

Background for Week 6

As all the gospels aim to do, Luke's primary drive is to reveal who this Jesus character is. Remember, Luke is a gospel that focuses heavily on his compassionate ministry to the marginalized. We often find Jesus interacting with those deemed less worthy: i.e. women, tax collectors, the poor, the sick, the oppressed, etc. A second theme is discipleship, which for Luke is not a lone wolf venture, but a way of life as a chosen member among all the servants of God's kingdom.

This week we find Jesus has by this point commissioned followers to go proclaim the kingdom and heal, fed 5,000 hungry people, taught about discipleship requirements, gone through transfiguration, healed a boy, talked about his death two different times, settled a dispute among the apostles, and experienced inhospitality. Beginning after the 70 appointed disciples had returned, our text concentrates on a public conversation between Jesus and a lawyer, which of course takes in front of the apostles and others who were gathered there.

Text for this week: Luke 10:25-37. (We encourage you to post your answers to these questions on our 100 Key Texts Facebook Page and engage in a discussion with the others.)

1. Read 10:25-37 in its entirety. What jumps out at you in the text? What thoughts are inspired by it? What questions arise?
2. Next, we'll break it down by verse(s). Read 10:25. Lawyer here refers to an expert in the law of Moses and was likely affiliated with the Pharisees. (An aside about this group: the word means "separated ones" and refers to a sect of leaders within Judaism that obeyed the written law of Moses and its unwritten interpretations, known as the tradition of the elders and focused on holiness. You'll see in John's gospel some were hostile, while in Luke's gospel, some were helpful.) When you read that the lawyer "stood up to test Jesus," what is the conversation climate you imagine? Though we tend to think of it in negative terms, it's hard to know with any absolute certainty the tone of this person's testing, if it was to simply gauge Jesus' knowledge, or if it was an attempt to trip him up. It's good to be aware of the assumptions we carry when we read scripture. When you think about eternal life, what does that mean to you? Do you view it in future terms, or as part of the here and now as well? As Christians, is eternal life our ultimate goal?
3. 10:26-28. Have you ever had a question answered with another question? What was that like for you? What do you think was Jesus' point in doing that? We see

the lawyer here summing up what Jesus' labels in other places as the first commandment: love the Lord your God with all heart, soul, strength, and mind. This in essence covers the first three of the Ten Commandments Moses etched in stone, which have to do with God. What does it say about our relationship with God? How do you see this playing out in your life? In other words, in what ways do you love God with your heart? Your soul? Your mind? Your strength? The second commandment Jesus spoke of in other places of course was exactly what this expert said, love your neighbor as yourself, which essentially encapsulates commandments 4-10. Saying love your neighbor is certainly much easier than living/doing it at times; it can be very complicated. For instance, what does love look like when a dear friend who is quite sensitive to critique isn't fulfilling certain job responsibilities? In the current climate we live in, what examples of loving a neighbor do you see?

4. 29-37: What do you notice about Jesus' response to the lawyer's second question? When reading this, who do you picture yourself as: the beaten man? The priest (or religious leader)? The Levite (lay associate of the priest)? The Samaritan? The innkeeper? One of the robbers? We have likely played more than one of these roles at different points in our lives.
 - Vs. 29: The Greek verb here for "justify" also means to pronounce righteous, to vindicate, to treat as just. In what ways have you perhaps tried to justify yourself, to show yourself as acceptable to God? To others? To yourself?
 - Vs. 30-32: The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was about 18 miles with a drop in elevation, and was very dangerous. Among many other things, we have no idea if he was traveling by foot or animal. What does the lack of information about the man perhaps convey? Do you think it was intentional or it just didn't matter to the storyline? What do you notice about Jesus' description of the priest and Levite? Have you ever been "passed by?" Have you ever passed by someone else? How has the church passed by those in need?
 - Vs. 33-34. Samaritans, name given to the inhabitants of what used to be the capital of the Northern Kingdom, were foreigners and generally didn't have good relations with the Jewish population. So for him to show compassion was quite unexpected. In today's world, you could compare it to an illegal immigrant bringing a border patrol cop to the hospital, or vice versa. What does one find in such surprising care?
 - Vs. 35: A denarius was a usual day's wage for a laborer. So this man gave two days worth of his income which would've provided approximately

two months of lodging. When have you experienced immense generosity? When have you had the opportunity to give generously? Though this story focuses on our behavior and relationships with others, what might this parable say about God's generosity?

- Vs. 37: When Jesus ends this story, which the lawyer recognizes is about mercy, what does that have to do with where this all started, inheriting eternal life?

For your prayers:

Dear Teacher, as you sought not to condemn, but to challenge and make room for much needed growth, may I/we be receptive to your life-giving word. Give me/us the courage, wisdom, and compassion to care for others as you have. Amen.

Next week: Luke 15:11-32