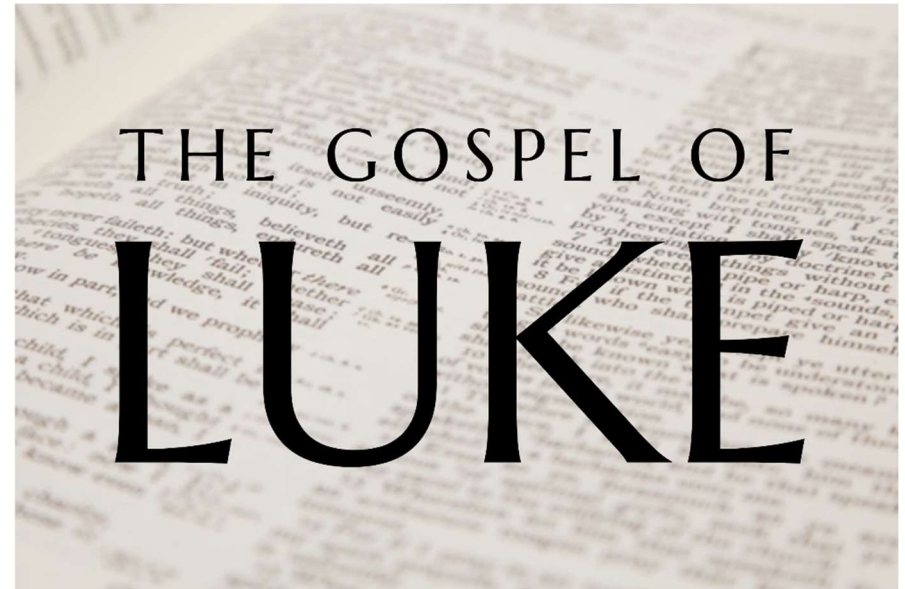


FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET



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 11:37-54 – Jesus tackles the Lawyers.

One of the Lawyers, those who gave themselves to the study of Old Testament Law, speaks. He states what they all must have been thinking, 'Teacher, you're insulting us'. It is quite a tame response given that Jesus has just called them 'fools', and that for all their tithing, self-seeking and craving of adulation, they are nothing more than unmarked graves. Jesus doesn't apologize or back off, instead he now turns on the Lawyers as a party and hammers them. Through their rabbinical traditions, they had been heaping more and more laws and demands on the people, to such an extent that the ordinary Jew couldn't cope. This is bad enough, but to lay it on people, and then fail to fulfil the fundamentals so abysmally themselves, well, what is that all about?

V47. As for the past, these Lawyers would ardently claim that they would not have killed the prophets of old, but Jesus says 'nonsense'; the fact that you are building special tombs for those prophets doesn't mean that you are honouring them – it shows the opposite. It says that they are effectively condoning these murders and, through their construction projects, are actually working to silence the voices of the prophets forever, even if the guise is one of 'hero' worship. Had they genuinely wanted to honour these men, all they had to do was believe and do what these prophets of God had taught.

The final woe reveals yet another paradox. These Lawyers profess to teach the meaning of the Law. But because their expositions are so filled with riddles, they've made it impossible for people to obtain a true knowledge of God. Preoccupied and enamoured with the mysteries they had concocted, they are blissfully ignorant of the fact that they have so obscured the Wisdom of God that the people can't understand it. And what's worse, they are finding pleasure and taking pride in these so-called displays of ability and learning, which are obscuring God's truth.

V53. Although they bite their tongues at the meal, word spread quickly about what Jesus had said. A corner had been turned; a bridge had been crossed. Jesus had launched an all-out attack on them, and these Lawyers and Scribes weren't going to sit back and take it quietly. They are enraged, and the more they talk about what Jesus had said, the more engaged they become. The strategy adopted is a simple one – get him to incriminate himself. Bombard him with questions: provocative questions, numerous questions, questions on anything to do with the Law, in the hope that he will say something that contravenes the Law, and then they will have him. The approach has changed. Previously it was a case of – 'who is this guy, and who does this guy think he is?' Now it is – 'we have to get him', and all their energy and cunning will go into trying to do so.

Jesus had accepted the invitation to this meal, and he chose not to wash his hands because he knew what would transpire. This is the beginning of the end game, and God is in control of every twist and turn. Take note, God is never playing catch up to you, He's always ahead.

Q1. What was the problem with the teaching being given by the Lawyers?

Q2. Who is in control of everything that is happening in your life and mine?

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

Thursday - Luke 11:37-45 – Jesus tackles the Pharisees’ empty religion.

V37. Jesus receives an invitation from a Pharisee to come to his home for a meal. It's interesting that the man extends such an invitation, given the interaction Jesus has just been having with the Pharisees and Scribes, but he does, and Jesus accepts it.

Throughout their history, God's people have been commanded to welcome others into their homes to show love. We read of Abraham offering hospitality (Genesis 18), and Job, even though he was sick, refused to neglect the opening of his home to others (Job 21:32). Paul writes 'practice hospitality' (Romans 12:13), and the verb he uses means to do so continuously. The fact that he cites it as a prerequisite for choosing church leaders (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8), speaks to its importance. Peter, likewise, says, "Above all things, have unfailing love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without complaining." (1 Peter 4:8,9). The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way, "Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to show hospitality, for by so doing, some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it." (Hebrews 13:1,2). An amazing and wonderful thought. The sad thing is that this Pharisee doesn't comprehend that he has invited the Son of God into his home.

V38. Jesus reclines at the table ready to enjoy the meal. Nothing noteworthy there. Well, actually, there is. Jesus' failure to engage in the ceremonial washing of his hands leaves the Pharisee speechless. This wasn't a matter of hygiene; it was part of Jewish tradition and considered as binding as the Law of God; in fact, one commentator says, it "was considered more binding than those of divine law." So, in the eyes of this Pharisee, this is a serious mistake on Jesus' part, and his reaction speaks volumes.

V39. Jesus responds. Now, we need to be clear, Jesus is not picking a fight here over a simple custom; for Jesus this is a matter that goes to the heart of how a person is made right before God. The Pharisees believed and deemed themselves to be holy before God, based on their outward religious activities; the fact that their hearts were filled with greed and wickedness was an irrelevance to them. Jesus calls them 'fools', literally devoid of any sense, and demands that they seek God for a new heart, that's what the reference 'almsgiving' means.

V42. A torrent of woes now descends from Jesus, first on the Pharisees and then the Lawyers. The crime of Pharisees is to elevate those activities which they think will point to their righteousness. For example, their delight in strenuously tithing the smallest of the flowering herbs; whilst, at the same time, completely neglecting critical matters of justice and the love of God. Their need for the prominent seats in the synagogue, and craving for the overzealous greetings in the marketplace, all spoke to the rottenness of their pride filled hearts. For Jesus, their lives are effectively invisible, of no consequence, forgotten and trampled over like old, unmarked graves.

How much you and I need to deal in matters of the heart and not outward religion. Keep the heart right and the rest will follow easily.

Q1. Is hospitality something we as Christians should be doing? If so, why?

Q2. What lay behind Jesus' attack on the Pharisees?

Monday - Luke 11:29-32 – An Evil Generation.

Previously in this chapter, in verse 16, we saw that there were those, the Pharisees and Scribes from Jerusalem, who were demanding of Jesus, that he show them a sign from heaven to authenticate himself. 'He should and must prove himself by way of some astonishing, beyond earth miracle.' Luke now tells us how Jesus responds to this demand in verse 29, and there is no holding back. "This generation is an evil generation." We tend to think of evil as being something openly and terribly bad. Something marked by clear and evident heinousness. But 'evil' for Jesus is hearing the Word of God and not obeying. Yes, they had flocked to hear him preach with authority and see him do amazing miracles. They had even extolled a blessing on his mother (verses 27 and 28); but what of their response to his preaching? They wanted a sign, an earth-shattering sign, one which would leave them utterly amazed and convinced. The fact that God had been giving them the truth, innumerable signs, day after day, in and through the person of His Son, seemed to be irrelevant.

They were going to be disappointed, for the kind of sign being demanded would not be forthcoming. God had decreed how He would manifest His Son, and how His Son would manifest His love for His chosen people. That had been sealed in from eternity, and no matter how ardent and earnest, no pleading was going to change that. It is one 'asking, seeking, and knocking' that would not be answered.

A sign would be given though – the sign of Jonah. What was the "sign of Jonah ... to the people of Nineveh?" It was the sign of 'resurrection' bringing salvation. Now, of course Jonah was not raised from the dead to become the Saviour of the Ninevites; Jonah was redeemed from death and held in the belly of the great fish for three days (Jonah 1:17). He then went to Nineveh, having been commanded a second time to do so, and preached the message of God's judgement. That preaching, by God's grace, resulted in the salvation of tens of thousands of people, and the city was spared. Jonah was 'resurrected' to do the work of God. Jesus is, of course, pointing to his own resurrection.

V31. Jesus demands that they consider who is standing in front of them. He does so by way of the example of the Queen of Sheba. A heathen woman, who journeyed from the ends of the earth, to hear the God-given wisdom of one man. And yet, here they have, standing in their midst, one who is greater than Solomon. Not only greater in person, but greater in everything associated with him, including his Kingdom. Hence the phrase, "something greater than Solomon".

The judgement is coming, and on that day the Queen of Sheba will rise up, and she will condemn the rejection of Christ by the generation standing around him at this moment. And she will be joined in this condemnation by the men of Nineveh who, by God's grace, repented at the preaching of his servant, Jonah. It is a sobering and challenging thought, given the privileges being extended to us daily. We should not take lightly our hearing and obeying of God's Word.

Q1. How does Jesus characterise the men he is speaking with and why?

Q2. What did Jesus mean when he spoke about the sign of Jonah?

Q3. How should the reality of the coming Day of Judgement impact our thinking?

Tuesday - Luke 11:33-36 - Guard the eye of your heart.

Jesus is talking here about lamps, cellars, baskets, and eyes; but what is he saying, what is his point? Is he simply talking about how we should light our homes, or the importance of our eyesight, if we are blessed with sight, or is he using these things to illustrate something else? Yes, he is using them to illustrate a simple truth about our life as a Christian. When a person is born again, they are set free from the bondage of sin and Satan, by a powerful work of God the Holy Spirit in their life. Where there was once darkness in our hearts, now the light of the gospel reigns within us. It is an eternal work and one that cannot be reversed, but the outworking of that work can be hindered by how we live our lives going forward. The picture of the lamp being light and put into the cellar to burn on its own, or under a basket, speaks to something that doesn't have a point. It makes absolutely no sense. So it is with our lives if the light is not shining in us. What would be the point of our being set free from the bondage of sin and Satan to live in darkness? We have been set free to live, to live for God's glory and our joy. Do you want to live your life as a Christian as though you are in a cellar or under a basket? Burning dimly and experiencing no joy and being wholly ineffective. You have been made alive in Christ and seated in the heavenly realms to burn bright, fulfilling the plans and purposes which God has foreordained since before the foundation of the earth for your life. And that is the 'eye' illustration comes in.

Just as light enters our body through the little amazing sensory organ in our face and as a result enables us to see, so we have a spiritual eye through which we receive the light that God wants to pour into our hearts, so we can live the new life He has given us to the full. That spiritual eye is your heart. Your regenerate heart. God has given your heart a brand-new spiritual inclination, and He wants you to fill that new heart with the light of His Word. The connection is simple - a good heart means a good and blessed life; on the other hand, a heart that is uncared for, and in want of spiritual nutrition, will lead to a dysfunctional, sick and ultimately sad life.

The question is, how do you prevent this dysfunctionality from happening or, if it does happen, and that's where you are currently at, how do you get the lamp out of the cellar, the light out from under the basket and up onto a stand where it should be, so that you can experience the joy of your new life in Christ? It is simple; you have to address what you are putting into your life through the 'eye' of your heart. You have to stop and look at what is getting into your life, through the spiritual eye of your heart. You've got to ask questions about what you are watching, reading, and engaging with. You've got to realise that what you are immersing yourself in day after day doesn't just go in one ear and out the other; it sticks, and probably more of it will stick than you think. And if it is not of the Lord, wherever it eventually lodges, you can be sure of one thing - it will not have a good impact in your mind and heart. Tomorrow we will consider what positive steps we can and must take to have our lives to be "full of light ... as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

Q1. What does the eye let into our lives? What is the spiritual eye of our lives?

Q2. If we are unhappy with our lives, what is the real problem we have?

Wednesday - Luke 11:33-36 - Guard the eye of your heart.

Yesterday, we considered these verses and saw that the issue of what we are putting into our hearts is critical to our joy and delight as Christians.

Jesus says that when our physical eyes are healthy, then our whole body is full of light, and the implication is clear; we need to keep the heart, the spiritual eye of our body, healthy for our lives to be marked by health and joy. That doesn't just happen naturally. It takes deliberate, intentional activity to make sure our hearts are kept healthy, and it requires determination to keep on doing what we need to do for our spiritual lives to blossom and be blessed. The term Solomon uses when he writes in Proverbs 4:23, that we are to 'keep our hearts with all vigilance, for from it flows the spring of life', means to keep on keeping on. One writer comments that our "gracious hearts are like a musical instrument, which though it is exactly tuned, a small mater brings it out of tune again. Put it aside but for a little while – and it will need setting again before another lesson can be played on it."

So, what is involved in guarding our hearts? Well, as we considered yesterday, we first need to take stock of where our hearts are at, as David says in Psalm 77:6, "let me meditate in my heart. Then my spirit made a diligent search." There needs to be real mourning for, and confession of, the specific sins. The type of mourning we read of in James 4:9, and the confession we find Paul engaging in Romans 7:24-25. It requires earnest prayer for the cleansing grace David speaks of in Psalm 18:12 and Psalm 51:7-10. Then there must be a constant desire for the fear of the Lord to be in our heart, and a jealousy for a strong sense of his presence in our lives, as we strive to make covenants with our eyes and heart (Job 31:1-4).

This is a hard thing to start doing and even harder to keep going. Heart work is the hardest of all works. It is incredibly easy to play at being a Christian; few questions are ever really asked of us. Even the public vows we make are often set aside all too easily, and few either love us enough or have the courage to call us out on our evident failures. In many other spheres of life such behaviour, of saying one thing and blatantly doing another, wouldn't go unchallenged, but hey 'we all love one another'. The fact is, all seasons of sin and darkness, can be traced back to the one source, the closing of the heart in some measure to the light of God's Word. Fail to expose your heart to the light of God's Word, and sin will find a fertile resting place to scatter its seeds of destruction.

A number of years ago, I was at a ministers' conference where a well-known minister was speaking. I had gone with a measure of anticipation, but it turned out to be the most discouraging conference I have been at. The talks were dry and lifeless, in large part a regurgitation of historical quotes, it was truly an arid experience. A few years later the speaker had taken his own life, no longer able to suppress the guilt of a series of inappropriate relationships with women in his congregation. When Jesus speaks of darkness in these verses, he's not playing with words for dramatic effect.

Q1. What does Solomon say about what we are to do with our hearts?

Q2. What steps are involved in the keeping of our hearts?

Q3. Where can all seasons of sin be traced to in our lives?