



grow. pray. study.

March 29, 2020 Breaking Bread, Kingdom Values

Scripture: Luke 14:1-3, 7-8a, 15-18a

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Family Activity:

If your child is not familiar with the story of Zacchaeus, read the story together from your children's Bible or locate the story online. In this story Jesus tells Zacchaeus that he is coming to his house for dinner. The people in Zacchaeus' town were surprised Jesus wanted to go to his house for dinner because nobody in the town where Zacchaeus lived really liked Zacchaeus. What we learn from this story is that Jesus wanted to come to dinner because Jesus loves everyone! To celebrate that Jesus loves everyone, plan a special family meal together. Encourage your child to cut out enough hearts for each member of your family. Write the name of each family member on a heart. Allow your child to invite everyone to a special family dinner by handing out the hearts and telling them "You are invited to dinner because Jesus loves you!" Then enjoy your meal together.

Note to readers:

During Lent, the GPS will lead us to read the entire gospel of Luke. To reach that goal, some daily readings are longer than usual. Mondays will highlight the "meal" passage from the previous Sunday's sermon. Tuesdays through Saturdays will cover the rest of the gospel. Have an extra cup of coffee, or maybe use your lunch break—make the time to read the whole gospel with us.

Jesus eating with a "sinner" (again!)

MONDAY 3.30.20 Luke 19:1-10

Jesus defied social prejudices by saying, "Zacchaeus, come down—I must stay in your home today." He offered this despised man his friendship—he went to the man's house. He told the upset crowd (many of whom Zacchaeus had likely cheated) that he "came to seek and save the lost." Zacchaeus responded with a profound heart change, one that no doubt paid money back to many who had grumbled about Jesus being "the guest of a sinner."

- Did Zacchaeus have a richer, more "successful" life, at the start of this story, or at its end? You know the answer you're "supposed" to give. But honestly, how do you define your own "wealth" and "success"? Would you ever even consider adjusting your values as Zacchaeus did when you realize how much Jesus wants to be your friend and Lord?
- Zacchaeus, a wealthy but short official, was so eager to see and hear Jesus that he climbed a tree in public. Jesus was so eager to reach Zacchaeus that he publicly invited himself to the house of one of the town's most despised "sinners." What parts of your social dignity and status are you willing to lay aside to "see" Jesus more fully, or to reach others with Jesus' love?

Prayer: Lord, when I seek you, I learn that you have been seeking me as eagerly as you sought Zacchaeus. When I feel “outcast,” remind me that I’m always an “insider” with you. Amen.

Shrewd swindler, foolish rich man

TUESDAY 3.31.20 Luke 16:1-31

Jesus told of a crook commended for cleverly buying off “friends” to help him after he lost his job. Jesus was against fraud, but asked: if that cheater thought ahead, wouldn’t you be wiser to use your means for eternal values than for earthly gain? Then Jesus told a parable about a certain rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. (The poor man, not the rich, got the dignity of a personal name.) The “rich man” shared nothing with Lazarus “at his gate.” After earthly life, the beggar was with righteous Abraham, while the wretched rich man asked him to warn his brothers about his sad fate.

- Jesus said no one can serve two masters—“you cannot serve God and wealth” (16:13). He was not against wealth, but strongly opposed giving wealth a higher priority than God. That challenged the rich religious leaders who saw their wealth as a sign of God’s favor and sneered (16:14). No matter your current financial status, which takes up more of your energy and time: money or God?
- Jesus’ second story (16:19-31) used some ideas about the afterlife common in his day to talk about our values in this life. Jesus said Moses and the prophets could show the rich man’s brothers (and, in real life, the self-enriching religious leaders) a better way to live (16:27-31). What helps you to build your social, financial and spiritual values on the teachings of Moses, the prophets—and Jesus? What forces push against those values?

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

Forgiveness and gratitude in Jesus’ kingdom

WEDNESDAY 4.1.20 Luke 17:1-37

Jesus told his disciples they should forgive “even if someone sins against you seven times in one day.” (Luke 17:4. [Matthew 18:21-22](#) said either “seventy seven times” or “seventy times seven.”) In any form, that’s more forgiving than we do naturally! “Increase our faith!” the disciples said. Jesus told them even a little faith is powerful. He healed ten lepers who showed just a little faith. Asked when (in the future) to expect God’s Kingdom, Jesus instead spoke of the need to trust God today to be ready for any trial that might come.

- On his way to Jerusalem, somewhere near the border between Galilee and Samaria, Jesus met the ten lepers. After Jesus healed and delivered them all, only a Samaritan praised God. Are there any experiences or obstacles that make it harder for you to express gratitude? Are there things you have forgotten or neglected to thank and praise God for?
- In 17:21, Jesus said either that God’s kingdom is “among you” or “within you” (Luke used the Greek *entōs humōn* could mean either or, maybe, both). What different significance do you find in the two possible meanings? To what extent does each of them ring true to your experience of belonging to the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I too wonder about the future in your kingdom. Help me focus on your presence among us, and within me right now, and trust you to take care of the future. Amen.

Outsiders welcomed; an insider opted out

THURSDAY 4.2.20 Luke 18:1-43

Did You Know?

1 in 8 people in our region was food insecure even before the current crisis. The United Methodist Church Social Principles “support policies that that increase access to quality food, particularly those with the fewest resources” and “affirm local, sustainable, and small-scale agriculture opportunities that allow communities to feed themselves.” * You can help relieve food insecurity by donating to local pantries, and even donating homegrown produce to Harvesters. [Click here](#) for more information and local drop-off sites.

(www.harvesters.org)

Jesus contrasted God with an unjust human judge. The issue, he said, was not if we can trust God, but if God can trust us (18:8). Jesus’ culture didn’t value tax collectors or children. Jesus said those “nobodies” were more apt to receive God’s favor than an arrogant Pharisee or a ruler who loved his wealth more than God. “Who then can be saved?” his startled hearers asked. Anyone, Jesus implied —“What is impossible for humans is possible for God.” “We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said in 18:31—and he was close. Jericho (18:35) was his last stop before Jerusalem.

- In 18:1-8 Jesus used a “how much more” image, as many rabbis did. “If even an unjust judge will do justice if pressed hard enough,” he asked, in effect, “how much more can we trust God to do justice?” His question about finding faithfulness on earth meant, can we keep trusting God to do justice even when disappointments or delays happen? How are you answering Jesus’ question?
- When the young ruler whose riches “owned” him turned away, Jesus said it was very hard for the wealthy to enter God’s kingdom. As we’ve seen, most people in Jesus’ day equated wealth with God’s favor. So the hearers asked, “Then who can be saved?” Are you confident that whatever your social status, your salvation is “possible for God”? How does that shape the way you live each day?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to give up trusting in my own righteousness, much less in my material possessions. Be the center and source of my life, now and forever. Amen.

* From <https://www.umcjustice.org/documents/14>, *Social Principles 160.H*. Provided by Kelly Shorten on behalf of the [EarthCOR ministry](#).

The peaceful king entered a heartbreaking city

FRIDAY 4.3.20 Luke 19:11-20:8

(Note: We already read [Luke 19:1-10](#) on March 30.)

Did You Know?

Jesus didn’t invent the more violent part of his story but took it from his day’s “headlines.” “Historically, Archelaus’s [son of Herod the Great] subjects (cf. 19:12) in fact had sent a delegation after him asking that he not be allowed to rule....Herod, Archelaus, and other rulers often dealt harshly with their political opponents.” *

Jesus told a story about faithful service. Like the one in [Matthew 25](#), this story praised servants who went all out to serve their king and received more duties. It warned against playing it safe—the king scolded the servant who was afraid to risk. Jesus set out for Jerusalem in [Luke 9:51](#) and now arrived. His entry echoed history (cf. [1 Kings 1:32-39](#)) and prophecy ([Zechariah 9:9-10](#)), a claim to peaceful kingship. His tears (19:41) said he loved the city’s people. But their heedless leaders did not love him.

- Jesus' listeners would have seen a story about kings and servants as an image of God's dealings with Israel. God had given Israel a task—to show God's glory and love to all nations ([Genesis 12:1-3](#)). How has God gifted you? In what ways do those gifts point to the task God calls you to? Are you ever tempted to keep your gifts safely in a “scarf,” rather than using them actively to do God's work in the world?
- The prophet Zechariah wrote that a righteous king would ride a donkey's colt and bring Jerusalem salvation and peace. Who sang and praised Jesus (19:37-39)? Who found his entrance into the holy city offensive? Would you more likely have been with “the establishment” who didn't want the orderly *status quo* upset, or with the upstart rabbi from Galilee's disciples?

Prayer: King Jesus, I want to serve you faithfully. Help me to see in what ways you have gifted me and help me to use those gifts to serve you boldly and faithfully. Amen.

* Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 234126-234128, 234142). Kindle Edition.

Jesus avoided expert traps, praised humble devotion

SATURDAY 4.4.20 Luke 20:9-21:4

As Jerusalem's religious leaders plotted his death, Jesus told a story that exposed the murder in their hearts. “Somebodies” all, they tried urgently to create a cause for his execution. They tried to get him to criticize paying Roman taxes, or to agree with them that faith in a resurrection was absurd. But neither their trick questions nor their great outward show of piety fooled Jesus. For him, worth and power lay not in earthly rank, but in people like the humble widow, whose tiny gift only he noticed.

- Jesus' vineyard story drew on a beloved Scripture ([Isaiah 5:1-7](#)), which called Israel God's vineyard. But like Isaiah's image, it had a sad ending. Hatred surrounded and stalked Jesus during his last week (Luke 19:47, 20:19). We, like the Jerusalem leaders, can have blind spots. Is there anything God's spirit is nudging you to face honestly in your life? Do you have the courage to face it, to grasp “the things that lead to peace”? The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection, and tried to make the idea sound ridiculous. What made absolute trust that death was not the end, that “the worst thing is never the last thing,” of crucial importance to Jesus? Do you share his confidence? If so, in what ways does it shape your day-to-day life for the better?

Prayer: King Jesus, your piercing insight made some powerful people very angry. But your purpose was always to redeem. Give me a measure of your insight, and a large dose of your redemptive heart. Amen.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer