

THE DAILY QUIET TIME REFLECTIONS SERIES

SEEK AND SAVE

Reflections on the Gospel of Luke

Eugene Han

Seek and Save: Reflections on the Gospel of Luke

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The Introduction draws on the introductory notes of Dr. Thomas L. Constable, used with gratitude for his lay-accessible scholarship on the text of Scripture.

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Reading, Reflecting, Together

This book was not written to be read in a single sitting. It follows the same daily rhythm as every volume in this series: one reading, one reflection, one day at a time. Each chapter corresponds to a portion of Scripture from the Bible Reading Plan included as an appendix, so that this book can be read alongside your own Bible in the same unhurried pace in which it was first written — as a daily discipline of Quiet Time, not a book to be consumed in a weekend.

Each chapter grew out of years of daily reflections shared by fellow readers working through the same passage on the same day, together with notes drawn from Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church in Dallas. What you are holding, then, is not a technical commentary but a companion for your own reading — written by fellow travelers, not experts, who have simply tried to sit with the text long enough to let it speak.

We encourage you to read the day's passage first, in your own Bible, before turning to the corresponding chapter here. Let Scripture have the first word. Then let this book help you listen more closely to what God has already said.

At the end of each chapter you will find a handful of reflection and discussion questions, suitable for personal journaling or group study. Take your time. Luke is the longest Gospel and the most comprehensive single account we have of Jesus's earthly life — a book that rewards slow, attentive reading, and whose central message, that the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost, is one best absorbed a little at a time.

INTRODUCTION

Luke wrote more of the New Testament than any other single author, and he wrote almost none of it as an eyewitness. Unlike Matthew and John, he had not walked with Jesus. Unlike Mark, he had no direct link to Peter's preaching. What he had instead was the historian's discipline: he tracked down the people who had seen and heard these things firsthand, "carefully investigated everything from the beginning," and set it down as "an orderly account" so that a man named Theophilus — and, through him, us — could "know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (1:3–4). Luke's Gospel is many things, but before it is anything else, it presents itself as a work of careful, sourced, historical reporting, written by a physician's exacting mind in service of a pastor's aim.

That combination shows up everywhere in what follows. Luke is the longest book in the New Testament, and the most comprehensive single account we have of Jesus's earthly life. He alone gives us the birth narratives of both John the Baptist and Jesus in full, the songs of Mary and Zechariah, and the one glimpse Scripture offers into Jesus's boyhood. He is also, by wide agreement, the most literarily accomplished writer among the four evangelists — a stylist skilled enough to structure long sections of his Gospel as chiasms, and disciplined enough to let his medical vocabulary show without ever letting it overwhelm his story.

But Luke was not simply a better-credentialed reporter than his fellow evangelists. He wrote with a particular audience and a particular ache in mind. Writing to Greeks steeped in a mythology of gods who were essentially superhuman — larger, stranger, and just as flawed as the people who worshiped them — Luke wanted his readers to understand that Jesus was something entirely different: fully human, and yet without sin; approachable, and yet the long-awaited Redeemer of a lost humanity.

Where Matthew traces Jesus's ancestry back to Abraham to establish His right to Israel's throne, Luke traces it all the way back to Adam, to establish something more universal: that Jesus is the head of an entirely new race, the "last Adam," succeeding everywhere the first Adam failed.

This concern for the outsider is the single most distinctive thread running through Luke's Gospel. No other Gospel shows Jesus eating with so many people society had written off. No other Gospel gives us as many stories centered on women, the poor, the sick, and the despised. And no other Gospel states its own purpose as plainly as the verse this volume takes its name from: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10). Everything Luke includes — the shepherds at the manger instead of dignitaries, the sinful woman weeping at Jesus's feet, the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son, Zacchaeus up in his tree — serves that one announcement. This is not a Gospel about a King arriving to claim what is owed Him. It is a Gospel about a Savior going out after what was never going to find its own way home.

We have organized this volume into twelve chapters, following the same daily-reading rhythm used throughout this series, walking straight through Luke's account from the angel's first appearance to Zechariah in the temple to the ascension of the risen Christ from the Mount of Olives. Along the way we meet a doubting priest and a believing teenager, a Baptist who ate locusts and a Savior who dined with tax collectors, a crowd that shouted hosanna on Sunday and crucify on Friday, and two travelers on the Emmaus road whose eyes were opened only after the risen Christ had already left the table. It is, as one commentator called it, perhaps "the loveliest book in the world." We hope these pages help you read it a little more slowly, and see in it a little more clearly the Savior who came looking for you.

CHAPTER ONE

No Word Will Fail

Luke 1

Luke opens not with drama but with a claim about method. "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us," he writes, "just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses" (1:1–2). By his own telling, Luke was not present for any of it. He was a second-generation witness, gathering testimony the way a careful historian gathers testimony, "so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (1:4). It is worth pausing on that word *certainty*. Luke was not writing devotional literature loosely inspired by rumors about Jesus. He was writing to settle a question of fact, on the strength of people who had seen these things with their own eyes. The same conviction runs through the rest of the New Testament — Peter insists that the apostles "did not follow cleverly devised stories" but "were eyewitnesses of his majesty" (2 Peter 1:16), and John opens his first letter the same way, grounding the gospel in what "we have heard," "have seen with our eyes," and "our hands have touched" (1 John 1:1). Whatever else Luke's Gospel is, it was never meant to be read as legend.

The account itself begins with a childless, elderly priest named Zechariah, serving his rotation in the temple, when an angel interrupts his incense offering with news that he and his wife Elizabeth will finally have a son — a son who "will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born" (1:15) and who will go 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" (1:16–17). That last phrase has puzzled readers for centuries, and it is worth sitting with rather than rushing past. Read on its own, it sounds like a promise of family reconciliation. But Jesus Himself

said He came not to bring peace to households but division — even setting "a man against his father" and "a daughter against her mother" (Matthew 10:35). The two statements are not actually in tension once we notice what Zechariah's own song later makes explicit: John's mission was "to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins" (1:77). The turning in view is not primarily a turning of parents and children toward each other — it is a turning of the proud and self-assured toward the childlike trust that receives the kingdom of God as a little child (cf. 18:17). "Fathers" here carries the same weight it carries throughout Scripture when Israel is called back to the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — a summons to leave behind confident unbelief and take up the posture of a child who simply trusts what has been promised.

That contrast — confident unbelief against childlike trust — is exactly what the rest of the chapter goes on to dramatize. Zechariah, given the news of a son in his old age, asks for proof: "How can I be sure of this?" (1:18). He gets his proof in the form of nine months without a voice. Six months later, a teenage girl in Nazareth receives news far stranger — that she will conceive a son by the Holy Spirit while still a virgin — and asks not for proof but for understanding: "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" (1:34). The angel's answer ends with a promise that could stand as the hinge of the entire chapter: "For no word from God will ever fail" (1:37). Mary's response is nothing like Zechariah's. "I am the Lord's servant," she says. "May your word to me be fulfilled" (1:38). One elderly priest, trained his whole life in the things of God, needed a sign before he would believe. One young girl, offered no sign at all, simply believed. Luke does not tell us this to shame Zechariah so much as to show us that God's purposes were never contingent on either of their responses in the first place. Whether we approach a promise of God with Zechariah's hesitation or Mary's trust, the promise itself does not bend to meet us. It was never going to fail.

When Mary hurries to see Elizabeth, her own faith is confirmed from an unexpected source — the unborn John leaps in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, pronounces the blessing that gives this whole scene its center of gravity: "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her" (1:45). What follows is Mary's own song, the Magnificat — "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant" (1:46–48). It is easy to read those words as pure celebration and miss what they do not yet know. Mary could not have understood, standing in Elizabeth's doorway, what kind of life this child would live or how He would die. That understanding would come later, delivered by another voice in the temple: "a sword will pierce your own soul too" (2:35). The wonder of this chapter is not only that God chose a poor, faithful young woman to carry the Messiah into the world — it is that the Messiah she carried would Himself be born into poverty, learn obedience through what He suffered, and be exalted only through a death none of them yet saw coming.

The chapter closes with Zechariah, his voice finally restored, breaking into song of his own. He names the purpose of his son's whole life in a single line: to give God's people "the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins" (1:77). That is the entire chapter compressed into one sentence, and it is worth letting it press on us the way it evidently pressed on generations of readers before us. Whatever else fills our days — our careers, our investments, our plans for security and comfort — none of it holds the weight this one sentence holds. It is possible to spend years of our lives chasing a return that an index fund would have handed us with far less stress, only to look back and realize how much of that time could have gone toward what actually lasts. Jesus would later put the same warning plainly: "life does not consist in an abundance of possessions"

(12:15). Zechariah's song does not call us to poverty. It calls us to clarity about what the knowledge of salvation is actually worth, and what everything else, by comparison, is not.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Luke insists his Gospel rests on eyewitness testimony, not legend. How does knowing this shape the confidence with which you read the rest of his account?
2. Zechariah asked for proof before he would believe; Mary asked for understanding but believed anyway. Which response feels more natural to you when God asks something difficult or confusing of you?
3. The angel tells Mary that "no word from God will ever fail" (1:37). Is there a promise in Scripture you find yourself needing to hear that way right now?
4. Zechariah's song names the purpose of his son's entire life in a single sentence — the knowledge of salvation through forgiveness. If you had to compress the center of your own faith into one sentence, what would it be?

CHAPTER TWO

Good News of Great Joy

Luke 2–3

Luke anchors the birth of Jesus in verifiable history before he tells us anything about angels: "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world" (2:1). It is a strange way to open the most celebrated birth story ever told — with an imperial tax registration rather than a fanfare. But that is precisely the point. Luke is not writing "once upon a time." He is telling us where a real family was, and why, and under whose administration, so that what follows can be checked against the facts of the world rather than filed away as legend. The child born that night in Bethlehem entered a datable, verifiable moment in Roman history. Christianity's claims stand or fall on events that actually happened, not on ideas that merely inspire.

Into that historical moment comes a scene that could not be less imperial. Shepherds — among the lowest-regarded workers in that society — are the ones an angel of the Lord visits first, and Luke tells us plainly how they responded: "they were terrified" (2:9). It is worth noticing how consistently Scripture describes this reaction. No one in the Bible meets an angel or the glory of God and responds with mild curiosity. Before sin entered the world, Adam and Eve walked with God without a trace of fear; afterward, hiding among the trees became their first instinct. Terror in the presence of God is not incidental to the human condition — it is the natural response of guilty creatures meeting a holy one. Which is exactly why the angel's first words matter so much: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (2:10–11). This is not merely permission to relax. It is the announcement of the

one thing that can actually resolve the fear guilt produces — not the absence of a threat, but the arrival of a Savior.

The angels' song that follows has become so familiar at Christmastime that it is easy to sing past what it actually says. "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests" (2:14). This is not a promise of political peace — Jesus would later warn that His followers should expect persecution from rulers and authorities, not protection from them (21:12). It is not a promise of social harmony, either — Jesus said plainly that He came not to bring peace but division, setting even members of the same household against each other (12:51–53). The peace announced over Bethlehem is peace with God — the ancient hostility between sinful humanity and a holy God, resolved through the child in the manger. Paul would later put a name to what the angels sang about: "since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). That peace is not a feeling we manufacture. It is a fact we receive, the same way the shepherds received it — as news, announced to people who had done nothing to earn it and everything to fear it.

Luke moves quickly from the manger to the temple, where Mary and Joseph present their son according to the law and encounter an old man named Simeon, who has been promised he would not die before seeing the Lord's Messiah. His blessing over the child ends with a line that will not make sense to Mary for another thirty years: "a sword will pierce your own soul too" (2:35). It is one of the more sobering notes in a chapter otherwise full of song, a quiet reminder woven into the celebration that this child's path runs through suffering before it runs through glory — for Him, and for the mother who will watch it happen.

Luke then compresses roughly twelve years into a single sentence — "the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him" (2:40) — before slowing down for the one story Scripture gives us from Jesus's boyhood. At twelve, on the family's annual Passover trip to Jerusalem, Jesus stays behind in the temple without His parents' knowledge, and when they finally find Him, three anxious days later, sitting among the teachers and astonishing them with His questions, His answer to their distress is not what they expect: "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (2:49). Even at twelve, Jesus understood something about His identity that Mary and Joseph, for all their faithfulness, had not yet grasped. And yet the very next verse tells us Jesus went back to Nazareth with them and "was obedient to them" (2:51). That combination — a boy who knew He belonged first to His heavenly Father, and who still submitted to His earthly parents — captures something worth sitting with. Jesus did not spend those years performing miracles or gathering followers. He spent them growing "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (2:52), quietly faithful in an ordinary town, for roughly eighteen years before His public ministry ever began. Most of us will never be asked to do anything dramatic for God. We will be asked, as Jesus was, to be faithful in the routine — and that, Luke wants us to see, is no small thing.

Chapter three jumps forward to introduce the man appointed to announce that the waiting was over. John the Baptist's preaching is nothing like the manger scene's tenderness. To the crowds coming out for baptism he says, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?" and warns that "every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire" (3:7, 9). But John does not stop at diagnosis. When the crowds ask what they should actually do, he gives concrete, unglamorous answers: the one with two shirts should share with

the one who has none; tax collectors should stop overcharging; soldiers should stop extorting and be content with their pay (3:11–14). This is, in miniature, the same kingdom ethic Jesus would later preach at length in the Sermon on the Mount — repentance that shows up as changed behavior, not merely changed feelings. John was not simply Jesus's warm-up act. He was preaching the same gospel Jesus would preach, in the same register Jesus would use.

John is also careful to distinguish two very different things he says are coming: "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:16). It can be tempting to hear "baptized with fire" as a blessing to be desired, something to sing about wanting more of. But John's own next sentence makes the meaning unmistakable: the wheat is gathered into the barn — that is the baptism of the Spirit, given to those who believe — while the chaff is what gets burned "with unquenchable fire" (3:17). The fire is not a gift poured out on the faithful. It is the judgment awaiting those who are not. Even here, in the ministry of the very last prophet before Christ, the same two responses are already on display that ran through Zechariah and Mary's story in chapter one: those who receive what God has said, and those who face what God has warned. "And with many other words," Luke tells us, "John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them" (3:18) — because even a message this sharp is still, at its root, good news for anyone willing to repent and receive it.

The chapter closes with Jesus's own baptism, the Spirit descending on Him like a dove, and a genealogy that traces His human ancestry all the way back — as we noted in the Introduction — not merely to Abraham but to Adam himself. "Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry" (3:23). Three decades of quiet obedience in Nazareth are about to give way to three years that will change everything. But Luke wants us to

remember, before we get there, that the Savior who is about to begin performing miracles is the same child who once simply grew, the same boy who once simply obeyed His parents, the same man who waited thirty years before doing anything the world would notice.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. The angel's first words to the terrified shepherds were "Do not be afraid." When has news about who Jesus is changed your own fear into joy?
2. The peace the angels announced was peace with God, not the absence of conflict in the world. How does that distinction change the way you think about "peace on earth" at Christmas?
3. Jesus spent roughly eighteen quiet, undocumented years in Nazareth before His public ministry began. What does His willingness to be faithful in the ordinary say to you about your own unnoticed seasons?
4. John's baptism of fire is judgment, not blessing — a warning for those who bear no fruit. How does that sharpen the urgency of his call to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance"?

CHAPTER THREE

Into the Deep

Luke 4–5

Fresh from His baptism, "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit... was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" to be tempted by the devil (4:1). It is worth pausing on that pairing — the Spirit leads Him there, and yet it is "the devil" who does the tempting (4:2). Scripture is careful about this distinction elsewhere too: James insists that "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone" (James 1:13), even while the same chapter assumes God does test His people. The difference is not in the circumstance but in the source and the intent behind it — God tests to reveal and refine what is already in the heart; Satan tempts to destroy. Hungry after forty days without food, Jesus faced three temptations that map onto the same three fronts every temptation eventually reaches: the appetite of the body, the desire for possession, and the pull toward proving oneself. To each one, Jesus answered not with cleverness but with Scripture — three quotations, all from Deuteronomy, the same book Moses preached to a generation who had just failed their own forty years of wilderness testing. Where Israel grumbled and demanded proof, Jesus trusted and refused to demand anything. He did not overcome the devil with a display of power. He overcame him with a life already so soaked in God's Word that the right answer was simply there, ready, when the moment required it.

That same authority is what gets Jesus run out of His hometown. He stands up in the Nazareth synagogue, reads from Isaiah — "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor" (4:18) — and then tells the room, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21). For a moment they are amazed. Then Jesus reminds them that God's mercy has always reached beyond Israel's own borders —

to a widow in Sidon in Elijah's day, to a Syrian named Naaman in Elisha's — and the same crowd that had just marveled at His gracious words tries to throw Him off a cliff. It is a strange, sobering preview of the rest of the Gospel: people can admire Jesus right up until He tells them something about themselves or about God's mercy toward outsiders that they do not want to hear. Luke tells us simply that Jesus "walked right through the crowd and went on his way" (4:30). His mission was not yet finished, and no crowd — admiring or hostile — could end it before its appointed time.

From there Jesus moves to Capernaum, where His authority shows up not only in speech but in power — commanding demons, healing Simon's mother-in-law of a fever, and then, after a full evening of ministry, deliberately withdrawing to pray before insisting He must move on to preach elsewhere too, "for I was sent for this purpose" (4:43). It is the same pattern we will see again and again in this Gospel: authority, then compassion, then withdrawal to the Father, then mission. Jesus never let popularity dictate His schedule.

It is by that same lake, not long after, that Jesus finds Simon Peter washing his nets after an exhausting, empty night of fishing. Jesus asks to preach from Simon's boat, and when He finishes, He tells the professional fisherman something no professional fisherman wants to hear from a carpenter's son: "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch" (5:4). Simon's answer carries the exhaustion of a man who has already tried everything that night: "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything." And then, almost as an afterthought that turns out to be the most important word in the sentence: "But because you say so, I will let down the nets" (5:5). What follows is a catch so large it begins tearing the nets and swamping two boats. Simon's response to abundance is not celebration — it is terror. He falls at Jesus's knees and says, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (5:8). It is a strange but telling reflex: face to

face with power this total, the first thing an honest man recognizes is not Jesus's greatness but his own smallness. Jesus's answer is neither correction nor reassurance about the fish. It is a redirection of Simon's entire life: "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people" (5:10). Simon had spent his whole career hauling in a catch that fed people for a day. He was being called to a catch that would feed people forever. He and his partners "pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him" (5:11) — not because the fishing had suddenly gotten bad, but because they had just met someone whose word could fill empty nets, and they wanted to see what else that word could do.

What that word could do becomes immediately clear. A man "covered with leprosy" — Luke's own physician's precision leaves no doubt about the severity — falls before Jesus and says, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean" (5:12). Under the law, this man was required to keep his distance, to warn others away, to live as an outcast among his own people. Jesus does not keep His distance. He "reached out his hand and touched the man" (5:13) — an act that should have made Jesus unclean by every rule that governed that society. Instead, the reverse happens: "I am willing," Jesus says. "Be clean!" And the leprosy left him. Uncleaness could not survive contact with Jesus. It never can. Every person this Gospel calls "lost" — every leper, every sinner, every outcast Jesus goes on to touch — will discover the same thing: His holiness does not recoil from our uncleaness. It overcomes it.

Not long after, four men lower a paralyzed friend through a roof to reach Jesus, and Jesus's first response is not what anyone in the room expects: "Friend, your sins are forgiven" (5:20). The religious leaders present recognize immediately what is being claimed — "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (5:21) — and they are right to notice it, even if they draw the wrong conclusion from it. Jesus does not back down from the

claim; He proves it. "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk?'" (5:23). It is not that one is genuinely easier to say than the other — both are equally beyond any merely human authority. It is that the second claim can be tested in front of everyone's eyes, right now, while the first cannot. So Jesus tests it: "I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" — and the paralyzed man gets up, takes his mat, and walks home (5:24–25). The healed body was never the main event. It was the proof that the forgiven soul was real.

That same authority reaches Levi, a tax collector — a profession that made a man a social and religious outcast among his own people, a collaborator with Rome, a cheat by trade. Jesus simply says, "Follow me," and Levi leaves everything to host a banquet in Jesus's honor, inviting all his tax-collector and outcast friends along. When the religious leaders object to the company Jesus keeps, His answer names exactly what this whole chapter has been building toward: "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (5:31–32). Every story so far in this chapter — the demoniac, the fevered mother-in-law, the leper, the paralytic, now Levi and his friends — has been the same story told with different faces. Jesus goes to the very people everyone else in that society had learned to avoid, and He does not merely tolerate their presence. He seeks them out.

The chapter ends with a question about fasting, and Jesus's answer explains why none of what came before could have looked like business as usual: "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?" (5:34). Something genuinely new had arrived — not a patch on the old religious system, but new wine that "must be poured into new wineskins" (5:38). A Savior who touches lepers, forgives paralytics, and dines with tax collectors was never going to fit inside the categories everyone had built to keep such people at a comfortable distance.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Jesus met each of Satan's temptations with Scripture He had already stored in His heart. How prepared are you, in your own moments of testing, to answer with God's Word rather than your own reasoning?
2. Peter's first instinct after the miraculous catch was to ask Jesus to leave. Have you ever found God's power more unsettling than comforting? What did you do with that feeling?
3. Jesus touched the leper before He healed him. Is there a place in your own life where you assume God would rather keep His distance than draw near?
4. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Does that describe how you approach your own need for Jesus — or do you find yourself, like the Pharisees, more comfortable keeping a little distance from Him?

CHAPTER FOUR

Your Faith Has Saved You

Luke 6-7

Two Sabbath controversies open this chapter — disciples plucking grain, then Jesus healing a man's withered hand in the synagogue — and both end the same way: Jesus asserting an authority the religious leaders cannot accept, because it comes from Him rather than from their own accumulated traditions. What follows that conflict is telling. Before choosing the twelve men who would carry His mission forward, Luke tells us Jesus "went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God" (6:12). Not a quick word beforehand — a whole night. It is worth sitting with the strangeness of that detail. The Son of God, in unbroken communion with the Father, still found it necessary to pray at length before a major decision. If Jesus needed a full night of prayer to choose twelve ordinary men, our own decisions — the ones that feel far smaller than founding a movement that would outlast the Roman Empire — deserve at least as much dependence on God as we're able to give them.

From that mountain, Jesus comes down to deliver what Luke records as the Sermon on the Plain, and it opens by turning the world's scoring system upside down: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God... But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort" (6:20, 24). This is not a simple celebration of poverty or condemnation of wealth. It is a statement about where lasting reward actually lives. Everyone in that first list — the poor, the hungry, the weeping, the hated — is promised something they do not yet have. Everyone in the second list — the rich, the well-fed, the laughing, the well-regarded — is warned that they have already been paid in full, in a currency that will not last. The whole sermon that follows is really one extended

commentary on that theme: what does it look like to live as someone who has not yet cashed in, who is still waiting on a reward that only heaven can supply?

That posture shows up most clearly in the sermon's hardest command: "love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back" (6:27, 35). This is not a strategy for winning friends. It is, Jesus says, what makes us recognizable as God's own children — because this is exactly how God treats us, "kind to the ungrateful and wicked" (6:35). We tend to want justice for ourselves and mercy for our own failures; Jesus asks for something far harder — mercy extended outward in the same measure we hope to receive it. "Give, and it will be given to you," He says. "A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (6:38). Read alongside everything just said about the kingdom's inverted economy, this is not a formula for earthly prosperity. It is a promise about the scale of what heaven pays out to those who give without keeping score.

Jesus closes the sermon with two warnings that belong together, even though they can sound unrelated on first read. "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart... for the mouth speaks what the heart is full of" (6:45) — meaning what we say, over time, is a more reliable window into our hearts than what we do on our best days. And then: "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (6:46), followed by the parable of the two builders — one whose house survives the flood because it was dug down to bedrock, one whose house collapses because it was never anchored to anything at all. Calling Jesus "Lord" and hearing His words is not the same thing as actually building a life on them. The flood does not ask what we called ourselves. It only reveals what we were actually standing on.

Chapter seven then gives us three stories in a row that each answer, from a different angle, the question of who actually recognizes Jesus for who He is. First, a Roman centurion — a Gentile, an occupying officer, someone with every reason to be treated as an outsider to Israel's God — sends word that Jesus need not even come to his house. "Say the word, and my servant will be healed," he reasons, because he understands authority: he tells one soldier to go and he goes, another to come and he comes (7:7–8). Jesus is amazed — one of the only times in this Gospel He is said to marvel at anything — and tells the crowd, "I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (7:9). The centurion never claimed a drop of the covenant heritage that surrounded Jesus's own people. He simply believed the word of Jesus was enough. That is a preview of everything this Gospel is building toward: faith that reaches Jesus does not require the right pedigree. It only requires actually believing Him.

Then comes a funeral procession at the town of Nain — a widow burying her only son, which in that world meant not only grief but the loss of her entire means of support. Luke tells us simply, "When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her" (7:13). Jesus does not wait to be asked. He touches the funeral bier, tells the young man to get up, and "gave him back to his mother" (7:15). Of everything Jesus does in this Gospel, this quiet detail — giving him back to his mother — may be the most tender. He was not merely performing a miracle. He was restoring a woman's whole future.

The third story is harder. In prison, awaiting execution, John the Baptist — the very man who once leapt in his mother's womb at the sound of Mary's voice, who baptized Jesus and declared Him the Lamb of God — sends his own disciples to ask: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (7:19). It is a startling question from the man Jesus calls the greatest ever born of woman (7:28). Even the greatest saints can find themselves, in their darkest hour, uncertain of what they once

knew with such confidence. Jesus does not rebuke John for the doubt. He simply points to the evidence: "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" (7:22) — every item on that list a direct fulfillment of what Isaiah had promised the Messiah would do. And then, gently: "Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me" (7:23). Doubt in prison is not the same thing as unbelief. Jesus meets John's question with evidence, not condemnation.

The chapter closes with the story that gives it its title. Jesus is dining at the house of a Pharisee named Simon when a woman known throughout the town for her sin comes in uninvited, weeping so hard that her tears wet Jesus's feet, which she then dries with her own hair before anointing them with expensive perfume. Simon's inward verdict is immediate: if Jesus were really a prophet, He would know what kind of woman was touching Him. Jesus's response reframes the entire scene. He points out that Simon, His host, gave Him no water for His feet, no kiss of greeting, no oil for His head — the basic courtesies of hospitality. This woman has given all three, in extravagant excess, with tears and hair and costly perfume. "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little" (7:47). Simon's stinginess toward Jesus was not a small oversight. It was the visible symptom of a man who did not think he needed much forgiven. The woman's extravagance was the visible symptom of someone who knew exactly how much she owed and could not stop pouring out gratitude for a debt she never expected to see cancelled. Jesus turns to her directly and says the words that name everything this chapter — and this whole Gospel — has been building toward: "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (7:50). Not her tears. Not her perfume. Her faith. The extravagant love was simply what faith looked like, once it understood what it had actually been given.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Jesus spent a whole night in prayer before choosing His twelve apostles. What decisions in your own life would benefit from that same unhurried dependence on God?
2. The centurion's faith rested entirely on the authority of Jesus's word, without needing to see Him in person. Where in your own life are you waiting to see before you're willing to believe?
3. John the Baptist doubted from prison even after all he had seen and proclaimed about Jesus. Has there been a season where your own certainty about Jesus wavered? How did He meet you in it?
4. The sinful woman loved extravagantly because she knew how much she had been forgiven; Simon the Pharisee loved little because he assumed he had little to be forgiven for. Which posture more honestly describes your own heart toward Jesus right now?

CHAPTER FIVE

Who Do You Say I Am?

Luke 8-9

Jesus tells the parable of the sower and closes it with a phrase He repeats throughout His ministry: "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear" (8:8). It is worth asking what that phrase actually implies. Everyone in the parable receives the same seed — the same word of God — yet only one soil produces a crop. Jesus later explains: the seed that lands "on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (8:15). Hearing, in other words, is not the same as listening. The difference between the soils was never the quality of the seed. It was the condition of the ground it fell on. That should give every reader of this book pause before we assume that simply being exposed to God's Word, year after year, guarantees that it has actually taken root in us.

What that Word can accomplish becomes unmistakable in the storm that follows. Jesus is asleep in the boat when a squall nearly swamps it, and when the terrified disciples wake Him, He rebukes the wind and the waves and "the storm subsided, and all was calm" (8:24). His question to them afterward cuts straight to the point: "Where is your faith?" (8:25). These were men who had already watched Him heal the sick and cast out demons, and still they panicked the moment their own boat was in danger. It is a pattern worth recognizing in ourselves — we can believe God is powerful in the abstract and still forget it completely the moment the water starts coming over the side.

Not long after, Jesus crosses into Gentile territory and frees a man so overtaken by demons that he lived naked among the tombs, bound by chains he could break as if they were thread. Jesus casts the demons into a

herd of pigs, and the townspeople's response is not gratitude but fear — they beg Jesus to leave (8:37). It is a strange thing to notice, but perhaps not so strange after all: people can grow so accustomed to whatever has been oppressing them that the prospect of deliverance feels more threatening than the oppression itself. Familiar bondage can feel safer than unfamiliar freedom, simply because we know how to live inside it. The Gerasenes chose the devil they knew over the Savior they didn't.

That same chapter closes with two intertwined stories of desperate faith — a woman who had suffered bleeding for twelve years and touches the edge of Jesus's cloak in a crowd, certain that contact alone would be enough, and a synagogue leader named Jairus whose only daughter is dying while Jesus is delayed helping the woman. Word comes that the girl has already died. "Don't be afraid," Jesus tells Jairus. "Just believe, and she will be healed" (8:50). It is worth noticing whose faith mattered in that moment — not the daughter's, who was already dead and could exercise none, but her father's. Throughout this Gospel, faith is what opens the door for Jesus's power, but it is never the source of that power. Jesus can heal whether or not the person healed believes anything at all; what faith does is simply position us to receive what only He can give.

Chapter nine opens with Jesus sending out the Twelve to preach and heal, and then — almost immediately — feeding a crowd of five thousand with five loaves and two fish. It is easy to read past how strange this juxtaposition is: the same disciples who had just been given authority to heal diseases now stand before a hungry crowd and tell Jesus, essentially, that the math doesn't work. "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish — unless we go and buy food for all this crowd" (9:13). Jesus does not need their math to work. He takes what little they have, gives thanks, and there is more left over at the end than they started with.

It is shortly after this — after the multiplied bread, after the healed multitudes — that Jesus asks the question that gives this chapter its title. "Who do the crowds say I am?" He asks, and the disciples report a flattering but ultimately mistaken chorus: John the Baptist, Elijah, one of the ancient prophets returned. Then Jesus turns the question directly on them: "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" And Peter answers, in four words that change the entire trajectory of the story: "God's Messiah" (9:18–20). This is the hinge on which this Gospel — indeed, the whole story of the four Gospels — turns. Every miracle up to this point has been building toward this exact question, and Peter, for once, gets it right.

But Jesus's very next words reframe what that confession actually means. He tells them plainly that "the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected... and be killed, and on the third day be raised to life" (9:22), and then adds something that applies to every disciple who has ever confessed Jesus is Messiah: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me" (9:23). Luke alone includes that word "daily" — a detail entirely fitting for the Gospel writer most attentive to precise, ordinary detail. This was never meant to be a once-in-a-lifetime crisis decision made at an altar and then filed away. It is a decision remade every single day, in the small unglamorous moments no one else sees.

Eight days later, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a mountain, and His appearance is transformed before them — His clothes becoming "as bright as a flash of lightning," Moses and Elijah appearing beside Him in glory. A cloud envelops them, and a voice speaks: "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him" (9:35). Peter had just confessed, in his own words, that Jesus was God's Messiah. Now the Father Himself confirms it audibly, from heaven, with an instruction that could stand as a summary of the entire Gospel: listen to Him.

The rest of the chapter is a study in how hard that instruction actually is to obey. The disciples fail to heal a demon-possessed boy while Jesus was on the mountain, and Jesus's response is unusually sharp: "You unbelieving and perverse generation" (9:41). They argue among themselves about who among them is the greatest, apparently having missed entirely what Jesus had just told them about the cross awaiting Him. And when a Samaritan village refuses to welcome Jesus, James and John — freshly reminded of Jesus's power over storms and demons — offer to call down fire from heaven to destroy the whole village. Jesus rebukes them (9:54–55). Understanding that Jesus has power is not the same thing as understanding what that power is for. The disciples had seen enough of Jesus's authority to want to wield some of it themselves, but they still had not grasped His mission: not to destroy, but to save.

The chapter ends with three brief, uncomfortable exchanges along the road — three people who each offer to follow Jesus, and three answers that expose what each of them was still holding back. "I will follow you wherever you go," one says, and Jesus warns him that following means "the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (9:57–58) — a life with none of the comfort this man was assuming would come with it. Another asks to bury his father first; Jesus tells him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (9:60) — not indifference to grief, but a redirection toward the one mission that cannot wait. A third wants only to say goodbye to his family before committing; Jesus answers, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (9:62). Three sincere-sounding offers. Three answers that all say the same thing: following Jesus after seeing who He truly is cannot be a partial, hedged, someday commitment. Once you know who He is, the only faithful response is to follow now, without looking back.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Jesus said the seed that bears fruit falls on "a noble and good heart."
What condition would you honestly say your own heart is in right now toward the Word you regularly hear?
2. The Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave rather than live with the change His presence demanded. Is there an area of bondage in your life that has become so familiar it feels safer than the freedom Jesus offers?
3. "But what about you? Who do you say I am?" How would you answer that question today, in your own words, rather than repeating what you've heard others say about Him?
4. Jesus said His disciples must take up their cross "daily" — not once, but every day. What would it look like for you to deny yourself and follow Him specifically today?

CHAPTER SIX

Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10–11

Jesus sends seventy-two disciples ahead of Him with a warning about scale: "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (10:2). He sends them without purse or bag or sandals — deliberately stripped of provisions — instructing them to accept whatever hospitality they're offered, "for the worker deserves his wages" (10:7). That phrase has been used for centuries to justify pastoral salaries, but read in its own context it means something more modest and more radical: these men were not owed a wage in the commercial sense. They were owed basic support from the households they served, support that flowed from relationship and hospitality rather than from a transaction. When they return, they are elated — "even the demons submit to us in your name" (10:17) — but Jesus redirects their excitement toward something far more important than power: "do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (10:20). It is a warning worth sitting with. Even genuine spiritual power can become a subtle distraction from the deeper reality — that our security rests not in what we can do in Jesus's name, but in the fact that He knows our names at all.

It is out of this same scene that an expert in the law stands up "to test Jesus" with a question every religious person eventually asks in one form or another: "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (10:25). Jesus turns the question back on him, and the man answers correctly, quoting the law's own summary: love God with everything, and "love your neighbor as yourself" (10:27). "Do this and you will live," Jesus tells him. But Luke tells us something revealing about what happens next: the man, "wanting

to justify himself," asks, "And who is my neighbor?" (10:29). That small phrase — wanting to justify himself — is the real key to the story that follows. This was never really a question about ethics. It was a question about limits. He wanted Jesus to draw him a boundary, a defensible line past which his obligation to love simply stopped.

Jesus answers with the most famous parable in this Gospel. A man is beaten, robbed, and left half dead on the road to Jericho. A priest sees him and passes by. A Levite does the same. Then a Samaritan — a man from a people Jews of that era despised as ethnically and religiously compromised — sees the injured man and "had compassion" (10:33), binding his wounds, carrying him to an inn, and paying for his continued care out of his own pocket. Jesus's closing question reframes the entire exchange: "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" (10:36). Notice what Jesus does here. The expert had asked, "Who is my neighbor?" — a question aimed at finding the edge of his obligation. Jesus answers a different question entirely: "Who acted like a neighbor?" There is no line to be found, because the whole premise of drawing one was the problem. "Go and do likewise," Jesus tells him (10:37) — not "now you know where love stops," but "now go and love without asking where it stops." The truth this story exposes, uncomfortably, is that no one can actually satisfy a command this large by their own effort. The lawyer wanted a boundary he could meet. Jesus gave him a standard he could never fully keep on his own — which was, perhaps, always the point. The law was never going to be the road to self-justification. It was going to be the mirror that shows us we need something — someone — beyond our own righteousness.

From that expansive parable, Luke moves us into a much smaller room. Jesus visits the home of two sisters, Martha and Mary. Martha is "distracted by all the preparations that had to be made" while Mary simply "sat at the

Lord's feet listening to what he said" (10:39–40). When Martha complains that she has been left to serve alone, Jesus's answer is gentle but pointed: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed — or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her" (10:41–42). It would be easy to read this as a simple rebuke of busyness, but the deeper point cuts closer to home for anyone who serves in Jesus's name. Even good work — hospitality, service, the practical care of others — can become a way of avoiding the one thing every disciple actually needs most: sitting still long enough to listen to Him. The Good Samaritan showed compassion in action. Mary shows us that action itself has to flow from time spent at Jesus's feet, or it eventually becomes exactly what it was for Martha — a source of resentment rather than love.

Chapter eleven opens with the disciples asking Jesus to teach them to pray, and He gives them what we now call the Lord's Prayer, followed by a parable about a friend who keeps knocking at midnight until he gets what he needs, purely because of his shameless persistence. Jesus's application is a promise about the character of God behind that persistence: "ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you... If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (11:9, 13). The confidence to keep praying does not come from believing we deserve an answer. It comes from knowing the Father we're asking.

The chapter then turns confrontational. Jesus casts out a demon, and some in the crowd accuse Him of doing it by the power of Satan himself. Jesus's answer is simple logic: "Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined" (11:17) — Satan casting out Satan would be sabotage, not strategy. A woman in the crowd calls out a blessing on Mary for having borne Jesus,

and His response redirects even that praise: "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (11:28). Even the honor of being Jesus's own mother, He says, is secondary to the honor of actually doing what God says. Biological closeness to Jesus was never the point. Obedient faith was always the point.

The chapter closes with Jesus at a Pharisee's table, and the confrontation sharpens further. His host is taken aback that Jesus skips the ritual hand-washing before the meal, and Jesus uses the moment to expose something much larger than table manners: "You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness" (11:39). Then comes the line that has been misread for centuries as a command for Christians to tithe: "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" (11:42). Notice what Jesus is actually condemning — not the tithing itself, but the way meticulous ritual observance had become a substitute for the two things that actually mattered: justice and love. The Pharisees had learned to measure their own righteousness by what was easiest to measure — precise fractions of garden herbs — while quietly neglecting the two things the law was always meant to produce. It is the same trap the expert in the law had walked into at the start of this chapter, wanting a defensible boundary rather than an actual transformed heart. Ritual can always be perfected and still leave justice and love completely untouched. Jesus is not interested in perfected ritual. He is interested in a heart that has actually learned who its neighbor is.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. The expert in the law asked "Who is my neighbor?" hoping to find the edge of his obligation to love. Where in your own life are you tempted to look for that same kind of boundary?

2. Martha's service came from anxious busyness; Mary's stillness came from simply listening to Jesus. Which posture more often describes your own time with Him?
3. Jesus taught His disciples to pray with the shameless persistence of a friend knocking at midnight. How would your own prayer life change if you actually believed the Father delights to answer you?
4. The Pharisees perfected the rituals that were easy to measure while neglecting justice and the love of God. Are there areas of your own faith where the same substitution might be happening?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rich Toward God

Luke 12–13

With crowds numbering in the thousands pressing around Him, Jesus turns first to His disciples with a warning: "Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy" (12:1). Their outward performance of righteousness masked something entirely different underneath, and Jesus promises it will not stay hidden: "there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed" (12:2). His counsel in response is not strategy but simple fear rightly placed — fear God, who holds authority over the soul, rather than the people who can only harm the body (12:4–5). Integrity, in other words, is not a matter of managing your reputation well enough that the truth never surfaces. It is a matter of having nothing underneath worth hiding in the first place.

That warning against hypocrisy sets up the moment that gives this chapter its name. Someone in the crowd interrupts Jesus with a request that has nothing to do with His teaching: "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus refuses the role of arbiter and instead turns the moment into a warning that reaches far beyond one family dispute: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (12:15). The parable that follows is almost uncomfortably simple. A rich man's land produces such an abundant harvest that he tears down his barns to build bigger ones, congratulating himself: "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." God's answer arrives that same night: "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?" Jesus's conclusion names the real issue at stake — not wealth itself, but what wealth was for: "This is how it

will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God" (12:16–21).

It's worth noticing what this parable does not say. It never tells us the man cheated anyone or lived immorally. His sin was subtler and far more common — he simply never thought beyond himself. Every plan in the parable begins with "I": "What shall I do?... I will tear down my barns... I will store my surplus... I'll say to myself." God never enters his accounting at all. This is not a condemnation of having wealth. Scripture gives us faithful, wealthy men — Abraham, Job — right alongside faithful, poor ones — John the Baptist, Jesus Himself. The danger was never the size of the barn. It was a life fully accounted for without once asking what any of it was actually for.

Jesus presses the same point further with His own disciples, telling them not to worry about food or clothing — "for life is more than food, and the body more than clothes" (12:23) — and pointing them to ravens who neither sow nor reap, yet whom God feeds, and wildflowers more finely dressed than Solomon in all his glory. "How much more valuable you are than birds!" (12:24). But Jesus does not stop at reassurance. He goes further, telling His disciples, "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" (12:33). It's a striking enough command that Peter interrupts to ask, "Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?" (12:41) — a fair question, since the words that preceded them were addressed specifically to the disciples rather than the whole crowd. Whatever the precise scope of that instruction, the underlying principle reaches every reader of this book: "where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (12:34). Our hearts do not simply happen to end up wherever our treasure is. They follow it there, every time, whether we intend them to or not.

Jesus then tells His disciples to live like servants who keep their lamps burning, ready for their master's return at any hour — "Blessed are those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes" (12:37) — followed by a sobering principle that governs the rest of the parable: "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded" (12:48). Greater knowledge of God's will carries greater responsibility, not less. It is a warning worth sitting with for anyone who has spent years reading Scripture, hearing sermons, and gathering understanding — the accumulation of knowledge is not itself the finish line. It raises the stakes of what faithfulness requires.

Chapter thirteen opens with people bringing Jesus grim news — Galileans killed by Pilate while offering sacrifices, eighteen people crushed when a tower in Siloam collapsed on them. The assumption behind the report is the same assumption people have made in every generation: surely such horrific deaths signal unusual sin. Jesus rejects the premise entirely. "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (13:2–3). This is not an answer to the question of why some suffer more visibly than others. It is a refusal to let the living use someone else's tragedy as evidence of their own comparative righteousness. Everyone, Jesus says, stands in the same need of repentance — the survivors as much as the victims. That any of us are still breathing at all is not proof of our goodness. It is evidence only of God's patience, which will not last forever.

Jesus follows this with the parable of a fig tree that has produced no fruit for three years, and a gardener who pleads for one more season to dig around it and fertilize it before it's cut down (13:6–9) — mercy extended, but not indefinitely. Then, immediately, He heals a woman who has been crippled and bent double for eighteen years, on the Sabbath, over the

objection of a synagogue leader who insists healing should wait for another day. Jesus's response cuts to the heart of the matter: "Should not this woman... be set free on the Sabbath day from what has bound her?" (13:16). The fig tree gets more time to bear fruit. The bent woman, after eighteen years, gets freedom the same day she asks for it. Both scenes make the same point from opposite directions — God's patience is real, and so is His readiness to act the moment repentance or need actually meets Him.

The chapter closes with Jesus warned that Herod wants Him dead, and His answer reveals a man utterly undistracted by that threat: "I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day — for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!" (13:33). And then, in one of the most tender and heartbroken lines in this entire Gospel, Jesus laments over the very city that would kill Him: "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" (13:34). Here is the whole burden of this chapter compressed into a single image. God's patience, His readiness to gather and protect and forgive, was never in question. What was missing, in Jerusalem as in the rich fool's barns, was a willingness to receive it. The hen was always willing to gather. The chicks were not willing to be gathered. That, more than any parable about wealth, may be the truest measure of what it means — or fails to mean — to be rich toward God.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. The rich fool's plans were full of "I will" and empty of God entirely. Where in your own planning — for retirement, for your career, for your future — does God tend to go unmentioned?

2. Jesus refused to let His listeners treat other people's tragedies as proof of their own comparative righteousness. Have you ever caught yourself doing the same thing?
3. "From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded."
How does the depth of your own knowledge of Scripture raise, rather than lower, what faithfulness requires of you?
4. Jesus said He longed to gather Jerusalem the way a hen gathers her chicks, but they were not willing. Is there an area of your own life where God has been patiently waiting for a willingness you haven't yet given Him?

CHAPTER EIGHT

Was Lost and Is Found

Luke 14–16

Jesus is dining at the house of a prominent Pharisee, and He turns to His host with an instruction that upends the entire logic of hospitality as that world understood it: "When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (14:13–14). The whole point of a banquet, in that culture as in most cultures since, was reciprocity — you invited people who could return the favor. Jesus tells His host to break that circuit entirely, to spend generosity on people who can give nothing back. It is the same principle we've already met in the Samaritan who cared for a stranger, and in the call to give without expecting return — except now it is aimed directly at the guest list of Jesus's own dinner companions.

Jesus follows this with a parable that makes the same point on a far larger scale. A man prepares a great banquet and sends his servant to summon the invited guests, but one after another they beg off with excuses — a field just purchased, oxen to be tested, a new marriage. Furious, the host sends his servant out again: "Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (14:21). When there is still room, the servant is sent out a third time, even further, to the roads and country lanes, and told to "make them come in, so that my house will be full" (14:23). This parable is, in miniature, the entire Gospel of Luke. The respectable, the comfortable, the ones who assumed their invitation was secure, decline. The outcasts — the ones with no standing to expect an invitation at all — are the ones who fill the house. Jesus then turns to the crowds following Him and makes the cost of

accepting that invitation unmistakably clear: whoever comes to Him without being willing to place every other loyalty beneath their loyalty to Him "cannot be my disciple" (14:26, 33). The banquet is free. The discipleship it requires is not cheap.

It is directly in response to this same crowd of tax collectors and sinners drawing near to Jesus — and the Pharisees muttering, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (15:2) — that Jesus tells the three parables that give this chapter its name. A shepherd with a hundred sheep loses one, and leaves the ninety-nine to search until he finds it, then calls his friends together: "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep" (15:6). A woman with ten silver coins loses one, sweeps her entire house until she finds it, and does the same. Both parables end with the identical explanation: "there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent" (15:7, 10). Notice what these two short parables insist on, twice, before the longer story even begins: the seeking is not passive. The shepherd does not wait for the sheep to wander home. The woman does not wait for the coin to turn up. They go looking, actively, until the lost thing is found. That is the whole architecture of this Gospel's understanding of grace — not a door left open for the lost to eventually find their own way back, but a God who goes out after them.

Then comes the parable that has given this chapter its name and, in many ways, given the whole Christian imagination its most beloved image of grace. A younger son demands his inheritance early, leaves for a distant country, and squanders everything in reckless living until a famine leaves him feeding pigs and longing for their food. "When he came to his senses" (15:17), he resolves to go home and beg to be made a hired servant, since he no longer feels worthy to be called a son. But the story does not wait for his rehearsed speech to land. "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" (15:20). The father does not wait at the door for an apology, does not require the son to grovel his way back into the family. He is watching. He is running. He is embracing his son before a single word of confession has even been spoken. "Bring the best robe... Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (15:22–24).

The parable, notably, does not end there. The older brother, who stayed and worked faithfully the whole time, refuses to join the celebration, protesting that he has never even been given a young goat to celebrate with his friends, while this son — who squandered everything — gets a fattened calf. The father's answer to him is as tender as his welcome of the younger son: "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 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" (15:31–32). Both sons, in their own ways, had misunderstood their father. The younger thought he had to earn his way back into a relationship he had squandered. The older thought his years of faithful service had earned him something the father was somehow withholding. Both were wrong about the same thing — this father's love was never a transaction to be earned in the first place. It was simply, always, freely there, waiting to be received rather than won.

Chapter sixteen turns from this warm scene to two harder ones, both concerned with money. In the first, a dishonest manager, about to be fired for wasting his master's wealth, secures his own future by slashing what several debtors owe — and his master, strangely, commends him "because he had acted shrewdly" (16:8). Jesus's application is not an endorsement of dishonesty; it's an observation about priorities: "the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light"

(16:8). Worldly people plan for their future with a determination believers often fail to bring to eternal things. "No one can serve two masters," Jesus concludes. "You cannot serve both God and money" (16:13).

The chapter's final story returns us to the same theme this whole section has circled from different angles — a rich man who lives in luxury while a poor man named Lazarus lies at his gate, "longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table" (16:21). Both die; Lazarus is carried to Abraham's side, while the rich man suffers in torment, begging first for relief and then for someone to warn his still-living brothers. Abraham's answer closes the chapter on a note worth sitting with: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (16:31). It is a striking claim — that a miracle, even one as dramatic as resurrection, cannot manufacture faith in a heart unwilling to listen to what God has already said. The rich man, in life, had every comfort and never once noticed the man starving at his own gate. In death, he discovers what should have been obvious all along: Scripture had already told him everything he needed to know about how to live, and he simply never listened.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Jesus told His host to invite guests who could never repay the invitation. Who in your own life would that kind of guest list actually include?
2. The father in the parable ran to meet his son before a word of confession was spoken. Does that picture of grace change how you think God receives you when you come back to Him?
3. The older brother resented a celebration he thought he'd earned the right to withhold. Have you ever found yourself more like the older brother than the younger one?

4. The rich man never noticed Lazarus at his own gate. Is there a need in plain sight in your own life that you've grown so used to seeing that you no longer actually see it?

CHAPTER NINE

God, Have Mercy on Me

Luke 17–18

Jesus warns His disciples about causing others to stumble, and then turns immediately to the everyday friction of life together: "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them" (17:3). Real community requires both halves of that sentence — honesty about wrong, and open arms when it's acknowledged. The disciples' response reveals how impossible this feels to them: "Increase our faith!" (17:5). It's a striking request to make right after being told to forgive a repeat offender seven times in a single day — as though what stands between them and that kind of forgiveness is simply a bigger tank of faith to draw from. Jesus's answer redirects the whole question: "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" (17:6). The issue was never the size of their faith. It was the size of the God their faith was resting on. Jesus follows this with a small, humbling parable about a servant who does exactly what was expected of him and is owed no special thanks for it, concluding: "when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (17:10). What the disciples needed was not more faith to generate. It was more humility to receive what God's strength alone could accomplish.

That posture — desperate dependence rather than self-sufficient striving — is exactly what distinguishes the one leper who returns. Ten men with leprosy call out to Jesus from a distance, and He heals all ten on their way to show themselves to the priests, as the law required. But only one of them, "when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice," throwing himself at Jesus's feet in gratitude — and Luke adds the

detail that sharpens the whole story: "he was a Samaritan" (17:15–16). Jesus's question hangs in the air unanswered: "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?" (17:17). Nine men received the same mercy and simply moved on with their restored lives. Only the outsider — the one with the least claim on Israel's God — recognized what he had actually been given, and came back to say so. All ten were healed of leprosy. Only one is told, "your faith has made you well" (17:19) — a deeper wholeness than the physical healing the other nine also received and apparently forgot to be grateful for.

This same instinct — desperate, unembarrassed persistence before God — becomes the explicit point of the parable Jesus tells next, "to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (18:1). A widow with no power of her own keeps pestering an unjust judge until, purely to be rid of her, he grants her justice. If even a corrupt judge eventually yields to persistence, Jesus argues, "will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night?" (18:7). The comparison is not that God is reluctant like the judge. It's the opposite — if a bad judge can be moved by persistence alone, how much more will a good Father, who already loves us, respond to those who keep bringing Him their need?

Then comes the parable that gives this chapter its title. Two men go up to the temple to pray. The Pharisee's prayer is really a résumé addressed to God: "God, I thank you that I am not like other people — robbers, evildoers, adulterers — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get" (18:11–12). The tax collector, by contrast, won't even lift his eyes to heaven. He beats his chest and says one sentence: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" (18:13). Jesus's verdict overturns everything His listeners would have assumed: "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" (18:14). The

Pharisee's prayer was accurate — he probably did fast and tithe exactly as he claimed. But accuracy was never the issue. He walked into the temple with nothing to ask for, because he believed he had nothing to be forgiven of. The tax collector walked in with nothing to offer, and walked out with everything.

That same posture of childlike dependence shows up literally moments later, when people bring infants to Jesus and the disciples try to turn them away. Jesus rebukes His own disciples instead: "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (18:16–17). A child brings nothing to negotiate with — no accomplishments, no résumé, nothing but open, empty hands. That is precisely the posture the tax collector modeled and the Pharisee could not bring himself to adopt.

It is in this light that the story of the rich ruler becomes so devastating. He asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life, and claims to have kept every commandment since childhood. Jesus's answer exposes the one thing standing between this man and the kingdom: "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (18:22). The man's response is not defiance but grief — Luke tells us "he became very sad, because he was very wealthy" (18:23). He wanted eternal life badly enough to ask a stranger for the formula. He did not want it badly enough to actually empty his open hands. Watching him walk away, Jesus makes the impossibility explicit: "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!... it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle" (18:24–25). When the stunned crowd asks who then could possibly be saved, Jesus gives the answer this entire chapter has been building toward: "What is impossible with man is possible with God" (18:27). Not the Pharisee's fasting. Not the ruler's lifelong obedience. Not

even the disciples' faith, however large or small. Salvation was never going to be a transaction any of these men could complete on their own resources. It was always going to require exactly what the tax collector and the children and the returning leper already understood — empty hands, held out, asking only for mercy.

The chapter closes at the gates of Jericho, where a blind beggar hears the crowd passing and asks what's happening. Told that Jesus of Nazareth is going by, he begins shouting — "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (18:38) — and when the people around him try to silence him, he only shouts louder. He has spent his whole life at the roadside, dependent on whatever scraps of mercy passersby happened to offer him. He is not about to let politeness cost him his one chance at something better. Jesus stops, calls him over, and asks the question He asks so many people in this Gospel: "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," the man says, and Jesus tells him, "Receive your sight; your faith has healed you" (18:41–42). The blind man's shout and the tax collector's whispered prayer are, in the end, the same prayer in two different volumes. Both understood they had nothing to offer and everything to ask for. Both walked away seeing — one physically, one spiritually — because both refused to let their own unworthiness talk them out of crying out for mercy.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. Only one of the ten healed lepers came back to give thanks. What restored blessing in your own life have you perhaps stopped noticing, the way the other nine seemed to?
2. The Pharisee prayed from a position of accomplishment; the tax collector prayed from a position of need. Which posture more honestly describes your own prayers?

3. The rich ruler wanted eternal life but couldn't let go of what stood between him and it. Is there something in your own life you'd rather keep than fully open your hands to God?
4. The blind beggar shouted louder when people tried to silence him. Is there a persistent, even unembarrassed, cry for mercy you've been too polite to voice?

CHAPTER TEN

To Seek and to Save

Luke 19–20

Nowhere in this Gospel does its purpose come into sharper focus than in a small, wealthy man climbing a tree in Jericho. Zacchaeus was not merely a tax collector — he was a chief tax collector, which meant that whatever hatred Jews of that era felt toward tax collectors generally was concentrated on him many times over. He had grown rich collaborating with Rome against his own people, and Luke tells us plainly that when he wanted to see Jesus passing through the crowd, his short stature forced him to climb a sycamore-fig tree just to catch a glimpse. What happens next is entirely Jesus's initiative. He stops beneath the tree and says, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today" (19:5). Of all the homes in Jericho Jesus might have chosen, He chooses the one everyone else in town would have refused to enter. The crowd's reaction confirms exactly how scandalous this was: "All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner'" (19:7).

What happens inside that house transforms Zacchaeus completely. Without being asked, without a single word of instruction from Jesus, he stands and announces: "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" (19:8). Compare this to the rich ruler from the previous chapter, who walked away grieving when Jesus asked him to do something similar. Zacchaeus needed no persuading at all. The difference between the two men was never really about money. It was about what each of them believed they had found. The ruler thought he was being asked to give something up. Zacchaeus had already discovered that he was being given something infinitely greater in return.

Jesus's response names exactly what has happened, and in doing so gives this entire volume its title: "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:9–10). Read that sentence again slowly, because it is easy to skim past its most important word. Jesus did not say He came to *accept* the lost, or to *wait for* the lost, or even simply to *save* the lost. He came to *seek* them — actively, deliberately, the way a shepherd goes looking for one missing sheep, the way a woman sweeps her whole house for one lost coin, the way a father runs to meet a son still a long way off. Zacchaeus climbed a tree hoping only to see Jesus from a distance. He never expected to be sought out and found.

That single verse is worth pausing over one more time, because it is the theological center not just of this chapter but of the whole Gospel of Luke. Every story this book has told so far — the shepherds at the manger, the sinful woman weeping at Jesus's feet, the Samaritan who stopped for a stranger, the father who ran to his prodigal son, the tax collector who could only ask for mercy — has been building toward this same single sentence. Luke's Jesus is not a King waiting in a palace for the worthy to arrive. He is a Savior who goes out looking for exactly the people no one else was looking for.

Jesus follows this scene with the parable of the ten minas, told because the crowds following Him toward Jerusalem assumed the kingdom of God was about to appear immediately. A nobleman entrusts ten servants with a mina each and departs to receive a kingdom, promising to return. Two servants put their money to work and multiply it many times over; a third simply buries his, wrapped safely in a cloth, and returns it exactly as he received it, offering only excuses about his master's severity. The master's judgment is severe precisely because the servant's excuse revealed his real problem — not caution, but a fundamental misunderstanding of who his

master actually was and what had been entrusted to him. What was given to each servant was identical. What separated them was entirely what they did with it. The kingdom Jesus describes here is not a passive inheritance to be preserved unchanged until He returns. It is a trust to be invested, multiplied, and returned with increase.

From there the road leads to Jerusalem itself, and the crowd's mood shifts entirely. As Jesus descends the Mount of Olives on a borrowed colt, the whole multitude of disciples begins praising God joyfully: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" (19:38). When some Pharisees demand that Jesus silence them, His answer is unforgettable: "I tell you, if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out" (19:40). But the triumph does not last. As Jesus approaches the city and actually sees it, Luke tells us "he wept over it" (19:41), grieving that Jerusalem does not recognize "what would bring you peace" (19:42) even as its own destruction, decades later, is already visible to Him. The same crowd shouting hosanna will, within days, be calling for His crucifixion. Jesus enters the temple and drives out those selling there, quoting Isaiah and Jeremiah together: "My house will be a house of prayer; but you have made it 'a den of robbers'" (19:46). The temple that should have been the place where the nations came to seek God had instead become a marketplace that kept the desperate at arm's length.

Chapter twenty is one long confrontation. The religious leaders demand to know by what authority Jesus does these things, and Jesus answers their trap with a question of His own about John's baptism that leaves them unable to respond either way without losing credibility with the crowd. He tells the parable of the tenants who beat and kill the servants sent to collect the owner's share of the harvest, and finally kill the owner's own son, thinking they can seize his inheritance. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?" Jesus asks, and answers His own question with

a quotation: "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone" (20:17). Everyone listening understood exactly who the rejected stone represented, and exactly who the tenants were.

The religious leaders respond with a trap dressed up as a compliment, asking whether it's right to pay taxes to Caesar — a question designed so that any answer would alienate either the crowd or the Roman authorities. Jesus asks for a coin and points to the image stamped on it: "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's" (20:25). It is a masterful answer precisely because it refuses the false choice they offered Him — as though loyalty to God and ordinary civic obligation were somehow in competition. The Sadducees try next, with a hypothetical about a woman widowed by seven brothers in succession, hoping to make the resurrection sound absurd; Jesus corrects their entire premise about what resurrected life will even look like. By the chapter's end, no one dares ask Him another question. The seeking Savior who came down from a sycamore tree to eat with a despised tax collector has walked, unafraid, straight into the heart of every trap His enemies could design — and walked out of every one of them still standing, still the cornerstone they were determined to reject.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Where in your own story did Jesus actively seek you out, rather than simply waiting for you to find your own way to Him?
2. Zacchaeus responded to grace with immediate, unprompted generosity, while the rich ruler in the previous chapter walked away grieving. What made the difference between them?
3. Jesus wept over a city that didn't recognize what would bring it peace. Is there a place in your own life — or in the life of someone you love — where you can see clearly what Jesus wept to see: a peace being missed?

4. The parable of the minas rewards what is done with what's entrusted, not merely its safekeeping. What has God entrusted to you that He may be asking you to actively invest rather than simply preserve?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Not My Will, but Yours

Luke 21–22

Jesus is teaching in the temple when He notices something almost everyone else overlooks. Wealthy people are dropping large gifts into the temple treasury, and then "he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins" (21:2). "Truly I tell you," Jesus says, "this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all gave out of their wealth, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on" (21:3–4). It's worth reading this scene alongside the warning Jesus had just given moments earlier, about religious leaders who love flowing robes and places of honor and "for a show make lengthy prayers" (20:47). The rich givers and the show-praying leaders share the same disease — visible religion performed for an audience. The widow's gift draws no attention at all; it would have looked, to anyone watching, almost embarrassingly small. But Jesus sees what the crowd cannot: a gift given with nothing held back, and nothing to gain from being seen giving it. The measure of a gift was never really about the amount. It was about what was left over afterward, and who the gift was actually for.

From there Jesus's disciples marvel at the temple's beautiful stonework, and He responds with a prophecy that must have stunned them: "the days will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down" (21:6). Their question — when will this happen, and what sign will precede it — launches the long discourse that fills the rest of the chapter, and it helps to notice that Jesus is actually answering two intertwined questions at once: what would happen to Jerusalem and its temple within their own generation, and what would happen at His final return at the end of the age. He warns of false messiahs, wars, earthquakes, and persecutions that His own disciples would live to see — "they will seize

you and persecute you" (21:12) — while also describing cosmic signs and "the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" (21:27) that reach far beyond their lifetimes. Whichever events belong to which timeframe, Jesus's counsel to His disciples never changes: "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life... Be always on the watch, and pray" (21:34, 36). Whether the trial is near or far, readiness looks the same — a watchful, praying heart, not paralyzed by fear of what's coming.

Chapter twenty-two moves us into the Passover meal that becomes the Last Supper. Jesus takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and says, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (22:19). He does the same with the cup: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (22:20). Every Passover before this one had commemorated Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt, the blood of a lamb protecting the firstborn from judgment. Jesus, at this table, quietly reveals Himself as the fulfillment those older meals had always been pointing toward — His own body and blood becoming the true Passover sacrifice, the covenant that would not need to be repeated year after year.

At that same table, Jesus turns to Peter with a warning wrapped inside a promise: "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers" (22:31–32). Notice what Jesus does not pray. He does not ask that Peter be spared the sifting altogether — only that his faith survive it, and that the failure itself, once repented of, become something Peter could use to strengthen others. Peter, characteristically confident, insists he's ready to go to prison or death for Jesus; Jesus tells him plainly that before the rooster crows, he will deny even knowing Him three times (22:33–34).

Then comes Gethsemane. Jesus withdraws from His disciples, kneels, and prays the prayer that gives this chapter its name: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (22:42). Luke alone, among the Gospel writers, tells us that His anguish was so great "his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (22:44), and that an angel appeared to strengthen Him. This is not a portrait of a serene, untroubled Savior calmly accepting His fate. It is a portrait of genuine anguish, genuine reluctance, a real desire — voiced honestly to the Father — for another way, if one existed. And yet the very same prayer that names that reluctance ends by surrendering it completely. "Not my will, but yours." That sentence, more than any other in this Gospel, is the hinge the entire story turns on. Everything that follows — the arrest, the trials, the cross — happens because in this garden, at this moment, Jesus chose His Father's will over His own preference, with His eyes wide open to exactly what that choice would cost Him.

The rest of the chapter unfolds with grim inevitability. Judas arrives with a crowd and betrays Jesus with a kiss. Jesus is arrested, and Peter — the very disciple just warned he would fail — follows at a distance into the high priest's courtyard, where, over the course of one night, he denies knowing Jesus three times, exactly as predicted. It is the timing of what happens next that makes this scene almost unbearable to read: "Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter" (22:60–61). Not a word of rebuke. Just a look. And that look accomplishes what no accusation could have — "he went outside and wept bitterly" (22:62). Peter had promised prison and death rather than betrayal, and within hours had denied Jesus to a servant girl. And yet this is the same Peter Jesus had already prayed for in advance, the same Peter told he would one day turn back and strengthen his brothers. The failure Jesus foresaw was never going to be the end of Peter's story. It was simply the sifting his faith would have

to survive on the way to becoming who Jesus had already prayed he would be.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. The widow's gift was small in size but complete in surrender; the wealthy gave much but kept back everything they didn't give. What would it look like for your own giving to look more like hers?
2. Jesus prayed that Peter's faith would survive the sifting, not that the sifting be avoided. Is there a trial in your own life you've been praying to escape rather than to endure faithfully?
3. Jesus's Gethsemane prayer combined total honesty about His own reluctance with total surrender to the Father's will. Which of those two — the honesty or the surrender — comes harder for you in your own hardest prayers?
4. A single look from Jesus, without a word, broke Peter into bitter tears. Have you experienced a moment where Jesus's presence alone, without any spoken rebuke, revealed something true about your own heart?

CHAPTER TWELVE

Their Eyes Were Opened

Luke 23–24

Before Pilate, the charges against Jesus reveal what His accusers actually feared: "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king" (23:2). It was never really a religious complaint dressed in political language — it was a political charge, because only a political charge carried the death penalty under Roman law. Pilate examines Jesus and states plainly, more than once, "I have found no basis for your charges against him" (23:14). He sends Jesus to Herod, who mocks Him and sends Him back. Twice declared innocent by the very authority with power to execute Him, Jesus is condemned anyway — not because the evidence demanded it, but because the crowd, stirred by the religious leaders, would not be satisfied with anything less than His death.

On the cross, Luke records words found in no other Gospel. As the soldiers cast lots for His clothing, Jesus says, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (23:34) — a prayer so remarkable that some of the oldest manuscripts of Luke's Gospel do not contain it, though it has always carried the unmistakable ring of Jesus's own voice and character even where scholars debate its precise textual history. Whether spoken in that exact moment or preserved as an early and faithful memory of what Jesus embodied throughout His ministry, the prayer captures something true about everything this Gospel has shown us: even from the cross, Jesus was still seeking to save the very people killing Him.

Two criminals hang on either side of Him. One hurls insults, demanding Jesus save Himself and them along with Him. The other

rebukes his companion, admits his own guilt is deserved, and turns to Jesus with the simplest request in the whole Gospel: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (23:42). He has no time left to prove anything, no opportunity to reform his life or demonstrate good works. He has only a few remaining breaths and a request. Jesus's answer arrives without hesitation: "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (23:43). Consider what this means for everything the rest of this book has said about seeking and finding, about lost things being found. Here, in the final hours of His life, on a cross meant for criminals, Jesus performs His last recorded act of seeking and saving the lost — one dying man, with nothing to offer but honesty about his guilt and hope in who Jesus was. If salvation could reach a criminal in his final minutes with nothing but a request, it was never going to depend on what any of us bring to earn it.

Darkness falls over the land, the temple curtain tears in two, and Jesus cries out, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (23:46). He breathes His last. A centurion standing watch, having seen everything, declares, "Surely this was a righteous man" (23:47) — a Roman soldier recognizing what Israel's own religious leaders had refused to see. Jesus is buried in a borrowed tomb, and the women who had followed Him from Galilee prepare spices to anoint His body once the Sabbath has passed.

They arrive at the tomb at dawn to find the stone rolled away and the body gone. Two men in dazzling clothes ask them a question that could stand as the theme of the entire chapter: "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!" (24:5–6). The women run to tell the apostles, and Luke records their reception with startling honesty: "these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them" (24:11). It is worth sitting with how strange this is. These were the eleven men who had walked with Jesus for three years, who had heard Him

predict His death and resurrection not once but three times. And still, when the moment came, their first instinct was disbelief.

That same day, two disciples are walking to a village called Emmaus, discussing everything that has happened, when a stranger falls into step beside them. It is Jesus Himself, though "they were kept from recognizing him" (24:16). He listens to their grief and confusion, then walks them through Scripture — "beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself" (24:27). They urge Him to stay for the evening, and at the table, He takes bread, gives thanks, breaks it, and gives it to them — the same gesture from the same hands that had broken bread at the Last Supper. "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight" (24:31). This is the moment that gives this chapter its title, and there is something worth noticing in how it happens. Jesus had been walking beside them, talking with them, teaching them Scripture, for miles — and still they did not know Him until the bread was broken. Sometimes recognition of Jesus does not come all at once. Sometimes it takes the whole walk, the whole conversation, the whole burning of the heart along the way, before the moment finally arrives when the eyes actually open. Looking back, they say to each other exactly what so many readers of Scripture have said since: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" (24:32).

They race back to Jerusalem and find the Eleven already saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon" (24:34). While they are still talking, Jesus Himself appears among them, showing them His hands and feet, eating in front of them to prove He is not a ghost. And then, in a moment that echoes the Emmaus road, Luke tells us Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (24:45). The disciples had walked with Jesus, watched His miracles, heard His teaching

for three years — and still, understanding did not come from their own effort or intelligence. It came as a gift, opened in them by Christ Himself. This is not a small detail. It is, in many ways, the final answer this entire Gospel has been building toward, all the way back to Zechariah's doubt and Mary's faith in the very first chapter: no one comes to see and believe by their own unaided insight. Eyes are opened. Minds are opened. The seeking Savior does the opening.

Jesus commissions His disciples to proclaim "repentance for the forgiveness of sins... to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (24:47) — the same message this whole Gospel has traced from John the Baptist's preaching in the wilderness to this final commission on a hillside near Bethany. Then, lifting His hands to bless them, "he left them and was taken up into heaven" (24:51). The disciples do not scatter in grief this time. Luke tells us they "worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (24:52), staying continually at the temple, praising God. The Gospel that opened with a priest struck speechless by doubt in that same temple closes with a company of ordinary men and women filled with joy in it, waiting for the promise Jesus had given them — the same promise that would carry this story forward into the book of Acts, as the seeking and saving that began in a Bethlehem manger continued outward, through those same ordinary disciples, to the ends of the earth.

Reflection & Discussion Questions

1. The dying thief had nothing to offer Jesus but an honest confession and a simple request, and it was enough. Is there a part of you that still believes you need to bring more to Jesus than that?
2. The disciples on the Emmaus road walked and talked with Jesus for miles before their eyes were finally opened. Has there been a long,

gradual process in your own life before you recognized what Jesus had actually been doing all along?

3. Even the eleven apostles could not understand Scripture until Jesus Himself opened their minds. How does that shape the way you approach your own understanding of the Bible — as your own achievement, or as something you continually need opened for you?
4. The Gospel that began with a priest silenced by doubt ends with disciples overflowing with joy. Where in your own walk with Christ has doubt slowly given way to worship?

CONCLUSION

The Gospel of Luke opens in a temple with a priest too skeptical to believe an angel standing in front of him, and it closes in that same temple with a company of ordinary disciples who cannot stop praising God. Between those two scenes sits everything this volume has walked through — a virgin's song, a manger in Bethlehem, a boy debating scholars three times his age, a carpenter's son rejected in His own hometown, a fisherman who left his nets, a leper who was touched, a paralytic who was forgiven before he ever walked, a sinful woman who loved much because she had been forgiven much, a Samaritan who stopped for a stranger, a father who ran to meet his prodigal son while he was still a long way off, a tax collector too ashamed to lift his eyes, a blind beggar who would not stop shouting, a wealthy man who climbed a tree, a criminal who asked only to be remembered, and two travelers whose hearts burned before their eyes ever opened.

Every one of those stories is the same story, told from a different angle. That is why we titled this volume *Seek and Save*. Luke gives us that phrase directly, in the mouth of Jesus Himself, standing outside a house nobody expected Him to enter: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (19:10). Not to wait for the lost to find their own way home. Not to leave the door open and hope. To seek — actively, deliberately, at real cost to Himself — the people everyone else in that world had already written off. The shepherd left the ninety-nine. The woman swept her whole house. The father ran while his son was still far away. And the Son of Man walked, deliberately, all the way to a cross, so that a dying criminal with nothing to offer but a request could hear, on his very last day, "today you will be with me in paradise."

If there is one thing we hope this book leaves with you, it is this: whatever has kept you at a distance from God — shame, doubt, self-sufficiency, a sense that you have wandered too far or fallen too often to be worth seeking — Luke's Gospel answers that fear with a Savior who goes looking. Zechariah doubted, and the promise found him anyway. Zacchaeus only wanted to see, and Jesus stopped beneath his tree. The blind man was told to be quiet, and Jesus called him closer instead. None of them found their own way to God. God, in Christ, found them.

We hope you have felt something of what those two disciples on the Emmaus road felt — a slow-burning recognition, chapter by chapter, of who has actually been walking beside you the whole time. And we hope that recognition, like theirs, sends you back out with joy rather than leaving you where it found you. The same Jesus who sought Zacchaeus, who forgave the thief, who opened blind eyes and burning hearts, is still, today, doing exactly what His name in this Gospel says He does. He is still seeking. He is still saving. The only question this book leaves you with is the same one every person in it eventually had to answer: will you let yourself be found?

For Reflection

- Of all the people this Gospel follows — Zechariah, Mary, the leper, the sinful woman, Zacchaeus, the dying thief — which one's story most resembles your own path to Christ, or the path you're still walking?
- Luke's Gospel insists that Jesus does the seeking. Where has that been true in your own life, even in a season when you weren't looking for Him at all?
- The Emmaus disciples' hearts burned before their eyes ever opened. Is there a truth about Jesus that has been quietly working on you, even before you've been ready to fully name or receive it?

APPENDIX

Daily Bible Reading Plan

This is the same daily Bible reading plan used at dailyqt.org, walking through the whole of Scripture in a year, a few chapters at a time. It does not need to be started in January — begin on whatever date suits you, and simply follow the sequence from there. The twelve days marked with a star are the readings this volume follows.

January

January 10 — Genesis 1-3
January 11 — Genesis 4-7
January 12 — Genesis 8-11
January 13 — Genesis 12-15
January 14 — Genesis 16-18
January 15 — Genesis 19-21
January 16 — Genesis 22-24
January 17 — Genesis 25-26
January 18 — Genesis 27-29
January 19 — Genesis 30-31
January 20 — Genesis 32-34
January 21 — Genesis 35-37
January 22 — Genesis 38-40
January 23 — Genesis 41-42
January 24 — Genesis 43-45
January 25 — Genesis 46-47
January 26 — Genesis 48-50
January 27 — Exodus 1-3
January 28 — Exodus 4-6
January 29 — Exodus 7-9
January 30 — Exodus 10-12
January 31 — Exodus 13-15

February

February 1 — Exodus 16-18
February 2 — Exodus 19-21

February 3 — Exodus 22-24
February 4 — Exodus 25-27
February 5 — Exodus 28-29
February 6 — Exodus 30-32
February 7 — Exodus 33-35
February 8 — Exodus 36-38
February 9 — Exodus 39-40
February 10 — Leviticus 1-4
February 11 — Leviticus 5-7
February 12 — Leviticus 8-10
February 13 — Leviticus 11-13
February 14 — Leviticus 14-15
February 15 — Leviticus 16-18
February 16 — Leviticus 19-21
February 17 — Leviticus 22-23
February 18 — Leviticus 24-25
February 19 — Leviticus 26-27
February 20 — Numbers 1-2
February 21 — Numbers 3-4
February 22 — Numbers 5-6
February 23 — Numbers 7
February 24 — Numbers 8-10
February 25 — Numbers 11-13
February 26 — Numbers 14-15
February 27 — Numbers 16-17
February 28 — Numbers 18-20

March

March 1 — Numbers 21-22
March 2 — Numbers 23-25
March 3 — Numbers 26-27
March 4 — Numbers 28-30
March 5 — Numbers 31-32
March 6 — Numbers 33-34
March 7 — Numbers 35-36

March 8 — Deuteronomy 1-2
March 9 — Deuteronomy 3-4
March 10 — Deuteronomy 5-7
March 11 — Deuteronomy 8-10
March 12 — Deuteronomy 11-13
March 13 — Deuteronomy 14-16
March 14 — Deuteronomy 17-20
March 15 — Deuteronomy 21-23
March 16 — Deuteronomy 24-27
March 17 — Deuteronomy 28-29
March 18 — Deuteronomy 30-31
March 19 — Deuteronomy 32-34
March 20 — Joshua 1-4
March 21 — Joshua 5-8
March 22 — Joshua 9-11
March 23 — Joshua 12-15
March 24 — Joshua 16-18
March 25 — Joshua 19-21
March 26 — Joshua 22-24
March 27 — Judges 1-2
March 28 — Judges 3-5
March 29 — Judges 6-7
March 30 — Judges 8-9
March 31 — Judges 10-12

April

April 1 — Judges 13-15
April 2 — Judges 16-18
April 3 — Judges 19-21
April 4 — Ruth 1-4
April 5 — 1 Samuel 1-3
April 6 — 1 Samuel 4-8
April 7 — 1 Samuel 9-12
April 8 — 1 Samuel 13-14
April 9 — 1 Samuel 15-17

April 10 — 1 Samuel 18-20
April 11 — 1 Samuel 21-24
April 12 — 1 Samuel 25-27
April 13 — 1 Samuel 28-31
April 14 — 2 Samuel 1-3
April 15 — 2 Samuel 4-7
April 16 — 2 Samuel 8-12
April 17 — 2 Samuel 13-15
April 18 — 2 Samuel 16-18
April 19 — 2 Samuel 19-21
April 20 — 2 Samuel 22-24
April 21 — 1 Kings 1-2
April 22 — 1 Kings 3-5
April 23 — 1 Kings 6-7
April 24 — 1 Kings 8-9
April 25 — 1 Kings 10-11
April 26 — 1 Kings 12-14
April 27 — 1 Kings 15-17
April 28 — 1 Kings 18-20
April 29 — 1 Kings 21-22
April 30 — 2 Kings 1-3

May

May 1 — 2 Kings 4-5
May 2 — 2 Kings 6-8
May 3 — 2 Kings 9-11
May 4 — 2 Kings 12-14
May 5 — 2 Kings 15-17
May 6 — 2 Kings 18-19
May 7 — 2 Kings 20-22
May 8 — 2 Kings 23-25
May 9 — 1 Chronicles 1-2
May 10 — 1 Chronicles 3-5
May 11 — 1 Chronicles 6
May 12 — 1 Chronicles 7-8

May 13 — 1 Chronicles 9-11
May 14 — 1 Chronicles 12-14
May 15 — 1 Chronicles 15-17
May 16 — 1 Chronicles 18-21
May 17 — 1 Chronicles 22-24
May 18 — 1 Chronicles 25-27
May 19 — 1 Chronicles 28-2 Chronicles 1
May 20 — 2 Chronicles 2-5
May 21 — 2 Chronicles 6-8
May 22 — 2 Chronicles 9-12
May 23 — 2 Chronicles 13-17
May 24 — 2 Chronicles 18-20
May 25 — 2 Chronicles 21-24
May 26 — 2 Chronicles 25-27
May 27 — 2 Chronicles 28-31
May 28 — 2 Chronicles 32-34
May 29 — 2 Chronicles 35-36
May 30 — Ezra 1-3
May 31 — Ezra 4-7

June

June 1 — Ezra 8-10
June 2 — Nehemiah 1-3
June 3 — Nehemiah 4-6
June 4 — Nehemiah 7
June 5 — Nehemiah 8-9
June 6 — Nehemiah 10-11
June 7 — Nehemiah 12-13
June 8 — Esther 1-5
June 9 — Esther 6-10
June 10 — Job 1-4
June 11 — Job 5-7
June 12 — Job 8-10
June 13 — Job 11-13
June 14 — Job 14-16

June 15 — Job 17-20
June 16 — Job 21-23
June 17 — Job 24-28
June 18 — Job 29-31
June 19 — Job 32-34
June 20 — Job 35-37
June 21 — Job 38-39
June 22 — Job 40-42
June 23 — Psalms 1-8
June 24 — Psalms 9-16
June 25 — Psalms 17-20
June 26 — Psalms 21-25
June 27 — Psalms 26-31
June 28 — Psalms 32-35
June 29 — Psalms 36-39
June 30 — Psalms 40-45

July

July 1 — Psalms 46-50
July 2 — Psalms 51-57
July 3 — Psalms 58-65
July 4 — Psalms 66-69
July 5 — Psalms 70-73
July 6 — Psalms 74-77
July 7 — Psalms 78-79
July 8 — Psalms 80-85
July 9 — Psalms 86-89
July 10 — Psalms 90-95
July 11 — Psalms 96-102
July 12 — Psalms 103-105
July 13 — Psalms 106-107
July 14 — Psalms 108-114
July 15 — Psalms 115-118
July 16 — Psalms 119:1-88
July 17 — Psalms 119:89-176

July 18 — Psalms 120-132
July 19 — Psalms 133-139
July 20 — Psalms 140-145
July 21 — Psalms 146-150
July 22 — Proverbs 1-3
July 23 — Proverbs 4-6
July 24 — Proverbs 7-9
July 25 — Proverbs 10-12
July 26 — Proverbs 13-15
July 27 — Proverbs 16-18
July 28 — Proverbs 19-21
July 29 — Proverbs 22-23
July 30 — Proverbs 24-26
July 31 — Proverbs 27-29

August

August 1 — Proverbs 30-31
August 2 — Ecclesiastes 1-4
August 3 — Ecclesiastes 5-8
August 4 — Ecclesiastes 9-12
August 5 — Song of Songs 1-8
August 6 — Isaiah 1-4
August 7 — Isaiah 5-8
August 8 — Isaiah 9-12
August 9 — Isaiah 13-17
August 10 — Isaiah 18-22
August 11 — Isaiah 23-27
August 12 — Isaiah 28-30
August 13 — Isaiah 31-35
August 14 — Isaiah 36-41
August 15 — Isaiah 42-44
August 16 — Isaiah 45-48
August 17 — Isaiah 49-53
August 18 — Isaiah 54-58
August 19 — Isaiah 59-63

August 20 — Isaiah 64-66
August 21 — Jeremiah 1-3
August 22 — Jeremiah 4-6
August 23 — Jeremiah 7-9
August 24 — Jeremiah 10-13
August 25 — Jeremiah 14-17
August 26 — Jeremiah 18-22
August 27 — Jeremiah 23-25
August 28 — Jeremiah 26-29
August 29 — Jeremiah 30-31
August 30 — Jeremiah 32-34
August 31 — Jeremiah 35-37

September

September 1 — Jeremiah 38-41
September 2 — Jeremiah 42-45
September 3 — Jeremiah 46-48
September 4 — Jeremiah 49-50
September 5 — Jeremiah 51-52
September 6 — Lamentations 1:1-3:36
September 7 — Lamentations 3:37-5:22
September 8 — Ezekiel 1-4
September 9 — Ezekiel 5-8
September 10 — Ezekiel 9-12
September 11 — Ezekiel 13-15
September 12 — Ezekiel 16-17
September 13 — Ezekiel 18-20
September 14 — Ezekiel 21-22
September 15 — Ezekiel 23-24
September 16 — Ezekiel 25-27
September 17 — Ezekiel 28-30
September 18 — Ezekiel 31-33
September 19 — Ezekiel 34-36
September 20 — Ezekiel 37-39
September 21 — Ezekiel 40-42

September 22 — Ezekiel 43-45
September 23 — Ezekiel 46-48
September 24 — Daniel 1-3
September 25 — Daniel 4-6
September 26 — Daniel 7-9
September 27 — Daniel 10-12
September 28 — Hosea 1-7
September 29 — Hosea 8-14
September 30 — Joel 1-3

October

October 1 — Amos 1-5
October 2 — Amos 6-9
October 3 — Obadiah 1, Jonah 1-4
October 4 — Micah 1-7
October 5 — Nahum 1-3
October 6 — Habakkuk 1-3, Zephaniah 1-3
October 7 — Haggai 1-2
October 8 — Zechariah 1-7
October 9 — Zechariah 8-14
October 10 — Malachi 1-4
October 11 — Matthew 1-4
October 12 — Matthew 5-6
October 13 — Matthew 7-8
October 14 — Matthew 9-10
October 15 — Matthew 11-12
October 16 — Matthew 13-14
October 17 — Matthew 15-17
October 18 — Matthew 18-19
October 19 — Matthew 20-21
October 20 — Matthew 22-23
October 21 — Matthew 24-25
October 22 — Matthew 26
October 23 — Matthew 27-28
October 24 — Mark 1-3

October 25 — Mark 4-5
October 26 — Mark 6-7
October 27 — Mark 8-9
October 28 — Mark 10-11
October 29 — Mark 12-13
October 30 — Mark 14
October 31 — Mark 15-16

November

November 1 — Luke 1 *
November 2 — Luke 2-3 *
November 3 — Luke 4-5 *
November 4 — Luke 6-7 *
November 5 — Luke 8-9 *
November 6 — Luke 10-11 *
November 7 — Luke 12-13 *
November 8 — Luke 14-16 *
November 9 — Luke 17-18 *
November 10 — Luke 19-20 *
November 11 — Luke 21-22 *
November 12 — Luke 23-24 *
November 13 — John 1-2
November 14 — John 3-4
November 15 — John 5-6
November 16 — John 7-8
November 17 — John 9-10
November 18 — John 11-12
November 19 — John 13-15
November 20 — John 16-18
November 21 — John 19-21
November 22 — Acts 1-3
November 23 — Acts 4-6
November 24 — Acts 7-8
November 25 — Acts 9-10
November 26 — Acts 11-13

November 27 — Acts 14-15

November 28 — Acts 16-17

November 29 — Acts 18-20

November 30 — Acts 21-23

December

December 1 — Acts 24-26

December 2 — Acts 27-28

December 3 — Romans 1-3

December 4 — Romans 4-7

December 5 — Romans 8-10

December 6 — Romans 11-13

December 7 — Romans 14-16

December 8 — 1 Corinthians 1-4

December 9 — 1 Corinthians 5-8

December 10 — 1 Corinthians 9-11

December 11 — 1 Corinthians 12-14

December 12 — 1 Corinthians 15-16

December 13 — 2 Corinthians 1-4

December 14 — 2 Corinthians 5-9

December 15 — 2 Corinthians 10-13

December 16 — Galatians 1-3

December 17 — Galatians 4-6

December 18 — Ephesians 1-3

December 19 — Ephesians 4-6

December 20 — Philippians 1-4

December 21 — Colossians 1-4

December 22 — 1 Thessalonians 1-5

December 23 — 2 Thessalonians 1-3

December 24 — 1 Timothy 1-6

December 25 — 2 Timothy 1-4

December 26 — Titus 1-3, Philemon 1

December 27 — Hebrews 1-6

December 28 — Hebrews 7-10

December 29 — Hebrews 11-13

December 30 — James 1-5

December 31 — 1 Peter 1-5

January

January 1 — 2 Peter 1-3

January 2 — 1 John 1-5

January 3 — 2 John 1, 3 John 1, Jude 1

January 4 — Revelation 1-3

January 5 — Revelation 4-8

January 6 — Revelation 9-12

January 7 — Revelation 13-16

January 8 — Revelation 17-19

January 9 — Revelation 20-22