

WEEK 33 DAY 1

Today's Reading: Luke 7:22-30

Expectation can be defined as "a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future." We can plan our routines, outfits and schedules; however, before we know it, we can end up with such a hunger for control that when we can't predict what's ahead, it leaves us confused and panicked.

In Luke 7:22-23, Jesus talked to a few of John's disciples who saw Jesus in real time, yet still questioned whether He was the Messiah. They were a part of miracle after miracle, yet Jesus was not what they had expected of a Messiah.

In verses 24-30, after John's disciples departed, Jesus praised John the Baptist and how he was the prophet hinted at in the Old Testament. The term "prophet" refers to someone who hears directly from God and shares with others what has personally been revealed to them. When we read about John's ministry, we learn he spent much time preparing the people for the coming Messiah. John's life was marked by faithfulness to the calling he was given. However, Jesus didn't praise John because of John's goodness but because John's life was a testimony to the goodness of God. John devoted his life to Jesus, not his expectations of who he thought Jesus should be.

In the final verses of this passage, we read the people responded to Jesus' praise of John by "acknowledging God's way of righteousness." When we follow Jesus, our lives no longer point to our successes, but to the glory of God!

- Name some false expectations the people put on the Messiah to come. How was Jesus different than these expectations?
- What are some expectations you put on God that are not promised in Scripture? Confess these to Him.

PRAYER:

God, thank You for being the Messiah we might not expect, but the one we need. Show us how to walk in faithfulness toward You today so others might acknowledge Your glory.

Bonus Reading: Malachi 3:1

WEEK 33 DAY 2

Today's Reading: Luke 13:31-33

In this portion of Jesus' ministry, we read of another threat to His life. Due to His great power over the people, many established "cultural elites" disapproved of Jesus, causing a great ruckus within the cities in which they had heavy influence. Herod Antipas was among these, having already killed John the Baptist. To maintain complete control over the population, Herod issued a threat against Jesus' life. Any ordinary man would have taken this seriously and retreated for a while, but Jesus' response is found in the crux of this passage.

Jesus had the Pharisees report back to Herod to indicate that He was unafraid because He knew His destiny was to die in Jerusalem. A common saying of the time, reflected in different places of Scripture, was that prophets customarily die in Jerusalem, which Jesus knew to be true about His own death.

When faced with such severe threat to His life, Jesus expressed confidence in God's plan, and continued to care for the people God had put in His path. While you and I do not know our death place, Romans 8:28 reads, "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." We can have similar confidence in God's plan to fulfill His promises.

PRAYER:

God, grant me the courage to do what You have called me to every day. Please help me trust in Your promises and live a life pleasing to You.

Bonus Reading: Luke 9:53

WEEK 33 DAY 3

Today's Reading: Luke 13:34-35

We read today of Jesus' lament over what He knew Jerusalem had become. The Old Testament storyline highlights God's faithfulness in pursuing Israel while Israel strayed further from Him. Jesus' words here are very reminiscent of many words we read from the prophets of old, as they also noted the spiritual decay of God's chosen people. God showed excellent love and patience for Israel throughout the Old Testament. Jesus echoed this by saying that He would protect Israel as a hen protects her chicks, a common metaphor for intimate protection. Jesus knew this truth and knew His destiny was to die there at the hands of the Jewish people, God's chosen ones. This shows the extent of how far they'd fallen by failing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah and plotting to kill God in the flesh.

The house in this passage was most likely referring to all of Israel. They ignored God and pressed further into a self-righteous hope that rendered them spiritually dead, again unable to recognize God, who was right in front of them. Instead, they trusted in themselves and their righteousness.

This passage can serve as an excellent example for us as believers. Even though God will not remove salvation from us, we can miss out on what He wants to do in us and through us by ignoring what He asks us to do. He desires to grow and protect us as He did in this passage for Israel. May we always have eyes to see God moving around us.

- In what ways do you bear fruit of your repentance?
- Does picturing Christ as the vineyard keeper change your perspective of Him? If so, how?

PRAYER:

Lord, draw me closer to You in everything I do. Please help me to cast aside the distractions that keep me from focusing on Your will for my life.

Bonus Reading: Matthew 23:37-39

WEEK 33 DAY 4

Today's Reading: Luke 14:1-6

As we read about the controversy Jesus faced on this particular Sabbath, let's first understand how the Sabbath was established and what purpose it serves.

Shortly after Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, they began grumbling and wishing they had never left. God provided them with manna (literally meaning "what is it?"), which was to be gathered daily since it was perishable and vanished before the following day - except for the Sabbath when it could not be found for gathering (Exodus 16). So, the people gathered twice as much on the day before the Sabbath.

In the New Testament, Jesus presented Himself as manna in John 6. Why would He do so if it were perishable and had to be gathered promptly? In Exodus 16:32-33, God instructed them also to have an omer of manna kept in the presence of the Lord to be a sign for all generations that would not perish. Thus, Jesus was comparing Himself to the non-perishing manna.

Within these two representations is a picture of law and grace. Manna was temporary, spoiling, and eventually fading; they had to gather it daily. Their work was never finished. Similarly, our work cannot produce life for us. As for the manna God made to last in His presence, it represented Jesus, who is currently seated at His right hand, bearing witness to all generations of God's saving grace. Our works cannot satisfy our needs and requirements for life; only what God has done will supply that.

Thus, Jesus was teaching them it wouldn't be necessary to observe the Sabbath in the same way they had before. For Christians, Sabbath is not about taking a day off. Sabbath is a picture of salvation! God established its original model under the Law of Jewish life, but there also existed a spiritual component about entering the rest of God for righteousness, His finished work. As there was futility in the Law, our works are futile in light of the grace and glory of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER:

God, help me to rest in You and Your finished work through Christ Jesus.

WEEK 33 DAY 5

Today's Reading: Luke 14:7-14

In today's world, we, as women, are highly encouraged through social media to promote ourselves, compete, and prove to others how clever, capable and confident we are. We are made to feel that if we are not living a glamorous lifestyle with luxury things, expensive vacations or complete perfection as portrayed by social media, we will not fit in, or worse, go unnoticed. The Enemy wants us to identify with the brokenness of the world and feel as though we're not enough when we don't meet these "worldly criteria." Jesus, however, wants us to identify with the broken and be free.

The parable in today's reading speaks to us about how important it is to humble ourselves. Luke 14:11 specifically tells us, "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." But what is humility? I love the way 19th-century Anglican author, T.T. Carter described it: "Humility is perpetual quietness of heart. It is never to be worn down or easily angered, irritable, or hurt; to wonder at nothing done to me, to feel nothing done against me. Humility is to be at rest when no one praises me and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and above is troubled."

Throughout Scripture, Jesus says His followers need to be humble: gentle, kind, forgiving. In Matthew 18, Jesus said we should be humble like little children. He even told us ways in which He, as the Messiah, was humble. In John 13, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.

·In what ways can we, as Christ-following women, practice humility?

PRAYER:

Lord, I need You. Teach me how to be humble in Your eyes. I lay my life down before You. Show me areas where I need to repent and grow to be more like You. Do Your work in me so my life may bring glory to You. In Jesus name, amen.

**Bonus Reading: Matthew 18:2-5,
John 13:3-17,**

WEEK 33 DAY 6

Today's Reading: Luke 14:15-24

The Parable of the Great Banquet in Luke 14:15-24 is a poignant and piercing story of Yahweh's desire to gather His beloved people, the Jews, around His banquet table, much as we might experience with our own family at a large Thanksgiving meal. Much preparation, anticipation, excitement and love is expressed when family members participate in such a joyful occasion. However, in today's reading, when invitations were issued, many declined, citing a variety of flimsy excuses. In short, they snubbed the gracious host and rejected his gift.

Understandably, this angered the host, and he instructed his servant to bring in downtrodden townspeople from the streets to enjoy the banquet feast instead. With additional space still available, and the banquet table not filled, the host ordered the servant to search further into the outlying roads and countryside and extend his invitation to even more people.

Jesus was purposefully presenting this message to a significant gathering of Jewish leaders in the home of a Pharisee. He clearly wanted them to understand the meaning: Those who reject the Messiah and, thus, refuse to attend the banquet will not be included "at the feast in the kingdom of God" (v. 15). They had refused the invitation, and the feast was available then to society's maimed, poor, lame and "unclean." Even outsiders (Gentiles) on the country lanes were invited to come!

As you likely gleaned, the master of the house is God, and the great banquet is His kingdom. The invited guests represent the Jewish nation. "But his own did not receive him" (John 1:11). Thus, the result of the Jewish rejection of Christ opened the door more widely for God's salvation to include the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6-7; Romans 15:12).

Verse 24 refers to that promised future banquet gathering of all who are included at "the wedding supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:6-9). Only those who accept the invitation of salvation through Christ will attend (John 1:12).

·Have you accepted the invitation that Jesus has given to you?

PRAYER:

Sovereign Lord, thank You for Your eternal, unshakeable kingdom that will be established on earth one day. Give me Your wisdom and lead me to those I can bring into Your kingdom.