made that it is the rich man himself who dug the chasm—when he built the gate that kept Lazarus out. He erected his own barrier between himself and God’s kingdom.
- (v.29) “They have Moses and the Prophets”—Jesus clearly has the Pharisees in His sights with this comment. They are exceedingly attentive to such things as exact tithing and exact definitions of work, but they overlook the much more important issue of mercy and generosity toward others.
- (v.3) “rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them”—the disciples don’t need to pretend nothing happened, but they do need to let go of their desire to punish the person who did it.

- (v.10) “we have only done our duty”—this presents an interesting contrast with Jesus’ earlier story about the master who does indeed serve dinner to his servants (12:37). God is indeed like a master who serves His servants. God serves us out of His generosity, not because we’ve done so much for Him that it’s about time He does something for us.
- (v.17) “Where are the other nine?”—only the Samaritan returns to thank Jesus. Over the course of Luke’s story, Jesus has mentioned several examples of outsiders who respond to God more enthusiastically than God’s own people. Luke’s story makes it abundantly clear that it doesn’t matter where you come from or what label you wear. No matter who you are, you can find yourself welcomed into God’s party—or left out. It might not be overstating it to say that which way it goes rests almost completely on how grateful you are to receive the invitation.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Imitate the prayer of the disciples. Ask God to give you more faith. Pray particularly that, by faith, God would increase your ability to forgive others. Pray that God would give you the boldness to speak up when you’ve been wronged, the grace to forgive, and the trust in God that you will not be taken advantage of.
- **For your Six:** Are any of your Six sick? Pray that God would heal them. If they do get well, pray that they would recognize God’s work in their lives and turn toward him with gratitude.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray for the relationship between the rich and poor of our city. Pray that barriers would be broken down and relationships built. Pray for mutual blessing between the rich and the poor. Ask God to allow our church to play a part in tearing down the barriers between rich and poor.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Ten lepers came to Jesus and asked for His help. He ended up healing all of them! But only one came back to thank Him. Ever wonder how many times Jesus does amazing things for us and we forget to say thank you? Have you ever wondered how many times Jesus does small things for us and we forget to say thank you? The Bible says every good and perfect gift comes from God.
- **To Do:** Take a piece of paper today and spend the day writing down things you are thankful for – both small and large things. Do you think you can come up with 10, 25, 50? Maybe even 100 or more? Most likely we can come up with even more if we really look around and see much God has given us. Let’s get started... Thank you Jesus for the air you are breathing, for water to drink, for paper to write on and a pencil to write with...

Thursday, March 10

Luke 17:20-18:14 — Parables & Kingdom Come

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, 21 nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

22 Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. 23 People will tell you, ‘There he is!’ or ‘Here he is!’ Do not go running off after them.

24 For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. 25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

26 “Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 “It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building.
29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 “It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day no one who is on the housetop,
with possessions inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything.
32 Remember Lot’s wife! 33 Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.
34 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35-36 Two women
will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left.”

37 “Where, Lord?” they asked.

He replied, “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.”

18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2 He said:
“In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. 3 And there was a
widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

4 “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people
think, 5 yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually
come and attack me!’ “

6 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen
ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice,
and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this
parable: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee
stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or
even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said,
‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt
themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.24) “flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other”—this is another interesting already/not yet moment regarding the kingdom of God. The Pharisees ask, “When will the kingdom of God come?” and Jesus answers, “It’s already here, but you don’t even see it, because it’s not a flashy thing.” Then He turns to His disciples and says, “When my kingdom comes, you’ll know it; it’ll be as obvious as the biggest fireworks display ever!” Perhaps it’s not even worth looking for the complete Technicolor version of Jesus’ kingdom unless you first appreciate its subtler form.
- (v.5) “you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man”—the full inauguration of the kingdom will take longer than the disciples expect—almost longer than they can bear.
- (v.32) “Remember Lot’s wife!”—before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah, God warned Abraham’s nephew Lot and his family to escape. As they were running away, Lot’s wife turned back in regret, and she turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:13).
- (v.37) “Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather”— Today’s whole passage is a bit difficult to understand, but the rest of it is simple compared to this. Hear is one possible interpretation:
- A dead body, lying on the ground, is difficult to see; but vultures, circling in the air, are easy to spot. So, if you want to find a dead body, look for vultures. The vultures will lead you to the body. Likewise, the coming of the Son of Man will be hard to spot directly; but there will be signs that point you in the right direction.

- (v.5) “yet because this widow keeps bothering me”—the judge eventually decides that it’s easier to grant the woman’s request than not. If the widow can outlast the corrupt and callous judge, it is certainly worth it for us to keep praying to God, who is a good father who wants to answer our prayers.
- (v.7) “Will he keep putting them off?”—if God is so eager to answer our prayers, why is persistence necessary? Why would He put us off at all? The answer may have something to do with the story about the fruitless fig tree (13:7). In this story of the widow and the unjust judge, Jesus is specifically talking about never giving up in praying for Him to come again to set everything right. The story of the fruitless fig tree, on the other hand, is about God’s willingness to give us every possible chance to make the most of our lives. Perhaps God’s eagerness to answer our prayers for His kingdom to come is balanced by His desire to allow us to achieve maximum possible fruitfulness before it does.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Pray that God would rescue you from the temptation to think of yourself as better than others. Particularly if you are a part of a close family, pray that God would give you the grace to enjoy what’s special about your family without looking down on others.
- **For your Six:** Ask God to loosen any attachment your Six might have to their possessions. This passage tells us that the ability to leave behind our possessions without hesitation might very well prove crucial to bringing us into God’s kingdom.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus seems to think it is really an open question whether or not he will find people patiently and faithfully expecting Him when he brings his kingdom. Pray that our church would be ready and waiting, and that when He comes He will find faith here.

Friday, March 11

Luke 18:15-43 — Encounters with Jesus

15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

18 A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

19 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.’”

21 “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said.

22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

23 When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was very wealthy. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

26 Those who heard this asked, “Who then can be saved?”

27 Jesus replied, “What is impossible with human beings is possible with God.”

28 Peter said to him, “We have left all we had to follow you!”

29 “Truly I tell you,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God 30 will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. 32 He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him; 33 they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”

34 The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.

35 As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36 When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. 37 They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.”

38 He called out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

39 Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

40 Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, 41 “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord, I want to see,” he replied.

42 Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” 43 Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.20) “You know the commandments”—just like he did with the legal expert, Jesus refers the man to the Law. In fact, Jesus quotes the Ten Commandments—or, rather, five of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are the famous summary of the Law given by God to Moses on two stone tablets. Four of the commandments had to do with relating to God and six of them with relating to one another. It’s often imagined that each set of five had its own tablet: a God tablet and a neighbor tablet. [Incidentally, the two commandments the law expert recited to Jesus (10:27)—love God and love your neighbor—serve as pretty good encapsulations of the two tablets]. The five commandments Jesus quotes here are from the second tablet, the neighbor tablet.
- (v.22) “You still lack one thing”—he’s not all the way there, though. Perhaps what he’s missing is the first tablet. He’s missing a loving relationship with God. To inherit eternal life, you have to be a child of the one who owns eternal life.
- (v.22) “Sell everything you have”—“You cannot serve both God and Money” (16:13). Jesus is calling him to separate himself totally from money and put his trust completely in God instead.
- (v.23) “he became very sad”—“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (12:34). We don’t know what the man ultimately chooses, but it’s clear that at this point wealth has at least some of his heart. His money makes it harder for him to truly choose God.
- (v.39) “rebuked him and told him to be quiet”—they rebuke this blind man, just like the disciples rebuked the children. This is similar to Jesus’ warning about causing little ones to stumble on their way to him (17:2). The blind man does not let himself be stopped, though. He’s persistent in asking, and his request is heard.
- (v.43) “received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God”—this blind man knows how to accept a gift.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Pray that God would increase your ability to love Him and to love your neighbors. Are you better at one of them than the other? Maybe you could ask your family members, housemates, or friends which one they see best in you. Thank God for your strength in that area, and then ask Him for help in strengthening the other one. Look for opportunities today to practice.

- **For your Six:** Pray that your Six would increase in their childlikeness. Pray particularly that they would be good gift-receivers.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray that our church would be known as good neighbors to our community and city. Pray for more opportunities to love and care for our local schools, civil officials, and nearby churches.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Simply put – Jesus loves children. They are a gift and precious to Him. As kids, our faith is pure and simple. We learn from stories and believe that Jesus is who He says He is. It’s not until we get older that faith becomes complicated – mostly by our own doing.
- **To Do:** Today, let’s celebrate with a childlike faith. If you are a child or kid, share something awesome about Jesus that you like to talk about. If you are an adult, see what you can learn from the kids around you and ask God to help you have a faith like a child.

Spend some time today just playing – maybe go to the park and play frisbee or a game of tag, ride bikes, play a board game – mostly just have FUN!!

Saturday, March 12

Luke 19:1-27— Zacchaeus & Parable of 10 servants

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

11 While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. 12 He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

14 “But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We don’t want this man to be our king.’

15 “He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.

16 “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’

17 “ ‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’

18 “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’

19 “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’

20 “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. 21 I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’

22 “His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a

hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? 23 Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?'

24 "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.'

25 "'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!'

26 "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. 27 But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.8) "Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor"—Zacchaeus recognizes his need to repent. He recalibrates himself from serving Money to serving God. It's interesting to me that Zacchaeus understands immediately that following Jesus calls for a radically different approach to money. Somehow, money seems to have a lot less of a grip on this chief tax collector than it does on the Pharisees or even on the rich ruler from yesterday's passage.
- (v.11) "people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once"—Jesus has been making His way very deliberately toward Jerusalem for quite some time now; and Jerusalem, being David's capital, would be the natural capital for the Messiah as well. So, people have gained the reasonable impression that Jerusalem is the finish line: as soon as He gets there, Jesus will unveil the kingdom of God. While it is, to a great degree, the climax of Jesus' earthly career, it's really only the beginning for His followers. It will be a while before the kingdom of God is fully established, and the disciples have a lot of work to do in the meantime.
- (v.12) "went to a distant country to have himself appointed king"—this story is "ripped from the headlines." The kings of Roman satellite kingdoms would have to have their kingships confirmed by Rome. Just like in this story, Herod Archelaus—the brother of the Herod who arrested John—had to travel to Rome to have his authority confirmed, and he had a delegation sent to contest his rule. Jesus too is going away—to heaven—to have His kingship confirmed by God.
- (v.17) "take charge of ten cities"—the ten minas were just a test. The nobleman was about to become a king, and he wanted to know who he could trust to help him rule his kingdom: This story presents us with the amazing idea that this entire life is just a test. Jesus is going away to be made a king. Everything we have is something Jesus has given us to put to work until He returns. In the next life, Jesus will give us authority in His kingdom proportional to the profits we are able to make for Him in this one. Life as we know it is just the practice round. Eternal life in the kingdom of God is the real thing.
- (v.27) "bring them here and kill them in front of me"—they've made it clear that they don't want Him to be king, but His kingship is inevitable. This is the only way to give them what they want.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Pray that God would give you the boldness and savvy of the first two servants. Ask God to help you do good business with what He's given you, and pray for good eternal profits from your investments.
- **For your Six:** Pray that the Holy Spirit would be at work in the consciences of your Six. Pray that God would be guiding them toward areas of their life that need recalibration, and that He would give them the willingness and the ability to make the necessary course corrections. Pray that God would give them joy as they make those choices.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Take a second to imagine Zacchaeus, a wealthy adult Jewish man, who completely forgets about his dignity or appearance and launches himself up into a tree, just to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Then, he meets Jesus; and this moves him so much that he makes an immediate decision to joyfully give away over half of all of his money. Wow! Pray that as Easter approaches, our desire to connect with Jesus would reach Zacchaeus levels! Pray that our unique encounters with Jesus this week would inspire joyful expressions of service and giving throughout the church.

Sunday, March 13

Luke 19:28-48— Jesus BIG entrance

28 After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. 29 As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, 30 “Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it.’ “

32 Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?”

34 They replied, “The Lord needs it.”

35 They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt and put Jesus on it. 36 As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road.

37 When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

38 “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!”

40 “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

41 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it 42 and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes. 43 The days will come on you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. 44 They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”

Jesus at the Temple

45 When Jesus entered the temple courts, he began to drive out those who were selling. 46 “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be a house of prayer”; but you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’“

47 Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. 48 Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.29) “Bethphage and Bethany”—these are the suburbs of Jerusalem. Jesus has finally made it to His destination.
- (v.30) “you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden”—just like the story of Jesus’ birth, the story of His death is dense with allusion to Old Testament prophecy. We find this colt in the prophecy of Zechariah:
Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation
lowly and riding on a donkey
on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9)

During war, a king would ride a horse. The fact that Jesus comes on a donkey symbolizes either that he is coming in peace or that he has already won the war.

- (v.35) “people spread their cloaks on the road”—practically, this would reduce the amount of dust thrown up as they travel over the dirt road. Symbolically, it communicates that even the hooves of Jesus’ donkey are too precious to touch the road. Only the very most wealthy and important people would have carpets. The people make a carpet for Jesus out of their coats, and they even let his donkey walk on it.
- (v.38) “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!”—this is from Psalm 118 (verse 26). They are welcoming Jesus as God’s representative. In fact, caught up in the exuberance of the moment, they may be calling Jesus God himself:
You are my God, and I will praise you;
you are my God, and I will exalt you.
Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever (Psalm 118:28-29).
- (v.41) “he wept over it”—Jesus is about to be killed in Jerusalem, but he looks on Jerusalem with pity and compassion, rather than anger. His mind isn’t on His own death, but on the destruction of Jerusalem, which he foresees. Jerusalem will be destroyed in a war between the Jews and the Romans in 70 AD—about 40 years after Jesus’ death, and maybe 10 years after Luke’s writing.
- (v.46) ‘My house will be a house of prayer’—Jesus refers here to Isaiah 56:7: “for my house will be called/a house of prayer for all nations.” What Jesus expects to see when He gets to the temple is prayer, but instead He finds shopping. The temple was always intended to be a place where people from all around the world would come to find God and have their prayers answered (2 Chronicles 6:32-34), but it’s fallen far short of its promise.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Today, like demonstrated on Palm Sunday (John mentions that the crowds wave palm branches as they sing), push the limits of the exuberance of your worship. Particularly if you tend to be a bit more staid, step out and do something that might make someone say, “That’s a little much, isn’t it?”
- **For your Six:** Pray that your Six would find a hospitable place to meet with God. Consider inviting them to church for Easter Sunday coming up in two weeks, and pray that they would accept the invitation. Pray that, if they do come, our church would be a place where they feel like they belong and where they are able to connect with God.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Holy Week, the week between Palm Sunday and Easter is just a week away. Pray that there would be a buzz about Jesus that next week in our city and local community. Pray for many people far from Jesus to take a step closer to him this week. Also jump into our Week of Prayer this week .

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** The people were gathered that day waiting to see who would ride through the gates proclaiming to be the long awaited Messiah. When Jesus came through, the crowds celebrated and gave shouts of praise waiving palm branches and laying down their coats. We have reason to celebrate too! Jesus is the Messiah who loves you and cares for you so much!
- **To Do:** Turn on your favorite worship song today and sing loud and proud praising God with your voices, your dance moves and/or hands in the air.

Week Six of 42 Days through Good News according to Luke

Monday, March 14

Luke 20:1-26 — Jesus challenged

1 One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple courts and proclaiming the good news, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. 2 “Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”

3 He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me, 4 John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

5 They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Why didn’t you believe him?’ 6 But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.”

7 So they answered, “We don’t know where it was from.”

8 Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

9 He went on to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. 10 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. 12 He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

13 “Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’

14 “But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.

“What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

When the people heard this, they said, “God forbid!”

17 Jesus looked directly at them and asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written:

“ ‘The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone’?”

18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.”

19 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people.

20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor. 21 So the spies questioned him: “Teacher, we know that you speak and teach what is right, and that you do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. 22 Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?”

23 He saw through their duplicity and said to them, 24 “Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

25 He said to them, “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

26 They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.1) “together with the elders”—the elders were members of the Jewish aristocracy who were neither priests nor teachers of the law (*Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* 201).
- (v.8) “Neither will I tell you”—Jesus sees through their avoidance; it’s not that they can’t answer but that they won’t. Since they refuse to answer Him, He refuses to answer them as well. Their unwillingness to recognize John leads to an inability to see Jesus for who He is.
- (v.9) “A man planted a vineyard”—Jesus is using a story from Isaiah (Isaiah 5:1-7) as the basis for his own story. Isaiah’s story ends like this:

The vineyard of the LORD Almighty
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are the vines he delighted in.
And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed;
for righteousness, but heard cries of distress (Isaiah 5:7).
- This vineyard to whom Jesus is referring is Israel, or Judah, and God is the builder and owner of that vineyard. Jesus adds a new set of characters—the tenants—to Isaiah’s story. The chief priests, teachers, and elders are the tenants.
- (v.13) “I will send my son, whom I love”—this is an echo of God the Father’s words about Jesus at Jesus’ baptism (3:22). It’s the answer to the priests’ question regarding Jesus’ authority. Jesus is God’s Son, sent by
- Him, with His authority.
- (v.17) “The stone the builders rejected”—this is Psalm 118:22. It’s the same psalm from which the people were singing, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD,” in yesterday’s passage. It’s a song of thanks for God’s rescue.
- (v.25) “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s”—Jesus looks at a coin and says, “Well, it seems to have Caesar’s name and picture on it; so, I guess it must belong to him. We should give it back.” Jesus answers their question forthrightly, but in a way that completely avoids making any political statements, either for or against Rome.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** The tenants in the vineyard start off just wanting to hold back a little fruit from the owner, but they end up killing his son. I think greed often starts small, but grows quickly out of control. Pray that God would protect you from greed. Ask God to point out any small entrance points for greed in your life, and ask Him to give you the strength to refuse to give in to it.
- **For your Six:** Pray that God would remove any barriers to your Six seeing or believing truth—whether it be truth about themselves, about God, or about something else. Also pray that the truth, when they do see it and embrace it, would be of great benefit in their lives. Particularly ask God to give them the boldness to accept truths that it might be difficult for them to admit.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus said to “give to Caesar what is Caesars, and to God what is God’s.” In the same way, although we live within the expectations of our society and government, our ultimate value is God. Pray that our church would live out this ultimate value, even in times when God and society are in conflict.

Tuesday, March 15

Luke 20:27-21:4 Resurrection & Identity

27 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. 28 “Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally, the woman died too. 33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

34 Jesus replied, “The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection. 37 But in the account of the burning bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.”

39 Some of the teachers of the law responded, “Well said, teacher!” 40 And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

41 Then Jesus said to them, “Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David? 42 David himself declares in the Book of Psalms:

“The Lord said to my Lord:

“Sit at my right hand

43 until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet.”

44 David calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”

45 While all the people were listening, Jesus said to his disciples, 46 “Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. 47 They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

21:1 As Jesus looked up, he saw the rich putting their gifts into the temple treasury. 2 He also saw a poor widow put in two very small copper coins. 3 “Truly I tell you,” he said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. 4 All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.27) “Some of the Sadducees”—the Pharisees have become familiar to us. The Sadducees were the other major religious/political party among the Jews in Roman Palestine. The Sadducees were more conservative than the Pharisees in some ways, but less traditional in others. For instance, they recognized the authority only of the Law—the five books of Moses, which were the oldest parts of the Jewish scriptures—not of the Prophets; but they were also significantly influenced by Greek culture and philosophy. Whereas the Pharisees were of the prosperous middle class and dominated among the teachers in the synagogue, the Sadducees were upper class and dominated among the priests at the Temple. The Pharisees were more numerous, but the Sadducees held the more powerful positions.
- (v.27) “who say there is no resurrection”—the Pharisees believed in life after death, but the Sadducees did not. It’s the perfect intersection of their scriptural conservatism (the books of Moses are a bit sketchy on what happens after death) and their urbanity (contemporary Greek philosophy focused on the material world).
- (v.28) “man must marry the widow and raise up offspring”—this law (found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10) was meant to insure that widows could be adequately taken care of—largely through having children who would

look after them in their old age—without land, which was the major wealth of each family, passing out of the hands of the family.

- (v.36) “they are like the angels”—a little dig at the Sadducees, who—despite plentiful evidence in the books of Moses—also did not believe in angels (*New Bible Commentary* 1012. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- (v.41) “Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David?”—During the birth stories early in his story, Luke makes much of Jesus’ association with David’s lineage. Even Gabriel, the angelic messenger to Mary, calls Jesus David’s son: “The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David” (1:32). Just a few passages ago (18:38), the blind man who calls Jesus “Son of David” is given as a positive example of faith. So, why does Jesus all of a sudden take issue with the Messiah being called David’s son? It may have something to do with the perception of the source of the Messiah’s greatness. It’s not that the Messiah benefits from David’s reflected greatness - rather, David was great because he resembled and to a certain extent foreshadowed the King who was to come.
- (v.3) “this poor widow has put in more than all the others”—speaking of widows, Jesus exalts this humble widow for her act of faith. These coins the widow puts in would be of worth very little, but they mean a lot more than they’re monetary value. She really believes she has no need to worry in this life, because she has a good father who will take care of her needs (12:30).

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Do you feel like you have very little to offer to God? Maybe you wonder if it’s even worth giving what you have to give. This passage shows us that God sees and honors the smallest offerings.
- **For your Six:** Their preconceived notion of what it meant for the Messiah to be David’s son was getting in the way of Jesus’ listeners ability to see Jesus clearly and accept what He had to offer them. Ask God to remove any unhelpful filters through which your Six see Jesus. One common filter is seeing Jesus as only a good moral teacher; pray for the truth of Jesus’ identity to break through every filter this week.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** From this passage, we can see that Jesus seemed to believe the resurrection was a pretty important thing to believe. In fact, Christianity doesn’t exist without it. Pray today for our Easter services. This is a time during the year where the church gets a bigger than usual platform to explain the reason for the hope that we have in Jesus. Pray that our church would be fully prepared and that many invited will come and experience the presence of a God who is alive.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** No matter how wealthy or poor we are, it’s easy to look around and see people with more and start to feel like we have nothing of value to offer God. Jesus honors this widow by showcasing the extravagance of her small gift. She gave from her heart and out of love. That’s the example we want to follow. No matter how big or small the gift, the important part we are giving with joy and from love.
- **To Do:** Young or old, money and giving can be a really hard thing to talk about. We really like our money, we can fear not having enough and worry that it will run out. Open up that conversation as a family today. Start with answering this question: Is it easy or hard for you to give an offering to God? Why? Is there an offering you think you might want to give to God’s work? Whether large or small, remember to give with joy and from love. Thank God for providing for your family, ask God to give you faith to trust Him with your money like the widow did and to really see that everything we have is His already anyways.

Wednesday March 16

Luke 21:5-22:13 — Jesus foretells the future

5 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 “As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.”

7 “Teacher,” they asked, “when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?”

8 He replied: “Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not follow them. 9 When you hear of wars and uprisings, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away.”

10 Then he said to them: “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. 11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

12 “But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 And so you will bear testimony to me. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 Everyone will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 Stand firm, and you will win life.

20 “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

25 “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

29 He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

32 “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

34 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap. 35 For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

37 Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives, 38 and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

1 Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, 2 and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. 3 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. 4 And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. 5 They were delighted and agreed to give him

money. 6 He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present. 7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.” 9 “Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked. 10 He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there.” 13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.24) “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles”—many of Jesus’ contemporaries thought that because Jerusalem was the home of the Temple, God would never let it be destroyed. This confidence was somewhat foolish, seeing as God had already shown in the past that He was indeed willing to allow His own house to be destroyed if that’s what it took to get the attention of his people; about 600 years before Jesus, Jerusalem was conquered and the Temple destroyed by the Babylonians. In AD 70, the Temple would be destroyed again by the Romans. The Temple was never as important to God as it was to the people of Jerusalem. It wasn’t even His idea; it was David’s (I Chronicles 17). God accepted the Temple and chose to bless the place with his presence, because the temple was a generous expression of gratitude from His people.
- (v.27) “they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory”—Jesus refers to one of the most famous prophecies of the Messiah, found in Daniel 7:13-14.
- (v.34) “and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap”— What Jesus was talking about until now was something that will happen in Jerusalem, which can be avoided by running to the mountains, for which there will be plenty of warning. Here, Jesus is talking about something happening suddenly, across the face of the whole earth. However, even it—the end of the world—can be escaped by the person who faithfully watches in the expectation of Jesus’ rescue.
- (v.1) “the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover”—this festival commemorates the Israelites’ escape from Egypt. The unleavened bread (bread without yeast) symbolizes the suddenness and haste with which the Israelites left Egypt: they didn’t even have time to let the dough rise. The first Passover, and instructions for future feasts, is found in Exodus 12.
- (v.7) “on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed”—At the first Passover, in Egypt, the people spread some of the lamb’s blood on their doorframes. God sent a plague on the firstborn of the Egyptians, to punish them for keeping the Israelites in slavery. But whenever the destroying angel came across the blood on the doorframe, it passed over that house, saving the life of the firstborn of that house (Exodus 12:23).
- (v.13) “found things just as Jesus had told them”—they are preparing for Jesus’ feast, but Jesus has already prepared for them to prepare. He gives them what they need to serve Him.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Pray that God would protect you from worry or distraction or unbelief that would get in the way of you being ready and on the lookout for the things He would like to do in your life.
- **For your Six:** This life is full of the possibility of unexpected dangers. Pray that God would mercifully protect your Six from being harmed by any disaster.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus tells his disciples that they can expect the world to start going crazy, with disasters, wars, and epidemics. He tells them that they can even expect to face personal danger and persecution. But His words are very clear in what actions they should take... “do not fear”... “do not worry”... “stand firm.” Pray that our church would hold on to the words of Jesus when the world around us starts to feel scary and unpredictable. Pray for overcoming fear about funding & completing all we have taken on in ILTJ. Pray for protection from the spirit of fear all over this place

Thursday, March 17

Luke 22:14-46 —Plotting, Communion & a Prediction

14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, “Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. 21 But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. 22 The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!” 23 They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. 28 You are those who have stood by me in my trials.

29 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, 30 so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

31 “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”

33 But he replied, “Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”

34 Jesus answered, “I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.”

35 Then Jesus asked them, “When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?”

“Nothing,” they answered.

36 He said to them, “But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. 37 It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.”

38 The disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.”

“That is enough,” he replied.

39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. 40 On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” 41 He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, 42 “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” 43 An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. 44 And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

45 When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow.

46 “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.16) “I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God”—this is a goodbye meal. Like the nobleman from the story in chapter 19, Jesus is going away for a while to take possession of His kingdom. They will someday all celebrate this feast together again. It will be a double celebration: the celebration of the Passover, and the celebration of their new kingdom.
- (v.20) “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”—For the centerpiece of this Passover meal, Jesus replaces the usual lamb with the bread and wine, the symbols of his own body and blood. He is establishing a new tradition, with a new sacrificial lamb: Himself. The Passover lamb was a symbol of God’s protection of His people from death, His rescue of them from captivity, and His guidance of them to a new land. The bread and wine commemorate a new but similar relationship between Jesus and his followers: salvation from death, rescue from sin, and the coming of a new kingdom.
- (v.22) “as it has been decreed”—numerous Psalms speak of the Messiah being betrayed by a friend. Psalm 41:9 is a good example:
Even my close friend,
someone I trusted,
one who shared my bread
has lifted up his heel against me.
- (v.32) “when you have turned back”—there will be a time when Peter’s faith will fail under Satan’s temptations and accusations. But that won’t be the end. He can repent: that is, recalibrate himself toward Jesus again. When he does, he’ll find that he not only has enough strength to follow Jesus himself but to lead others toward Him as well.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** In their last supper together, Jesus taught his disciples how to practice communion, how to do something symbolic (eating the bread and drinking the wine) so that they would think often of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Ask Jesus to help you to stop and remember His actions on the cross. Take a moment today before you eat and drink to say thank you to Jesus and ask Him again to wash you clean on the inside.
- **For your Six:** Pray that Jesus would protect your Six from the devil’s plans for their destruction. Ask God to unmask the work of Satan’s lies, accusations, and temptations in their lives.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Communion has a special significance for the church because it is a visible reminder of what it’s all about: Jesus and his sacrifice for us. Pray for our Easter services. Pray that they would be full of joy and remembrance for those of us in relationship with Jesus; and that those who have not yet met Him would sense His love for them in special way.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Passover was a big deal for Israel. It was a way for people to remember God protecting and saving them from Pharaoh and Egypt. See the full story in Exodus. Jesus shared a final Passover meal with His disciples only this time He said He would be the lamb sacrificed once and for all for the sins of the people. He talked about the bread representing His body and the wine representing His blood.
- **To Do:** Take some bread or crackers and juice and take communion together as a family tonight thanking God for the incredible sacrifice He made on our behalf.

Friday, March 18

Luke 22:47-23:25 — *Betrayal, Denial & Trial*

47 While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, 48 but Jesus asked him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

49 When Jesus’ followers saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, should we strike with our swords?”
50 And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered, “No more of this!” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs? 53 Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns.”

54 Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. 55 And when some there had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them. 56 A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, “This man was with him.”

57 But he denied it. “Woman, I don’t know him,” he said.

58 A little later someone else saw him and said, “You also are one of them.”

“Man, I am not!” Peter replied.

59 About an hour later another asserted, “Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean.”

60 Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.

61 The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.” 62 And he went outside and wept bitterly.

63 The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. 64 They blindfolded him and demanded, “Prophecy! Who hit you?” 65 And they said many other insulting things to him.

66 At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and the teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. 67 “If you are the Messiah,” they said, “tell us.”

Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, 68 and if I asked you, you would not answer. 69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.”

70 They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?”

He replied, “You say that I am.”

71 Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”

1 Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse him, saying, “We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king.”

3 So Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

4 Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.”

5 But they insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.”

6 On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. 7 When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

8 When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. 9 He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. 11 Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. 12 That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

13 Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. 15 Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.

16-17 Therefore, I will punish him and then release him.”

18 With one voice they cried out, “Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!” 19 (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)

20 Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. 21 But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

22 For the third time he spoke to them: “Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him.”

23 But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed. 24 So Pilate decided to grant their demand. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.52) “touched the man’s ear and healed him”—Jesus shows that he really is a child of God. He shows mercy even to the people who are trying to kill Him. (see Luke 6:35-36)
- (v.54) “Peter followed at a distance”—Peter has just sworn that he will follow Jesus to prison and death. In the book of Acts, Peter does indeed follow Jesus to prison (Acts 4:3, for example); and church tradition tells us that he eventually follows Jesus to execution, perhaps even on a cross. Right now, though, the best he can muster is following at a distance—and he doesn’t even sustain that for very long.
- (v.64) “Prophesy! Who hit you?”—they think they’re being clever, but they’re actually in the middle of fulfilling prophecies he has already given: “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law” (9:22); and, “They will mock him, insult him, and spit on him; they will flog him and kill him” (18:32-33).
- (v.69) “the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God”—Jesus is referring again to the Messianic prophecy from Daniel 7:13-14. It’s a concise, poetic way of saying, “Yes, I am the Messiah. Now that I’ve told you, you will kill me; but killing me will only end up leading to my exaltation and the establishment of my kingdom.” They might not catch all of it, but they understand enough to respond, “So, you’re saying you’re the Son of God, then?”
- (v.1) “led him off to Pilate”—Pilate is the Roman governor. The council needs his approval to apply the death sentence.
- (v.4) “I find no basis for a charge”—upon further examination, Pilate determines that Jesus is not a significant political threat. Luke is stressing the lack of legitimate charges against Jesus to clearly establish that Jesus is not a common criminal. For Luke’s readers, it would be quite scandalous that Jesus was crucified; it’s a form of death reserved for the lowest of the low.
- (v.7) “he sent him to Herod”—Herod is probably in town for the feast. As a Galilean, Jesus is technically Herod’s citizen. But since the charges have to do with actions in Judea, Pilate has the right to try Jesus (*IVP Bible Background Commentary* 253); he’s just trying to pass off a difficult case.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Do you feel as if you've failed God in some significant way? Ask God for forgiveness. If Jesus' treatment of Peter is any indication, He's more than willing to give you another chance. God is rooting for you to succeed.
- **For your Six:** Jesus healed the ear of one of the people who came to arrest him and kill him. Particularly if any of your Six have been hostile to Jesus; pray that He would draw them to Himself by showing them kindness in a way that they know is from Him.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Jesus chooses not to engage in arguments with His accusers. He seems to draw strength from the fact that He has nothing to hide. Pray that our church would be a place free from destructive secrets. Pray that we would not respond defensively to anyone falsely accusing us but be given Holy Spirit grace and peace in every situation.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** One of Jesus' disciples cut off another man's ear with his sword when they came to the garden to arrest Jesus. Jesus picked up the ear and put it back on the man's head. This story always blows my mind. 1. Sometimes followers of Jesus mess up and do things they think are right, but they aren't. 2. This man's ear was cut off and then put back on! In spite of being eye-witnesses to such a miraculous healing, they arrested Him anyway? What a mess!
- **To Do:** Put your hand over your right ear. Just close your eyes and imagine what it would have been like to be the man who experienced such a horrible and then beautiful thing happen to him. What do you think this man told his family about Jesus when He got home that night? Jesus *always* did right thing even in the hardest of times. Has there been a time when you had to do something hard but it was the right thing to do? Ask God to help you be a person who loves God and Others and does the right thing even when it's a hard thing to do.

Saturday, March 19

Luke 23: 26-56 — Crucifixion, Death & Burial

26 As the soldiers led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. 27 A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. 28 Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' 30 Then

" 'they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!"

and to the hills, "Cover us!"

31 For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33 When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. 34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

35 The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is God's Messiah, the Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

38 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?

41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.”

42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

43 Jesus answered him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

44 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

47 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away.

49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

50 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.26) “made him carry it behind Jesus”—Simon Peter, who just last night talked of dying with Jesus, has run away; so Simon of Cyrene has to temporarily fill in for him. Cyrene, by the way, is in North Africa, in modern Libya (*IVP Bible Background Commentary* 254).
- (v.27) “including women who mourned and wailed for him”—it’s not quite true that all of Jesus’ followers have abandoned Him. The men among the disciples are hiding, but the women continue to follow Him to the very end.
- (v.34) “Father, forgive them”—Jesus continues to follow His own advice from the sermon on the plain: “bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you” (6:28), and, “Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned” (6:37). To the very end, Jesus is giving generously to others, particularly to those who won’t or can’t give anything in return.
- (v.34) “they divided up his clothes by casting lots”—it was common practice for the executioners to get the personal effects of the prisoner (*New Bible Commentary* 1017), but this is also a reference to Psalm 22 (written by David, about 1000 years before Jesus).
- (v.42) “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom”—Criminal though he is—and as far as we know a complete stranger to Jesus—he is the only person we’ve encountered who believes that this is not the end for Jesus. Even as Jesus hangs on a cross next to him, this criminal believes that Jesus will survive and triumph.
- (v.45) “the curtain of the temple was torn in two”—the curtain is the divider between the Holy Place (the priestly area of the temple) and the Most Holy Place (where only the chief priests could go, and only once a year). Perhaps this is the symbolic beginning of the destruction of the temple.
- (v.46) “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”—this is the first line of Psalm 31:5, which continues, “redeem me, LORD, my faithful God.”

- (v.53) “placed it in a tomb cut in the rock”—the fact that Jesus’ body is placed in a tomb bought by this influential councilman brings to mind an odd little detail in one of Isaiah’s prophecies of the suffering servant: “He was assigned a grave with the wicked,/and with the rich in his death” (Isaiah 53:9). Like Isaiah’s suffering servant, Jesus dies the death of a criminal (and would have simply been buried in a public burial ground with them except for Joseph’s intervention [*New Bible Commentary* 1018]) but is buried in a rich man’s grave. Even more than Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 (written about 800 years before Jesus) is startling in how accurately and vividly it portrays Jesus’ suffering—it might be worth finding a Bible and reading the entire chapter.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Jesus’ death is undeniably a very powerful story, but it’s also one that can be very difficult to grasp. Pray that God would give you a new understanding today of the meaning of Jesus’ death.
- **For your Six:** Pray that like Simon of Cyrene your Six would be drawn into Jesus’ story in surprising ways.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** While their companions are sneering, the second criminal and the centurion find in Jesus’ death something compelling and faith-inspiring. Pray that many people in our community would also gain a new appreciation for Jesus during these few days when there is so much focus on him and his death. Pray that many would be curious enough to accept an invitation to church to hear more about it. Pray that our church would be bold in our invite factor and in tune with the Holy Spirit.

Sunday, March 20

Luke 24 — Resurrection, Reconnection & Ascension

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’ “ 8 Then they remembered his words.

9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

19 “What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning

23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

36 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. 46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things. 49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

50 When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- (v.5) "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"—As Jesus told the Sadducees, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (20:38). God is certainly Jesus' God; therefore, Jesus is alive.
- (v.8) "Then they remembered his words"—again and again, Jesus has told his followers these things, but they haven't been able to understand. Finally, this thing that's remained a mystery is unveiled: "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in may see the light" (8:16).
- (v.10) "Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James"—these are some of the same women who have been traveling with Jesus since chapter 8 (8:2-3). Luke mentions their names to show that he is relying on the eyewitness testimony of specific people, not on rumor, hearsay, or anonymous tips. The testimony of women was considered less reliable than that of men (*IVP Bible Background Commentary* 256); nonetheless, Jesus gives the first news of his resurrection to these faithful women who have been following Him and who have come to do honor to His body.

- (v.26) “and then enter his glory?”—Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, which so vividly portray Jesus’ suffering, don’t stop there. They go on to describe the sufferer’s glorious future even after death.
- (v.41) “they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement”—they go from overwhelmingly scared to overwhelmingly happy.
- (v.43) “he took it and ate it in their presence”—I think eating the fish both proves that He’s not a ghost and brings some normality to the situation.
- (v.45) “he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures”—Jesus walks his followers through some of the very passages we’ve been looking at the past few days, opening their eyes to the fact that what looked terribly wrong was actually going exactly according to the script.

TAKING IT HOME:

- **For you:** Just as you prayed for a greater understanding of the meaning of Jesus’ death yesterday, ask God to give you a deeper appreciation of the significance of His resurrection today. Ask God to fill you today with wonder and praise.
- **For your Six:** Ask Jesus to show himself to your Six. Ask Him to give them whatever explanation or demonstration they need to believe in His death and His resurrection.
- **For our church/ILTJ:** Pray for God’s forgiveness and his salvation to be poured out on our church, community, and city. That’s why Jesus came.

FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD OPTION:

- **To Talk About:** Jesus rose again!!! Best day EVER!!! What do you think it would have been like to witness that first hand? It must have been pretty amazing!
- **To Do:** Gather as a family in a circle and each person take a turn praying today. Thank God for His incredible gift and sacrifice, thank Jesus for our salvation and pray that others around us would be impacted by our joy and thankfulness for today too.

Final Reflections

What has been most rewarding in reading this devotional?

What have you learned reading through Luke?

How have you seen your faith grow during Leap of Faith?

Do you think you have seen any change in you as a result of these six weeks?

What did you experience or what answers to prayer did you get:

For You? _____

For your Six? _____

For our church? _____

Did you make any new decisions or are you starting any new disciplines or habits because of your involvement in Leap of Faith?



LEAP OF FAITH RESOURCES

journeycommunitychurch.com/leap

Daily readings will be available on the website beginning February 8.

Download a PDF version of this booklet.

Listen to audio tracks of the daily reading.

Subscribe to receive the daily readings by email.

Find out how to join a group.

And much more!