

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: 35-43 - The blind beggar.

The journey of Jesus and his disciples towards Jericho is interrupted by a blind man. Matthew says there were two blind men, and Mark, in his account, names the principal individual as Bartimaeus (Matthew 20:29ff, and Mark 10:46ff). There are other differences in the three accounts; Luke says it takes place as Jesus enters Jericho, while Matthew and Mark say it takes place as Jesus was leaving the town. There are also differences in the three accounts of what took place. How do we get around these apparent inconsistencies? We don't; we accept them as the honest reflections of godly men. No two people, let alone three people, always see the same event in the same way; if they do, it's evidence of collusion to get their story 'right'. So this shows the authenticity of the account of Jesus' life and work.

The noise of the crowd as Jesus passes by that arouses the blind man's interest and leads to the question of what is going on. He's told that the commotion is being caused by the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene. Immediately the blind beggar cries out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me!" And when he's told to be quiet, he refuses and calls out again. All three Synoptics indicate that he calls out the same thing again, which is interesting because previously, Jesus had shut down any acknowledgement that he was the Messiah, but not so now. Why? Formerly, he was motivated by a desire that the people would be protected from doing something rash because of their mistaken view of Messiahship. Still, now it doesn't matter as he is on his way, as the Messiah, to his crucifixion in Jerusalem.

The blind man ignores the calls for him to be quiet and persists. Jesus, on hearing the plea, stops and calls/commands that the man be brought to him. Mark tells us (Mark 10:50) that the man throws off his cloak, springs up and comes to Jesus. There's no hesitation in response once the invitation has been extended. Why? Because the man is all too aware of his need, and he believes that Jesus can heal him. Too often, we are insufficiently aware of our needs, with the result that our response time to God's offer of help and blessing lags at a rate that makes no sense.

Jesus' question about what the man wants searches out the genuineness of the man's request. God is only interested in that which is marked by honesty and integrity. And when the answer comes, a desire to be able to see, Jesus pronounces healing upon the man, which immediately results in the restoration of his sight. The man believed Jesus could do the impossible. What do you think Jesus can do for you that could result in others praising God when He does it?

- Q1. Why are there apparent inconsistencies in the accounts of Jesus' life?
- Q2. Why did Jesus not tell the man to be quiet about him being the Messiah?
- Q3. Why was the man healed?

Thursday - Luke 18:31-34 – Jesus again foretells what awaits him.

We are now entering a new phase in the life and work of the Lord Jesus. We know that he has already set his face towards Jerusalem and all that will unfold for him there. But now that steps up a gear. The leisurely, if personally hectic journey for Jesus, down from the region of Perea on the east to the Jordan, is at an end. Jericho is ahead of them, and it's a short distance from there into Jerusalem. Jesus always led his disciples in the sense of setting the destination. Still, Mark's comment in Mark 10:32, when he says that Jesus was walking ahead of his disciples, gives a sense of urgency and intentionality to the situation. Jesus knows what is ahead of him, and he's not being dragged along reluctantly; he is striding out to face and confront it. And he shares, not for the first time (see Luke 9:22,40), exactly what awaits him, although the details are more specific this time. It's a sharing, though, which, as we will see, is hidden from the disciples.

It will be truly astonishing, as the word, 'see,' literally 'lo' or 'behold' in verse 31, draws attention to. The 'we' refers to Jesus and the twelve, the men who will witness all that has been prophesied about Jesus come to fruition (except for Judas Iscariot, who will hang himself before Jesus is crucified). And note the word that Jesus uses to describe it. His death will not be a mistake nor the result of an accident; it will not be a tragedy; it will be an accomplishment. All that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit decreed from before the foundation of the earth (Ephesians 1:3-10) and then proclaimed through the prophets will be brought to the exact end, in the exact way, for the exact purpose that God has planned. It will be accomplished. Nothing decreed by God will be left unaccomplished. Your salvation, my salvation, is a done deal; the Holy Spirit has sealed it in. Our inheritance is guaranteed to the praise of God's glory. What a wonderful reality and one we should give thanks for daily, given that the only other thing that is guaranteed in your life and mine is the fact that one day we will die.

Two things are remarkable about this passage. The first is the evident calmness of Jesus as he speaks of the abuse he will receive and of his death, and the second, as in Luke 9:45, the disciples didn't grasp a word of what Jesus is telling them because the Spirit of God keeps it from them. In time they would come to fully appreciate every word of it, but not now. Why? We're not told, but possibly it is simply because God knows that they wouldn't be able to handle such devastating news.

Q1. How personally engaged is Jesus in the plan of God?

Q2. Do the disciples get what Jesus is telling them?

Monday - Luke 18: 18-30 – Who is good?

In saying that 'no one is good except God alone' when the young ruler calls him 'Good Teacher,' Jesus is making the young man think about his use of the word 'good.' It's like when we say someone is a good person, what does that mean? When you use that phrase, are you saying that the person it refers to is of absolute moral perfection? No, and it's the same when this young ruler uses it. He's not using it in the sense of absolute moral perfection when addressing Jesus, but he should, shouldn't he? In saying what he does, Jesus is challenging the young man to think about this. But there's more. Implicit in Jesus' response is the fact that eternal life cannot be inherited by being good because, as we have accepted, everyone is morally bad. So, Jesus is confronting this man with his need for salvation, having just drawn his attention to that he, Jesus, is truly good and must be the Messiah.

To press the truth home to the young man of the reality of his sin and the absolute need for salvation, Jesus asks him if he has kept the Law of God, specifically the 'second' table of the Law. Why does Jesus reference just the second table? I think for two reasons. First, the young man will probably think of himself as being able to and having kept these laws. So, if you will, Jesus is taking the young ruler to where he feels most secure. Second, because it is the lesser table, in the sense that it speaks of what is commanded in terms of man's relationship to man. If these commandments cannot be kept, then there is no hope of keeping the commands that relate to God and the worship of Him, which, of course, is the case.

You see how, for Jesus, the key issue in every interaction he has, is to address the moral inability of anyone to know God apart from saving faith in him. It is as though nothing else mattered. But then, is that not the case? What does matter more than eternal life, through saving faith, and walking in loving obedience before God, in the strength of Christ?

The speed and certainty of the young man's response is striking. The Law of God engenders no fear in him at all. It speaks to his upbringing that he had been schooled that if he did the right things, he would have nothing to fear, and as he sees it, that is precisely where he is at in his life.

Those of us who are parents need to be careful that, as we instruct and encourage our children, we don't inadvertently instill in them a self-righteous attitude. They must know that they are sinners who have the glorious blessings and privileges that come with God's covenant promises.

Q1. When the young man used the word 'good,' what did he mean by it?

Q2. In challenging him in his use of the word 'good,' what was Jesus doing?

Q3. What care must be taken when instructing and encouraging children?

Tuesday - Luke 18:18-30 – Jesus looked at him and loved him.

The young ruler saw himself as living a righteously good life. Others saw him the same way; he had been elected a ruler after all. Yet he was not happy. The certainty he had about his keeping of the Law is absent when it comes to what he has to do to inherit eternal life, hence his initial question. And Jesus responds to that and does so in a way that shows his love for this young man. Mark tells us that “Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said to him...” (Mark 10:21). Isn't that beautiful? Jesus saw that the young man wasn't being arrogant in expressing that he had kept all the Law; he was just being honest in terms of what he had been taught and knew, and yet he had this sense of want in his life, which of course Jesus could see. When responding to people, we need to be mindful that we don't simply take what they say but that we hear the story behind the words. Sometimes we are too quick to write people off simply because they don't respond as we think they should, even when they ask for our help.

Jesus now answers the rich young ruler's initial question. Not that he is telling him that entry into heaven can be earned by making oneself materially poor. The instruction to sell all he has and distribute the money he gets from doing so among the poor goes to the heart of the matter. And note, it's not about the money, *per se*. Jesus is addressing the issue of who or what the young man is going to love. Eternal life is all always about love; it's about God's love for His people, seen in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it's about our responding in loving obedience to God.

The promise is clear - if he does what Jesus tells him, the young ruler will have treasure in heaven. And again, at the expense of repeating myself, there is no implied reward here; it is about the blessing of salvation and obedience to God. But the young man won't bend the knee, at least not at this point. He's too materially comfortable; life would be unimaginable with his wealth. So, he's choosing to trade the riches of eternal glory for the comfort of a life of ease on earth. Love cannot be engineered; it can only be experienced as a gift from God, and only when God opens the heart and mind to understand and receive His love will there be a response of love.

Jesus sees the sadness on the face and in the young man's demeanour and, turning to his disciples, makes the point that unless there is submission to God, it is impossible for a rich man, and for that matter anyone, to enter into eternal life.

- Q1. What was the young man's immediate response to what Jesus said?
- Q2. How did Jesus feel about the young man?
- Q3. Why is it difficult for those materially well-off to seek God?

Wednesday - Luke 18:18-30 – Who can be saved, and what is our reward?

The response to the conversation Jesus had with the young man is startlement. The disciplines look at each other, and then one of them asks if what Jesus has just said is true, and they believe that it is, “Then who can be saved.” And note, this is not just about whom among the rich can be saved; it is who can be saved in the sense of anyone. Jesus' answer leaves us in absolutely no doubt; salvation can only be, and only is, of God. But isn't that glorious because that which is humanly impossible is achieved because all things are possible with God. What an incentive for us to be going out with the good news of the gospel. We know that we cannot convince anyone to believe in Christ. It is just impossible to do so. But Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians that it has pleased God to save those who believe through the folly of the preached gospel. There is a power in the gospel to save, for, in the good news, there is a convicting agency and a righteousness of God that is revealed and received by faith. We have no power to do anything, but we have a gospel by the work of the Holy Spirit that can do everything.

What do we do with Peter's statement in verse 28? Is he seeking to self justify? In other words, is he saying, ‘since we did what you asked the young man to do, we must be saved?’ Or is he saying, ‘since we have left everything, families, and material goods to follow you, will we get a special inheritance in heaven?’ It is a statement putting out the idea that the more we do, the greater the reward. It must be the latter, given Jesus' response. Jesus doesn't contradict Peter, and he wasn't beyond doing so when he needed to (Matthew 16:23). He affirms the fact that God is a debtor to no man. Given what God has done, the idea of Him being a debtor to those whom He has reconciled to Himself in Christ is just astonishing. Surely every saved person would consider it a huge privilege to give up everything they have as a declaration of love to God in response. Yet Jesus states clearly that there are innumerable blessings that will be received in this life and eternity if we seek him with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. Here are some texts which speak to those blessings, first in terms of our relationships: Romans 16:13, 1 Timothy 1:2, 1 Timothy 5:1,2; and then concerning possessions: Psalm 37:16, Proverbs 15:16, Proverbs 16:8,16 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10. The bottom line is that the riches of knowledge, hope, peace, and contentment that we receive in Christ are far greater than any material wealth the godless may attempt to hold like sand in the palm of their hand.

- Q1. Who can be saved?
- Q2. What is our reward for receiving and then walking in obedient love to God?