

## WEEK 35 DAY 1

Today's Reading: Luke 16:19-31

### The Rich Man and Lazarus

Jesus spoke in parables to those who surrounded him - the tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and His disciples. The Pharisees ridiculed the teaching of Jesus, and one reason was because they loved money. Jesus shared the parable of the rich man and the beggar, Lazarus, with them, anyway.

The rich man was depicted as having no lack, possessing luxury, food and wealth to spare. The beggar, Lazarus, had no money, no health, no comfort. Lazarus experienced pain, discomfort, alienation and humiliation. The rich man paid him no attention or compassion. Scripture says even dogs were more attentive to the condition of Lazarus than was the rich man.

Both men, irrespective of their earthly experience, were destined for physical death. Lazarus, however, experienced spiritual life, comfort and community with other believers. The rich man experienced spiritual death, torment and alienation. In fact, the rich man begged for relief from Abraham and Lazarus, but nothing could be done.

In the parable, the rich man came to the end of himself and was unable to change his eternity, so he asked permission to warn his brothers, who had not yet died. Abraham explained that God used Moses and the Prophets to share the reality of eternity with them. The man tried to convince Abraham to send another way to warn them, but the choice is the same for all: Choose faith in God or faith in oneself.

Despite the Pharisees' reactions to his teachings, Jesus was patient to share parables to help connect them to truth. He loved them enough to warn of their impending eternal separation from God if they didn't surrender their lives to the authority of Jesus and live for the kingdom of God.

- How does this parable change your perspective on the importance of earthly possessions?
- How does Jesus' character in this passage lead you to trust Him more?

### **PRAYER:**

Father, thank You for inviting us into Your kingdom. Lead us to love those around us and keep the kingdom of God at the forefront of our lives.

**Bonus Reading: John 13:35**

## WEEK 35 DAY 2

Today's Reading: Luke 17:1-4

Studying the life of Jesus brings so much peace and assurance because, over and over, we see His heart of love for humanity. However, Jesus did not shy away from giving firm warnings of dangers to come when we choose to disobey God. Because God loves His Church so much, He commands unity and hates disunity.

In today's passage, we see Jesus confirm that temptations will come to everyone as a part of life.

However, being the one through whom those temptations come brings significant consequences. We are to resist temptation and not be the source of it. Additionally, we are to be quick to forgive, even if that forgiveness feels never ending. The forgiveness we extend to one another pales in comparison to Christ's forgiving our sins and taking the punishment for them.

Before He died an excruciating death on the Cross, one of Jesus' main concerns - something He begged God for - was that His disciples would be unified - as one. If unity was at the forefront of Jesus' mind before He experienced such unimaginable suffering, we should also place the same importance on this. We must value and respect each other enough not to stumble or hold grudges. Through Christ's power, we can access radical unity and mutual respect for our brothers and sisters.

- Why does Christ desire unity in the Church?
- When we find it difficult to forgive someone, what should we remember from Christ's example?

## **PRAYER:**

Lord, reveal areas where I am causing a brother or sister in Christ pain or temptation. Give me the ability to forgive those who cause me pain or temptation.

**Bonus Reading: John 17:20-26**

## WEEK 35 DAY 3

### Today's Reading: Luke 17:5-10

As a 4-year-old child, I was often swayed by fear and worry. One such bout was initiated by an episode of Full House in which the character, Michelle, was under the belief that her feet were too big. In a dramatic scene, she had a nightmare that her feet grew to be ginormous and took over the house. I was convinced this same thing could happen to me. My parents did what they could to console me and assure me it wasn't possible. They went so far as to provide an in-depth explanation of a foot's bone structure. Finally, they resorted to taking me to the doctor, who at last convinced me this fear was irrational.

Too often we strive for understanding as a consolation to our fears. Furthermore, Western culture prioritizes standing on intellectual ascent, a set of ideas or beliefs that should be backed scientifically. Truth is thought to depend on whether something is proven true, and if not, doubt is conceived, often giving birth to total disbelief.

Faith, on the other hand, is dependent on complete trust and confidence. It transcends matter of the head and becomes a matter of the heart. You can believe all the right things and still be in bondage, miserable and unchanged. Hebrews 11:6 teaches, "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." As renowned British preacher Charles Spurgeon put it, "Faith is the vital part of salvation. If a man lacks faith, he lacks everything."

For transformative power to occur, what matters most is not necessarily the quantity of our faith but rather that our faith is placed correctly in the right person: Christ. When we understand there is a God who loves us, and in whom we can trust completely, faith is born. Jesus explains it as something small that can grow big, but we are responsible for positioning it in the ground! May we be people who plant our faith, no matter how small, in Jesus, and trust in the One who can move mountains.

- Do I trust God mostly with head knowledge or heart surrender?
- What is one thing that encouraged my faith today?

## **PRAYER:**

God, help me to put my faith and trust in You, seek less understanding, and lean more into Christ.

## WEEK 35 DAY 4

Today's Reading: Luke 17:11-19

When I graduated high school, I sent announcements to my favorite teachers. I also sent them a thank-you card to tell them how much I appreciated their encouragement and support when I was in their class. I was surprised to see how many of them responded to my notes with their own cards, encouraging me as I entered a new chapter as a college student. It made me think: If my high school teachers showed me so much kindness in response to my gratitude, how much more will our heavenly Father respond to our gratitude toward Him?

In today's passage, we read about 10 lepers who were healed. Of the 10, only one took the time to turn back and thank Jesus for His miraculous healing. This is not to say the other lepers did not have faith, because they did - since Jesus did not heal them immediately, they had to trust Him and walk in faith to see the priests. It was only once they started on their way that they were healed.

Notice that both crying out to God and thanking Him were done in a loud voice. While the cry for help had to be shouted because the lepers could not get close to Jesus for fear of passing their disease to Him, the Samaritan man worshipped the Lord with a loud voice because he wanted others to know what Christ had done for him.

- What do you still need to thank the Lord for?
- How can you share your gratitude to God with others?

## **PRAYER:**

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your healing hand  
and all the other ways You bless me. Thank You  
most of all for salvation through Jesus Christ.  
Today I praise You with a grateful heart for all  
You have done for me!



## WEEK 35 DAY 5

Today's Reading: Luke 17:20-37

No man knows the day or the hour. Be ready. This world is not our home.

Today we read of the confusion that had surrounded the topic of the kingdom of God while Jesus was here on earth, and still causes confusion today. Jesus was asked about the timing of His kingdom. He explained to His disciples that the kingdom was within them, in their midst, and among them. This may have been a hard concept for them to grasp as their expectations were more political than spiritual. The coming kingdom was not something they would have a front-row seat to observe.

Jesus warned us not to get caught up in figuring out exactly when and how He would establish His kingdom and to be careful not to follow those who falsely say that the kingdom is here when it isn't.

As the Scripture illustrates, the coming of the Son of Man will be quick and sudden, like a flash of lightning. He reminded the disciples of the days of Noah and Lot, righteous men living in unrighteous times. People were engaging in everyday life activities such as eating, drinking and marrying. Both scenarios describe times when God brought judgment to the earth. Though Noah warned people for 120 years, the flood "suddenly" came, and all but eight perished. Likewise, only Lot's small family escaped Sodom and Gomorrah, and tragically, his wife was destroyed as she looked back longingly for her old life. So it will be when the Son of Man returns. People will carry on, ignore Jesus, and it will be too late when He "suddenly" arrives.

•How can I be strong in the Lord and faithful to Him without being influenced by the world?

## **PRAYER:**

Jesus, help me to be fully prepared as I expectantly await Your return.

**Bonus Reading: Matthew 24: 36-44; Mark 13:32-37; Genesis 6-8, 19**

## WEEK 35 DAY 6

### Today's Reading: Luke 18:1-8

Parables are stories that point to a greater meaning. Jesus used parables to illustrate truth to His people. Today we observe Jesus' using a parable to teach His disciples the importance of persistence in prayer.

The widow in this parable is a woman seeking justice from a prideful, unjust judge. In Jewish culture, we would expect this judge to be impartial, understanding that all judgment ultimately belongs to God. However, that is not what we see here. The judge does not fear God or respect man. Even after the judge refused justice for this widow, she remained persistent and faithful to plead with him. Because of her persistence, the judge granted her justice.

If a careless and unjust judge was willing to grant a widow justice, how much more will a just and loving God answer the prayers of His children? We serve a compassionate and loving Father. (Psalm 145:8-9). God will answer the prayers of His children. His answers may not always come in the ways we expect, but God's timing will always be perfect, even when unexpected.

Though our culture and circumstance are not the same, we can all relate to the widow in this parable. We are just as desperate and have the same need for a Savior. May we be persistent in prayer as we trust in the faithfulness of our Father.

·How has God been faithful to answer your prayers? Write down these prayers as you think of them.

·Would you consider yourself faithful and persistent in prayer? Why or why not?

## **PRAYER:**

Thank you for being a loving and compassionate Father. Help me to trust Your faithfulness and be persistent in prayer.

**Bonus Reading: 1 Thessalonians  
5:16-18**