

# The Father's Heart      Luke 15

Luke 15:2      " This man welcomes sinners and eats with them!"

1. Jesus was well known for seeking out lost people ('sinners'), and he delighted in welcoming them to his table. The Jewish religious leaders thought this was improper for a righteous man. Do you think Christians today are perceived to be more like Jesus, or more like the Jewish religious leaders?
  
2. Read Luke 15. In response to the Pharisees complaint in verse 1-2, Jesus tells 3 stories.
  - a. What are the common elements in each story?
  
  - b. In what ways are they different?
  
  - c. What 'point' does each story make?
  
  - d. How do you think the first two stories prepare us (and also the Pharisees) to hear the third? (ie. why not just give us the third?)
  
3. Focusing on the 'parable of the prodigal son'...
  - a. From verses 11-16, what was the heart of the younger son's 'sin' against the father? What was the result? In what subtle ways does the text emphasize the seriousness of these?
  
  - b. From verses 17-19, what are the features of the son's repentance?
  
  - c. From verses 20-24 & 31-32 what do we learn about the father (clearly representing God)?
  
  - d. In verses 25-32 we see the reaction of the older brother, who in the context represents the Jewish religious leaders. To what extent is his attitude aligned with the Father's?
  
4. What reaction do you have to reading this parable? Can you identify with either of the two sons? Is there any attitude or action from which you (or we as a wider church) need to repent?
  
5. In what ways can we guard against making the same mistake as the older brother?
  
6. More positively, what attitudes or actions will characterise us if we truly share the father's heart for the lost?

# Whom will you Serve? Luke 16:1-13

1. In Australia we enjoy a relatively high standard of living. What spiritual opportunities and dangers do you think this brings for us?
2. Read Luke 16:1-13. Do you think Jesus commends dishonesty here? Why or why not? What was it about the 'unrighteous manager' that Jesus commends to his disciples?
3. What does Jesus tell his disciples (and us) to do with "unrighteous money" (v 9)? What do you think this might look like in practice for us?
4. This passage pictures us as 'stewards' of money entrusted to us by God (v 10-12). In what ways does this challenge our attitudes to and the way we 'manage' money and possessions? What opportunities does it present for us?
5. Verse 13 contains famous words. In what ways do we attempt to serve 2 masters (whether conscious or unconscious that we're doing it)?
6. In a culture which serves material wealth, Jesus teaching here is challenging.
  - a. What hurdles/barriers do you experience in accepting and obeying it?
  - b. What blessings can you see would flow if you did think & live this way?
  - c. What strategies might we adopt to help us continue to believe and obey Jesus' teaching here?
7. To what extent do you see yourself as serving God by managing His money 'astutely' and faithfully? What changes do you need to make?
8. Pray for each other and for our church as a whole, that we would be faithful stewards of the resources God has entrusted to us.

# What will persuade you? Luke 16:14-31

1. "Hell" is a very serious subject. What do people these days think about hell?
2. In the first part of chapter 16 Jesus gives positive teaching (via the parable of the shrewd manager) on how to live now in light of eternity. In the last part (v 19-31) Jesus tells another parable on the same theme – this time focusing on the consequences and reasons behind a rich man's failure to live now in light of eternity. The central section (v 14-18) indicates that the Pharisees are primarily in view.

Read verses 19-31.

- a) What do we learn from Jesus' parable about 'Hades'? What different characteristics are portrayed?
- b) What would you say to someone who objects that this is 'just a parable' (a story to make a point) and not to be taken literally? (See also Jesus' teaching in 13:5, 13:24-30 & 17:1-2)
- c) Why does the rich man find himself in 'hades'? Was it simply because he was rich in this world, or because he didn't care for the poor man on his doorstep – or do these things reflect more basic or deeper problems? Hint: What does the rich man want his brothers to do, that he failed to do? (v 27-31)
- d) Now read v 14-18. In what 2 ways is the parable of the rich man and Lazarus so appropriate for the Pharisees?

(Note: Try not to be 'side-tracked' into discussion of the issues around divorce and adultery. Presumably Jesus mentions this to remind the Pharisees that although they present themselves as righteous people, they fail to keep God's law).

- e) What, 'in a nutshell', is the message of this parable?

3. (As time permits) What would you say to someone who says....

"Show me a miracle and then I'll believe."

"Hell is just a medieval myth designed to scare people into religious adherence."

"How can you say God is loving and forgiving if people suffer in hell?"

4. In the busyness, self confidence and relative wealth of our lives, what warnings do you hear in this passage? How does it challenge your perspectives and priorities? What changes do you need to make?

# Things that matter to Jesus      Luke 17:1-19

1. What do people in our world understand by the word “faith”?
  
2. Read Luke 17:1-19. In this section of Luke’s Gospel we find a collection of things Jesus taught his disciples, and a report of 10 people healed of skin diseases.
  - a. What is the structure of the passage? Try and break it up into sub-sections and give a title to each.
  
  - b. What questions do you have about the passage? Are there any answers suggested by the passage itself, or by the surrounding chapters?
  
  - c. Are these sections just randomly put together, or can you see any connections (or logical flow) between each part or with chapter 16?
  
  - d. If you had to give a title to the whole passage, what would it be?
  
3. What do we learn from this whole passage about the nature and power of “faith”?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What aspect of Jesus’ teachings here do you find most challenging? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. In verse 5 the ‘apostles’ ask Jesus: “Increase our faith”. Pray this for each other in relation to the specific challenges raised by the passage?

# How will Jesus find you? Luke 17:20-18:9

1. When you think of “the Kingdom of God” do you think mainly of something past, present or future? Why do you think this is?
  
2. Read Luke 17:20-21. The Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come. Presumably they were thinking about the promised Messiah coming to establish the rule of God on earth. Read these Old Testament promises and see some of what they were expecting– Isaiah 9:6-7 & 11:1-10.
  
3. What do you think Jesus meant when he told the Pharisees that “the Kingdom of God is among you”?
  
4. Read Luke 17:22-37.
  - a. What do you think Jesus means by “the day/days of the son of man”? (See also Daniel 7:13-14)
  
  - b. What should we expect to happen? What will it be like? Do you think this is something to look forward to, or to dread?
  
  - c. What can we learn from remembering Lot’s wife? (See Genesis 19:12-29)
  
  - d. When will this come? Do you think he is talking about a time past, present or future to us?
  
  - e. If you had to sum up the message of this section ‘in a nutshell’, what would you say?
  
5. Read Luke 18:1-8. From verse 8 we see that Jesus is still thinking about ‘when the son of man comes’.
  - a. How does this parable relate to (extend or apply) what Jesus has just said in 17:20-37?
  
  - b. What prayer is commended here, and why is it important to persevere in it?
  
6. What could you pray in response to reading this passage? Spend time praying together.

# Will you find Jesus? Luke 18:10-43

1. If we did a survey of our church, and people answered honestly, what do think would be the most common answers to this question: "Which groups of people in our society are most likely, and which are most unlikely, to be Christians?"
2. Luke 18 opens with the parable of the persistent widow, and Jesus' question "When the Son of Man comes, will he find that faith on earth?" The rest of chapter 18 explores what "that faith" looks like. From another angle, the chapter deals how to enter the kingdom of God.

Read 18:9-42. Who enters and fails to enter the kingdom? For each one - why or why not? (Note that "enter the kingdom", "inherit eternal life" & "justified" all speak of the same reality).

v 9-14

v 15-17

v 18-30

v 35-42

3. What is the impact of including Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection (v 31-33), and the disciples failure to understand it (v 34) in the midst of this section?
4. What themes of Luke's gospel, and of this whole section, can you see in the closing account of the healing of the blind man?
5. How does this chapter challenge your own (and our church's) presumptions about who enters the kingdom? To what extent do the people who enter or fail to enter the kingdom in this chapter align with your own observations?
6. In what situations might Jesus' word of assurance in verses 29-30 most encourage you?
7. What would be good to pray in response to reading this passage? Pray together about these things.

# Are you Lost or Found     Luke 19:1-10

1. What different ideas might (other) people have about Jesus' mission in the world (ie. about what he came to do)?
  
2. "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). This is the climax of Jesus' teaching on his journey to Jerusalem. Read Luke 19:1-10.
  - a. In what ways does Zacchaeus exemplify someone who is "lost"? (Think about how he is described in light of the themes of chapters 15-18).
  
  - b. How does Jesus "seek" him? What was Zacchaeus' role in this?
  
  - c. How does Zacchaeus respond to Jesus' call? (How does this response compare or contrast with the various people described in chapter 18?).
  
  - d. What does Jesus conclude from the evidence of Zacchaeus' changed life? With what emotion or 'tone of voice' do you think Jesus spoke the words of verse 9?
  
3. Who are the "lost" people in our circles? (Do you think the poor, needy and marginalised are more 'lost' than the wealthy, together and mainstream in our society? Why or why not?).
  
4. Now that Jesus has died, risen and ascended into heaven, has his mission been accomplished? To what extent is his mission then continuing in our era? (See Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:1-8, Acts 28:23-24 & 30-31.)
  
5. To what extent are your personal goals and passions aligned with Jesus' mission? How about the practical priorities of your group, and of our church? How would things be different if we were thoroughly gripped, centred on and shaped by Jesus mission?
  
6. For your prayers. Arising from this passage and your discussion...
  - a. For what can you thank and praise God?
  - b. What sin needs to be confessed?
  - c. What changes do you need to make for which you need God's help?
  - d. Pray that our church will be about Jesus' mission.
  - e. Pray for specific groups of 'lost' people in our area, or known to you.

# The Master's Business    Luke 19:11-27

1. What are the main gifts or blessings has God given you (both spiritual and physical/material)? Make a group list (Stop when/if you get to 20!).
2. In the last study we looked at the climax of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, and reflected on his mission to seek and save the lost (19:10). As people listened to this teaching, Jesus felt the need to tell a parable about when his kingdom would come (v11), and what his disciples should be do in the meantime (v13).

Read Luke 19:11-27. What (in general terms) do you think is the main point of the parable?

3. Although we always need to be careful about reading too much into the details of a parable (allegorizing), this one does seem to be talking about real events and people.
  - a. To what events and people does Jesus seem to be talking about in verses 12-15? What evidence is there from the whole passage to support your answers?
  - b. How do you feel about the way the master dealt with the 3 slaves? Was he fair?
  - c. What do you think the nobleman's business is? (See also 19:10 & 24:46-49)
  - d. What do think the "minas" represent?
4. What is encouraging for us here? What do find most challenging?
5. To what extent do you see yourself engaging in the master's business? In concrete terms what does/might being 'engaged' look like for you? Are there any changes you need to make, hurdles you might need to overcome, or help you need to seek?
6. How might we make the mistake of the 3<sup>rd</sup> slave (ie. what would that look like)?
7. Thank God for revealing his plan, for the gifts he has given you and for the privilege of being involved in his business. Ask for God's help to do the things you have talked about.

# The First Coming of Jesus Luke 19:28-48

1. Think back to a time you can remember when a city welcomed a king or very important leader (eg. A coronation, inauguration, state visit, official welcome). What kind of things normally associate such an arrival & welcome? (eg. Modes of transport, ceremonies, programs, activities?)
2. Read Luke 19:28-48. In Luke's Gospel Jesus, the promised Messiah, has been heading for Jerusalem (See 9:51, 13:2 & 18:31-33). What is different or surprising about his arrival?
3. Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey is striking and famous. Why do you think Luke records so much detail about the arrangements for the donkey?

The background to this is found in two Old Testament passages. Read each of these and summarize what is being described or celebrated. How does this deepen your appreciation for what is happening?

- a. Psalm 118:15-29 (Note that verse 26 is on the lips of the people in Luke 19:38).
  - b. Zechariah 9:9-17
4. In verses 41-44 Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (as he did near the start of his journey there, in 13:31-35). Why does he weep? What should the people of Jerusalem have known / seen in his arrival? Why do we learn here about the 'heart' of Jesus?
  5. To what extent do we (or should we?) share a similar grief for those in our world today who are lost, not realizing that Jesus is God's their king and saviour? What difference do think it would make if we felt this more deeply?
  6. In what way do verses 45-48 seem to be an 'anticlimax' to the Messiah's arrival in Jerusalem? In what ways is it exactly what we should have expected?
  7. (As time permits) Once again there are Old Testament passages in the background. Read these passages, summarize what is being described or celebrated, and reflect on how this deepens our understanding of, and appreciation for, what is happening in Luke 19.
    - a. Jeremiah 7:1-11
    - b. Isaiah 56:1-8
  8. What do you think God would have you pray/praise/thank in response to this passage? Make a list and pray together.