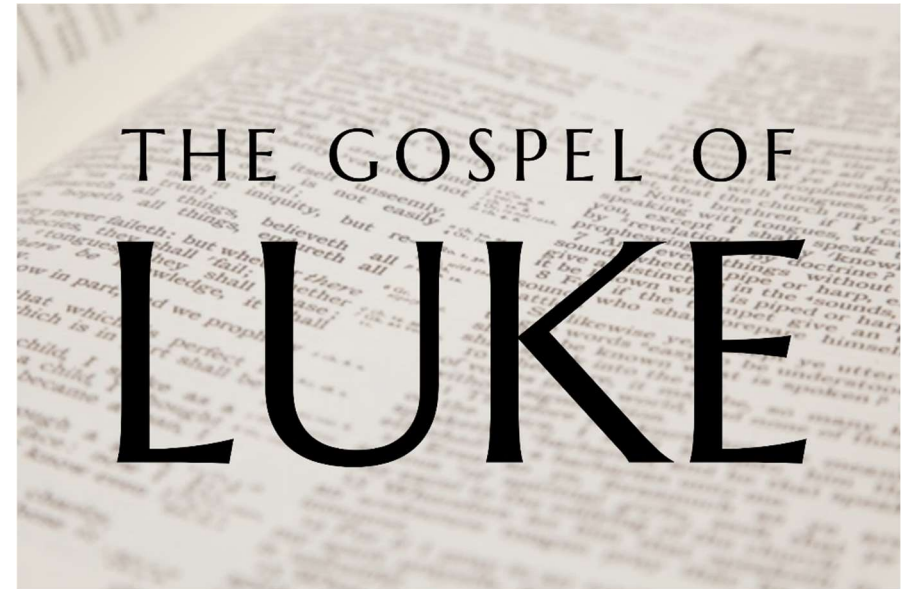


FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Luke 11:24-32 - Blessed are those who hear and obey God's Word.

V24. Unlike Matthew, who places this passage later, Luke deals with it now to complete the account regarding demons. The point is simple; when a demon leaves a person, and that person is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, no matter what moral tidying up of the life may result, the person remains vulnerable to being possessed again. The number is not significant; what it indicates is the dimension of increased wickedness. Only Christ can fill the soul of a person in such a way as to exclude perpetual, ever-increasing, sinful behaviour.

V27. As Jesus is saying this, a woman, impressed by the miracle and the stunning simplicity of his response to the Pharisees and Scribes, shouts out. She acknowledges who Jesus is and utters a wonderful statement of commendation on his mother. The thought is - 'she is blessed to have had a son like this, and is to be blessed herself for how she raised him'. You would think that Jesus would receive this compliment upon himself and his mother with a personalized response, i.e., stating his appreciation for her recognition of who he is, and the contribution his mother made in rearing him. But he doesn't. He doesn't question the truth of what the woman says; he just doesn't respond to it. Yes, the physical connection with Jesus is significant and not to be dismissed lightly, but the reality is that the relationship of the soul with Christ is far superior.

Many today think that it would have been wonderful to have seen and heard Jesus in person. Surely nothing could surpass the experience of being in one of those crowds that followed him around. They may even think that they would be more committed as Christians if they had had such a privilege. Seeing Jesus in the flesh, listening to his teaching with such authority, witnessing some of his miracles. How could you not be moved to become really committed after that? That is a misguided, if not a false, premise to live under. We are far more blessed today than the people who saw and listened to Jesus, including the disciples, because we have the entirety of the Word of God that we can hear, read and study, and then obey. How incredibly blessed we are today to have the voice of Jesus, in the Holy Spirit's power, come to us through his never-changing Word. Our task is not to dream about what we could have been like if we had seen and heard Jesus when he was on the earth. Our task is to listen to him now, as he speaks from heaven today through his Word, and then obey him. As James later says, we are to be not only hearers of the Word, but doers of it also (James 1:22).

- Q1. How does Jesus respond to the woman who calls out to him?
- Q2. Many people today think it would have been better to have seen Jesus in person. Why is that not the case?
- Q3. Have you thought much about what it means to be a doer of God's Word as well as a hearer of it?

Produced by Ottawa RPC to help family worship.
These notes have been prepared by
Rev. Dr. Andrew Quigley.

Thursday - Luke 11:14-23 – Whose side are you on?

Yesterday we saw how the Pharisees and Scribes believed that Jesus was working hand in hand with the devil. Now others, equally hostile and agreeing that this was the only plausible suggestion, asked Jesus to 'clear up' the issue by giving them a sign from heaven. Luke doesn't address Jesus' response until later in the chapter, i.e., verse 23, but we will come to it Monday probably, unless you want to read on and see for yourself what Jesus says.

V17. Evidently, these comments about Jesus working hand in hand with the devil were made just among the Pharisees and the Scribes, as they grumbled among themselves. But Jesus knows what they were thinking, and he answers what they are unwilling to raise with him. His logic is simple, in fact life is always simple; it is the devil who complicates it in his attempt to bring chaos and disruption. The principal of a divided kingdom or household working together for the same goals is irrational. It just makes no sense. It is untenable. The point is self-evident – if Satan is divided against himself, then how can his kingdom stand/continue? If Satan sent demons into men to war against Jesus, and then he called them back when Jesus commanded so that people would be amazed at Jesus, where is the sense in that?

V19. The second proof that this is nonsense rests on the first. The “sons” Jesus is referring to are the young men who graduated in the practice of exorcism from the schools of the Pharisees and the Scribes. We know nothing about how these Jewish exorcisms were conducted or the success rate they had, but Jewish exorcism was practised. Jesus' point is straightforward – if you say that I am casting out demons by working with the devil, then what does that say about how your guys are doing it. They must be doing the same thing, so where does that leave you and your accusation?

V20. So that leaves us with only one option. The casting out of demons is the work of God, not Satan, which means that God must be in their midst. What they are witnessing is what they have been looking for all their lives. But their problem is that their view of the Messiah is so wide of the mark that they can't see him, even though he is being revealed right in front of them.

V21. The illustration Jesus gives in this verse is self-explanatory. Satan is powerful, but Jesus is far more powerful. Satan can do all he wants to defend his cause, to guard his empire, and he will be successful in doing so, up and until the day that Jesus comes along and says, 'I am having that', and that will be it.

V22. The question is, 'Whose side are you on?' The choice is simple, just as the explanation has been simple, just as the illustration has been simple. There are only two options. You can either choose Jesus or Satan. The Victor or the vanquished. You either 'gather in' with Jesus, or end up being scattered with Satan. Being gathered in affords comfort, peace, protection, and provision. Being scattered is not a place you want to be. Don't make the wrong choice!

Q1. How does Jesus address the thinking of the Pharisees and the Scribes?

Q2. Why does Jesus bring up the point about the 'sons' who cast out demons?

Q3. What is the purpose of the 'strong man' illustration?

Monday - Luke 11:8-13 – Ask, Seek and Knock.

The commands and promises presented here, just like the Lord's prayer, are taught more than once by Jesus (Matthew 7:7,8). Jesus introduces them with an assertive statement – "I tell you". Jesus has been teaching and telling his disciples many things, and all of them are significant. But, you get the sense here that he is saying to them, 'sit up and listen'.

V8,9. *Ask, seek, and knock.* The use of three imperatives, ask, seek, and knock, emphasizes the necessity of this coming to God. Note also, the ascending order of intensity. To ask is important, to seek demands more investment, and to knock requires deliberately engaged activity. It is not that we are to ask, and if that doesn't get it done, then we are to seek, and if that doesn't work, then we step it up to the knocking stage and hope that does it. The three actions, asking, seeking, and knocking, are all part of the one process. When we ask, we are also to be seeking; and when we are seeking, we are to be knocking. As we engage in all three simultaneously, we are communicating that, 'I really want this!' It is the focus, the intensity that lies at the root of the asking, seeking, and knocking, that is important. Lackadaisical, half-hearted, communion with God won't work. It has to be 'all in'. Jesus was 'all in' in obedience to the Father. It is because he was 'all in' that we have the opportunity and privilege to be 'all in' with him and the Father and the Holy Spirit. Nothing less will do; why would it?

V9. *Asking, seeking, and knocking.* The fact that the verbs are also continuous mean that Jesus is saying, 'you are to do these things today and tomorrow, and every time you have a need.' The command is to be persistent in coming before God. We are not to ask once or twice, and then leave it with God. We are not to seek God a couple of times, and then say, 'God, you know what I need, I'll wait and see what you come back with.' Our knocking is not to be a few taps on the door and a hanging about outside to see if anyone answers. Today, we are to ask, seek, and knock; tomorrow we are to ask, seek, and knock; and we are to keep on asking, seeking, and knocking until we get an answer. Oh, how much I should have adopted this approach in my life down through the years. It wasn't that I was half-hearted in my asking, seeking, and knocking, but I just gave up too quickly. It was too frequently a case of 'God already knows what I am asking for so why persist.' 'I haven't heard anything back, so it's clear that he doesn't want me to have it, so why persist.' Of course, that is a wholly understandable thought to think, but it is not acceptable. Jesus tells us to keep on pursuing our Heavenly Father, no matter how long it takes, and regardless of the discouragements. If it's important enough to come to God with it in the first place, then it's important enough to keep coming back until we get a clear answer.

Q1. What is it that Jesus says we are to do? And is there any increase in the intensity with which we are to pursue God?

Q2. How long does Jesus say we are to keep pursuing God?

Tuesday - Luke 11:8-13 – Your prayers will be answered.

V9, 10. *The promise is clear and repeated.* Jesus utters a specific promise. Asking will produce a response, seeking will produce a response, knocking will produce a response. What will be that response? We will be given what we ask for? But surely that is not always the case, frequently we pray and don't get what we desire. How does that sit with Jesus' promise? It sits perfectly. The critical issue is whether our praying is consistent with the will of God. How can we know if it is or not? By submitting our asking to what God has revealed in His Word. If our prayers arise out of what God has commanded, then our asking, seeking, and knocking will solicit from God what we desire; for example, if we ask God for the help to 'seek first his kingdom', then we will get it. Does that mean that we can only pray for the promises in God's Word? No, we can ask God to heal those we know who are ill, but we must do so acknowledging God's Sovereign will for each individual's life, and be willing to accept that He does know what is best for His glory, and for each life which He has created and sustains.

V10. *An answer will be given.* The fact that Jesus reiterates, albeit in a different way, underscores the importance of the point he is making. The promise is emphatic. Everyone, without exception, who asks will receive; everyone, without exception, who seeks will find; everyone, without exception, who knocks will get the door opened to them. There are no exceptions, for there cannot be. If God hears, which He will do, if our praying is done in Jesus' name and through a relationship with him, then He will answer. The answer will come in God's time and in His way, but He will answer. That is an astonishing thought. If only we could understand and own that promise, would it not bring a greater degree of care, intentionality, and deliberateness to our praying?

V11. *The lesser to the greater.* Just as Jesus has argued from the lesser – the man being asked for bread – to the greater – God being asked for what we need, now he does so again. The lesser – if our human fathers responded to the requests we made of them as they were able, then the greater – how much more likely is our Father in heaven to answer us given who He is. Some people had fathers who were not kind to them. The idea that a human father would not give their child what they need and ask for, but would give them that which would hurt them, is unthinkable. I am blessed to have a wonderful father who couldn't have done more for my siblings and myself. And, if such men, godly caring men, still owning a deceitful heart from their natural state, can give good gifts to their children, how much more will God our Father, who is Holy, not bless and give to us what we ask, seek, and knock for. And what is the highest good we could ask, seek, and knock for in our lives? It is the work of the Holy Spirit, making us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit's work enabling us to fulfil our chief end in life, to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Q1. What are we to ask for and how? Will God answer our prayers?

Q2. What is Jesus doing in arguing from the example of the lesser to the greater?

Q3. What is the highest good we could ask God for?

Wednesday - Luke 11:14-23 – Increase in opposition.

Once again, the incident described isn't set in its chronological context. Luke doesn't play by the rules of chronology because he is drawing material together to make points. And the point now is to highlight how the opposition to Jesus is increasing. Up to this point, Luke has been telling us about how Jesus' preaching and miracles have been, on the whole, positively received. We have seen crowds flocking to hear him preach and seen him heal people. It's not that there hasn't been opposition, there has, for example, when he healed the paralytic man who had been let down through his roof in Capernaum. But things now begin to take a turn for the worse. Those who do not like what Jesus is doing are beginning to find their voice with increasing intensity and viciousness. Ultimately, it is the spiritual warfare that Jesus is engaged in which provides the pretext for their assault on him. Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic gospels), have already been indicating the presence of this spiritual opposition by addressing the level of demonic activity directed at Jesus.

V14. *The miracle.* Luke tells us that Jesus cast a demon out of a man who could not speak. Matthew tells us that the man was also blind (Matthew 12:22). After the demon is cast out, the man is able to speak and see (Matthew 12:22). That is all we are told about this man, but what a change it must have brought to his life. It is remarkable to think that he woke that morning not being able to see anything and not being able to speak with anyone; and that night he climbed into his bed, which he could see, having said 'good night' to those living with him, assuming he didn't live on his own. His encounter with Jesus changed his life. So it is with everyone who meets Jesus. Yes, there may not be physical healing, but the new life that comes by faith in Jesus brings its own phenomenal healing for this life and eternity.

As ever, when Jesus did a miracle, the crowds were astonished. How could you not be, witnessing something like that? But there were some, Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem (Matthew 12:24, Mark 3:22), who, while noting what had happened, had a different view than the crowd. They, of course, couldn't do what many modern Bible 'scholars' do, and question the literary accuracy of the text, i.e., say it is a made-up story for the sake of making some point. They had to accept the reality of it because they had just witnessed it, but that didn't mean that they were going to accept that because Jesus had done it, it must mean that he is therefore the Son of God, the Messiah. That they could not do because Jesus did not fit their view of who the Messiah would be and what he would do. So, since Jesus didn't fit the profile, there could only be one alternative; he had to be working with Beelzebul, that is, Satan. For these Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem, it was simple; Jesus was working hand in hand with the devil. The devil would send a demon into a person's life, causing them all sorts of problems. Jesus would come along and tell the demon to leave. The devil would call the demon back, and Jesus would be left taking the applause. It was obvious that this was what was happening. How else could it be explained?

Q1. What new development does Luke draw our attention to in these verses?

Q2. Who do the Pharisees and Scribes think Jesus is working with?