

# 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 18: 18-30 - The rich young ruler.

Jesus is now approached by a man who will ask Him a potentially life-changing question. Luke is the only one of the three Synoptic gospels who tells us that he is a ruler, although he doesn't specify in what sense he rules. The general nature of the term speaks of someone who was an official in some capacity. So, this young man (Matthew tells us that he was young, Matthew 19:22) is someone who is probably socially accomplished and competent.

The young man begins by calling Jesus "Good Teacher". This is interesting because it wouldn't have been a greeting that the Jewish rabbis would have used. For them, it would have been deemed as ascribing an attribute of God's divine character to man. So, this young man is either ignorant of that fact and is seeking to show Jesus an extraordinary level of respect, or engaging in flattery. Either way, the issue that has gripped him is that of eternal life and what he must do to inherit it, in the sense of working to attain it.

Jesus doesn't reject the assertion that He is 'good', but does state the truth that no one is good but God. In so doing, Jesus is setting the conversation in the context of what is right. He could have just overlooked the issue and focused on the heart of the young man's question, but He doesn't; why not? Because error cannot be overlooked, it has to be addressed so that the conversation can progress based on truth. It is something we need to be mindful of. Sometimes it's wise to say nothing, but on other occasions, we have to face the fear of correcting someone so that our subsequent conversations will be grounded in truth.

The question that had been asked was 'what should I do?' So, Jesus responds in terms of 'doing' and directs the young man to the commandments. Specifically, the five commandments that deal with his and our duty to others but not to God, which is interesting. It shows that Jesus is leading this man to think about his life in terms of what he perceives goodness to be, that is, 'goodness' apart from God. Which, of course does not exist (Romans 3:11,12). So, in essence, Jesus is challenging the young man to think about the hopeless basis of his question, what can I do to inherit eternal life. Something we will pick up on again next week, God willing.

Q1. How does the young ruler address, Jesus?

Q2. What is Jesus' response?

Q3. What is Jesus seeking to do by directing the young man to the commandments?

## Thursday - Luke 18:15-17 – Let the children come to me.

We now come to an interesting juncture in Luke's gospel because after nine chapters, in fact, since Luke 9:51, we now find that Luke is now dealing with the same material as Mark does going forward (see Mark 10:1 and Matthew 19:1).

Some people, we are not told who, are bringing infants to Jesus so that he can lay his hands on and bless them. Mark points to the fact that the children were being brought to Jesus while he was in a house (Mark 10:10), which may explain why the disciples were initially able to discourage. Why did the disciples do it? It doesn't tell us; maybe they thought that Jesus had enough to be doing without having to deal with infants as well. Whatever the reason, the verbs indicate that the people kept doing so until the disciples rebuked them. However, when Jesus became aware of what was going on, he put a stop to the disciples' interfering. He called that the infants should be brought to him, literally 'let the little children be coming to me and stop hindering them', and he gives the reason that they belong to the kingdom of God. It's not that he feels that showing an interest in infants will make him more 'human' or caring in the eyes of the people; it is because these infants are members of God's covenant household and kingdom - what a clear advocacy of the covenantal blessings that apply to the child born into a godly home. Christ welcomes our children as his, and they have all the blessings associated with that until they either receive new life in him by faith or reject those blessings in unbelief. Of course, the gift of faith may be laid into their hearts by God, even up to the moment of their death.

The Lord Jesus, in a few words, now speaks to what is required of those who would seek eternal life. The essence of what he says is simple and straightforward – such a person must come to God with a genuine sense of unworthiness and utter dependence upon His grace. That can only happen if they are prepared to come as a child would, with the same transparent openness and complete trust. Too often, we want to tell God how He should receive us, what our preferences are, and the things that we will find acceptable; but that's not how entering into and dwelling in the Kingdom works. We are subjects, blood-bought slaves, not rulers; our sole desire and inclination should be to submit fully and humbly to His rule and delight as we do so.

Q1. Who were the disciples trying to prevent from coming to Jesus?

Q2. What was his response?

Q3. How does Jesus use this to speak about those who would come to His Kingdom?

## Monday - Luke 18:1-8 – She just kept on asking.

This chapter opens with two parables on prayer, addressing both the need for persistence and a correct heart attitude when praying. First, we have the encouragement to persist expectantly in our praying. And who of us does not need such encouragement? Is there anyone who finds the work of prayer easy? Is it not the case that the great privilege of coming before Almighty God is something we all wrestle with and for various reasons?

Jesus opens up the world of a lonely and probably poor widow who had a serious grievance with someone who has done her a life-impacting injustice, one which she wants the law to address. But there is a problem, and it is a significant one. The judge, the one person in the city who should have been sympathetic to her, isn't interested. Why not? Indeed, this was a case he should have been keen to address. So, what was his issue? Well, he had two issues. First, he has absolutely no fear of God, which is remarkable given his high office and undoubted knowledge of God's warnings against unjust and conscienceless judges. Second, and less significant but equally important, he has no respect for his fellow man.

What is the widow to do? She has tried to get legal recourse but unsuccessfully, not because her case has been heard and she didn't win, but because the judge refuses to do anything. He doesn't care, and so he ignores her. Nothing is more frustrating when you are dependent on someone who has a responsibility to do something about it, and they refuse to engage. Yes, you try various approaches; asking, putting forth your case, cajoling, and being forceful, but if it repeatedly draws a complete blank, what do you do? It is life-destroying. There is an additional factor in this woman's case, the huge power difference between her and this judge. Also, she has no other recourse; he is the last port of call on the issue. What can she do? Well, she has a choice to make; she can give up or keep asking. But maybe she has no choice; perhaps she cannot give up. Maybe her very existence depends on getting justice. And that's it; it's her absolute need for justice that keeps her coming to him, time and again, time and again, time and again .... She has no option; she cannot stop coming to and asking him for justice and restitution. And eventually, because of her constant, persistent coming to him, she gets through to him, and he gives in and rules on the case. But note, it's only because he wants his peace back that he does so; it has nothing to do with the widow's just and needy case. Tomorrow we will see what lesson there is in this for our praying.

Q1. Who are the people in this parable?

Q2. How does the judge initially respond, and why?

Q3. What does the widow do, and why does the judge eventually give in?

## Tuesday - Luke 18:1-8 – God does hear and will answer His people’s prayers.

Jesus tells us this parable about a widow who brings a case to a judge who initially wants nothing to do with her but eventually hears her case solely because she would not give up bringing it to him. So, what is the point of the parable? Well, Jesus tells us in verses 6 through 8. The parable's point is one of contrast, and its purpose is to highlight, with the most significant magnitude possible, the reality of God’s love and care for his praying people.

There is the contrast between how the unrighteous judge, as Jesus characterizes him, interacts with and responds to this widow and God’s response to those on whom He has set his electing love. The widow comes frequently to the judge; God’s elect people come to Him day and night. She is not heard because of the unrighteous judge’s selfish attitude. God, who is utterly holy and whose character is love, immediately hears the cries of the people whom He has set His love on from before the foundation of the world; there is no delay where God is concerned. The judge is slow to give his verdict and ultimately only does so for his own sake; whereas God quickly gives justice to those he has chosen and predestined unto eternal life because He loves them. Yes, it may seem that we are not getting the answer we need as quickly as we want it, but we have got to keep telling ourselves what is true, namely that with God one day is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8) and that He does love His people, the reality of which was manifest at the cross (1 John 4:10,11), and that He will answer us in a way that is perfect, and for our absolute and utter good. Often the delay is to give us time to seek Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, so that when He does answer, as He most certainly will, then we will know that the Hand of God has intervened in our lives and be in a position to appreciate better and give thanks for His doing so.

So, it’s clear, we have no reason for not coming consistently and persistently to God our Father in prayer. The question is - will you and I do it? Note I’m not asking the question Jesus is. Read the last sentence in verse 8 again. Jesus is asking us directly if we will take up this incredible privilege and, by faith, seek God in prayer, day and night? It’s both an encouragement and a challenge to lay hold of prayer in our lives and exercise it persistently by faith.

Q1. What are the contrasts between the unrighteous judge and God?

Q2. How should our knowledge of God fuel our praying?

Q3. How does faith impact our praying?

## Wednesday - Luke 18:9-14 - Prayer, it is about the heart.

Today we come to another parable on prayer, but this one focuses on the heart of the person praying. Specifically, the idea that by doing good things, one can merit righteousness. The good thing, in this case, is prayer. This parable rejects the idea that one can gain something with God by doing good - you can’t, and you won’t. Salvation is wholly and solely by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why we are told that Jesus told “this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous”.

The parable is about two men praying in the temple. The temple was a place where public worship was held, but also a place of private prayer. One of the men was a religious, outwardly devout individual, a good churchman, a Pharisee, someone you would have expected to have seen in the temple praying. The other man is a ‘persona non grata’ of the religious community, a tax collector. His presence would have caused a silent stir, given that tax collectors were generally viewed in the community as being dishonest characters who were actively engaged through their work in betraying their own people.

The Pharisee stands by himself because he definitely wants to be seen and probably heard. And when he speaks, every word that comes out of his mouth is about himself and is laced with arrogance and pride. He begins his prayer with a litany of negative statements. It’s all about what he does not do and who he is not like. He’s determined to establish a contrast between himself and those he sees as flagrant breakers of God’s law, including the tax collector who has caught his eye. He then lists off the good things he believes he has done, things which in his eyes will obviously make him favourable with God. This man may think he is speaking with God, but he has no interest in anyone but himself.

The Tax collector is an entirely different individual, and it’s not simply about the absence of any outward religion in his life; it is about his heart’s approach to God. So conscious of his utter unworthiness, the man stands at a distance from the inner Sanctuary, at the very back of the court for men. Engulfed in awareness of his sin, he is incapable of lifting his eyes up as he prays. The physical act of beating his chest is a sign of the level of his emotional distress. The first word he utters is ‘God,’ he knows whose presence he is in, what he needs from God, ‘mercy’, and why, because of his sin. The wonderful news is that the parable ends with a pronouncement of salvation, not on the Pharisee who expected it because of his works, but on the tax collector who threw himself on the mercy of God and sought it.

Q1. Describe the two men and the reason why they prayed so differently.

Q2. Which man was saved and why?