

A Study in Luke

Week Twelve

Luke 7:24-8:8

Day One

24 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

v. 24 – Jesus asked a lot of questions when He taught. He was trying to help people come to conclusions using their own mind. He got them thinking, then He led them to the correct answer. Everyone must have known about John or else the lesson would have been irrelevant to some. As stated earlier, God can promote His messengers. They don't need to do it themselves. People had to make an effort to go and see John and the desert wasn't a pleasant place when they got there. What price are you willing to pay, where are you willing to go, to hear the word of the Lord?

v. 25 – There was nothing special about John or Jesus that would warrant special attention. They were worthy of attention because of their anointing. What they did, they did in the power of God. Remember what was written about Jesus:

Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him (Isaiah 53:1-2).

Do you look at the outer "packaging" or do you look for the content of the Spirit? You would be wise to look for the latter.

v. 26 – John had endorsed Jesus' ministry, although he was now questioning whether Jesus was "the One." Now Jesus returned the favor and endorsed John as a prophet in the tradition of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Prophets speak for God; they have insight into the things of God. They may speak specific factual information or they may share perspective on what the Lord is doing in their generation or in future generations. Prophecy can be abused and sometimes people may speak out of their own inspiration or understanding. That doesn't disqualify them from the prophetic. Our duties where the prophetic is concerned are outlined by Paul:

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:19-22).

You are responsible to judge everything that a prophet tells you and not receive it indiscriminately. You also must not despise prophecy if you have seen it abused. There is counterfeit money in circulation only because there is real money. The same holds true for prophecy.

Day Two

27 This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." 28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." 29(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was right, because they had been baptized by John. 30 But the Pharisees and experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

v. 27 – It is my opinion that everyone has a verse or passage from the Bible that defines his or her life's purpose. John's is found in this verse, which is from Isaiah 40:3. God helps you fulfill your purpose with supernatural power. Think of John. He lived in a remote area, wore strange clothes and had a stranger diet. Yet all of Israel came out to see him. Why? Because the Lord brought them out to see John. What do you do that when you do it, you sense the favor and pleasure of God? That is your purpose. For me it is to bring "order out of chaos" as portrayed in Genesis 1:2.

v. 28 – John was an "Old Testament prophet." Now Jesus was preaching the kingdom of God and those who entered were greater than John. By this, Jesus was pointing out the superiority of the new covenant that He was establishing in His name. Yet many today still try to return to the old covenant era of laws, sacrifices and the supremacy of Israel over the church of Jesus Christ. I don't want to go back to the old covenant; I want to live fully and completely in the new covenant, which is superior in every way to the old. If you doubt this, then re-read our studies from Hebrews.

v. 29 – The tax gatherers were considered the most corrupt men in Israel because they collected taxes from Jews to give to the Roman government. Yet they were not beyond the reach of God's mercy or message. There is no group today that is beyond the message, but the church still treats some like that. Probably homosexuals would take the place of tax collectors today. I am not endorsing homosexuality as a lifestyle or practice. I am simply saying that they are not untouchables as far as God's mercy is concerned.

v. 30 – People ask me all the time if it is possible to miss or reject one's purpose. I answer "yes" and I always refer to this verse. The Pharisees listened to John but refused to submit to baptism. They listened to Jesus and decided He deserved to die. I know my purpose because God wants all His servants to know His will for their lives. I accepted my purpose and have done my best to fulfill it in my generation. How about you? Is money, fear or a hard heart keeping you from accepting or fulfilling your purpose? If so, don't fret! Repent and turn around. Do what it is that God wants you to do.

Day Three

31 "To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? 32 They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other: "'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry.' 33 For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' 34 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners." ' 35 But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

v. 31 – As stated earlier, Jesus asked many questions when He taught and He also fielded questions. I try to take as many questions as possible to insure that people understand what I am saying. It is not enough for me to deliver my message for there are two parts to effective communication—speaking and understanding. I want to do all I can to insure that my listeners have grasped my message. Years ago I stopped using notes when I preach to keep me focused on God and on the people. When the people are done listening, then I should stop speaking. When God directs me to do something that I hadn't intended to say, then I don't need to be tied to an outline that I must finish.

vs. 32-34 – It's hard to please religious people when it comes to spiritual things. John was so strange that the leaders said that he was influenced by demons. Jesus was so natural that they felt that He had to be a sinner because He seemed to enjoy spending time with sinners. Do you know anyone who is impossible to please when it comes to things in church or of the Spirit? The music is too loud, or there aren't enough hymns, or we don't do enough for missions? Are you like that? If so, you need to "chill out" and repent. Who made you God's watchperson, overseeing the Kingdom to make sure it suits your standards?

People pray for revival, but then they want revival to come a certain way that they have preconceived in their minds. They want sinners to repent, but they don't want emotional displays, contemporary music or manifestations of the Spirit that make them uncomfortable. My role in the church is not to defend God, explain God, rationalize God or adjust God. My role is to obey God and yours is too.

v. 35 – I like to say that God is a "bottom-line God." What He does works. I try not to get hung up on technique, but on results. Jesus was saying that wisdom will produce "children" or results. I don't have to like everything that happens; it may not suit my personal preferences. But I must support everything that goes on that produces godly results, whether I like the means or not. When someone says, "God would never do *that*," they are saying that they know everything that God would do. I doubt that very much. Yes we search the Bible to understand or justify something, but when you search the Bible, do you find church buses, youth ministry, church buildings or liturgy? You do not because those things came about to fulfill the ministry of the church in this culture. So when someone looks at something and says, "That isn't in the Bible," I think they are missing the point. The Bible doesn't contain everything that God did or everything that He will do. It gave us an understanding of God's heart and we are then to apply that

loving heart to our own day to reach the sinners that Jesus loved to be with. Does this make sense? Do you agree or disagree? What are the dangers, if any, in what I just stated?

Day Four

36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

v. 36 – It was a distinct honor to be invited to someone's house to eat. This was a sign of fellowship, friendship and covenant. This is why Judas is described with shock and dismay:

Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me (Psalm 41:9).

When was the last time you had a meal in your home with an invited guest? The Bible urges us to practice hospitality.

v. 37 – It has been widely assumed that this woman was a prostitute, but the text does not bear this out. She was a sinful woman, of that we are sure. But we are not sure what her sins were. But it doesn't matter. We should all identify with this woman:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus (Romans 3:21-25).

Many feel that this alabaster jar was the woman's dowry, since this was expensive perfume. She poured out all she had on the man who had made her what she was and had delivered her from what she once was. I hope we never forget where we were when Jesus met and saved us. I owe Jesus everything and should be willing to pour it all out on Him.

By the way, I doubt if the woman broke the bottle, but rather only the seal on the bottle.

v. 38 – This picture makes me uncomfortable, not because of the woman, but because of my own hang-ups. She wet Jesus feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair! That is just too close for comfort and my tastes. But it's not what makes me comfortable when

people worship—it's all about Him! I don't know what Jesus had done for someone, so why should I set myself up as their judge? Also, many complain that some worship is too emotional? What is too emotional? Am I the judge of that? Are you?

v. 39 – The Pharisee didn't judge the woman—he judged Jesus! I have often done the same, wondering why God would do this or that for a particular person. What business is it of mine? But I make it my business. I would do well to heed James' words:

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? (James 4:11-12).

Lord, help me to mind my own business. Deliver me from a judgmental and critical spirit. I ask you to come and replace my hard heart with a heart of flesh that has compassion and mercy for others. I can't do that, Lord, but I give you permission to do that in me. I choose today to identify with the woman in this story and not the Pharisee.

Day Five

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41 "Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

v. 40 – Jesus always has something to say to us. Our response should be the same as Simon's: "Tell me!" Many people don't mind hearing what Jesus said, they just don't want it to be personalized to them and their situation. Does Jesus have something to say to you today? Are you open to whatever it is?

vs. 41-43 – Jesus always took real-life examples and applied them to the lessons at hand. These examples helped the listener understand. Jesus wasn't trying to embarrass His pupils, but rather to help them learn. Everything seemed to be a teaching opportunity for

Jesus. I teach regularly, but I am always trying to get better, using Jesus as my model. I have a long way to go.

vs. 44-47 – This woman loved Jesus much because her sins were great, or at least she was aware of how great a sinner she was. For that reason, she was also aware of her great need for God, which everyone has, even a man like Simon in this story. Yet Simon was smug and content in his relationship with God, which caused him to harshly judge this woman and Jesus. You might say that Simon was a bit self-righteous and complacent.

“For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm” (Proverbs 1:32-33).

But this woman was crying and pouring out her anguish on Jesus and Jesus wasn't upset or uncomfortable. In fact, Jesus seemed to be chastising Simon for his lack of hospitable touches—no feet washed, no oil for anointing, no kiss of greeting. So who really gave Jesus a better welcome—this woman or Simon?

v. 48 – Jesus spoke the most important words that He could speak—her sins were forgiven! Those words should mean a lot to you and me, for He has said them to us. But if you don't think you are that sinful, then you won't be overwhelmed by the grace of God as this woman was.

v. 49 – The guests weren't happy that this woman was set free from her burden of sin. They wanted to theologically dispute whether Jesus had the authority to forgive those sins. Remember what we said in an earlier study: The people knew more about Jesus and His mission than the leaders did. A spiritual leader is not perfect, not is that leader necessarily more spiritual than a follower. If you have put pressure on your leaders to be more spiritual than you, to hear from God for you, then you need to stop it! You are responsible for your walk with the Lord, not them.

v. 50 – We know that Jesus knew their thoughts, but He ignored their whining and complaining to maintain His focus on the woman. Do you need help keeping your focus? Are you concerned about your critics? Are you intimidated by what people are saying about your purpose, about what God wants you to do? Ignore them and watch Jesus! As you do, you will meet the needs of sinful people to the chagrin of the religious establishment. But serve God and not men and you will always have the correct focus.

Day Six

8:1 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

v. 1 – Jesus traveled from town to town, probably preaching the same message wherever He went. This could account for some of the variety in the four gospels. He could have varied His material while still keeping to the same themes. Notice that Jesus wasn't preaching the church, so to speak; He was preaching the kingdom of God. Someone once said if you preach the Kingdom, the result is the Church. If you preach the Church (a denomination or a particular doctrine), then the result is religion.

I like to substitute the phrase “the government of God” for “the kingdom of God.” Jesus preached God's government—God's absolute rule in your life that guides your money, business, relationships and thoughts. What does it mean that when you preach God's government, you get “the Church?” I joined my church not only because I like it and feel at home, but because Jesus has led me there and commanded me to be a part. That is an expression of His government. I will stay not because I like everything that goes on there all the time, but because I am a “kingdom man” and want to stay under Jesus' authority. Does this make sense? I stay at my church not only to help build that church but to build *the* Church of Jesus.

Do you go to Church regularly? Are you a committed member of a local body, even if you've been hurt in church before? Remember what the writer of Hebrews said:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

You must attend church because Jesus commands it, not because it makes you feel good. You go to church not because the doctrine there is perfect or that the leaders and people are perfect. You go because you are a member of God's kingdom and Kingdom people must attend a local fellowship.

v. 2 – Jesus traveled with a team and had a group of prominent women who traveled with Him as well. This had to be controversial! Women were not active participants in the religious life of Jesus' day, but He repeatedly included them in His ministry. Luke paid special attention to this aspect of Jesus' ministry. If Jesus' set such a trend where women are concerned, what has happened to the Church today? Why aren't women more prominently featured in the life of most Churches? I have often said that the Church has had to build itself without utilizing the gifts of more than half its members.

v. 3 – These women had some money of their own and they were using it to minister to Jesus and His team members. Do you have some money of your own? Are you faithfully using it to minister to Jesus and His ministry team? If not, why not? Some of the women went with Jesus because of all that He had done for them to heal and deliver them from their infirmities. I owe Jesus everything. That is why I try to go where He wants me to go whenever He wants me there—I want to serve Him out of love, not out of duty.

Day Seven

4 While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: 5 "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds of the air ate it up. 6 Some fell on rock, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown." When he said this, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

v. 4 – People came looking for Jesus from all over. They didn't know where they would find Him or how long they would stay. They didn't even know if He would be teaching when they got there—they just came in faith. The people were desperate for a touch from God so they walked, some of them a long distance.

vs. 5-7 – Jesus told stories called parables. Usually the details of a parable aren't that significant, for a parable is structured as a story with a moral or lesson. The lesson is usually the most important aspect and not the specifics of the story itself. In this case, Jesus went on to explain the details, which we will look at in the next study. But unless Jesus explained the details of a parable, you probably don't need to examine the details that closely. Rather find the overall lesson and make that your focus for any parable.

Jesus always drew His parables from real-life situations with which the listeners could relate. He also made His listeners think and seek God for clarity, something many weren't ready or willing to do. Jesus had to be observant of all that was around Him, working to draw lessons from what He saw in everyday life. Jesus was aware of His environment, what people were thinking and what people truly needed. Oh yes, He was also aware of His Father, only doing and saying those things that the Father commanded. Are you in touch with your surroundings? Can you draw spiritual lessons to share with others from everyday life? If not, then get in touch with Jesus, the master Teacher. Ask Him to help you see and understand, and then ask for help to put it into words.

v. 8 – Jesus said on several occasions, "If you have ears, hear what I am saying." Just because someone is listening doesn't mean he or she understands. Spiritual hearing takes work and indicates an open heart and willing mind to do what is learned. Do you have ears to hear? Can you examine the hard sayings from God to find their meaning for you and others? My first book was entitled, *Life is a Gold Mine: Can You Dig It?* I wanted to point out that you must work hard to get at the things of God that are sometimes buried or obscured.

I often ask people several days after they have heard me speak what I spoke about. I want to see if they heard me and if they are still thinking about what I said. If they can't tell me, then I question whether I did a good job teaching. People so clearly remembered what Jesus said that they could write about it 30 years after He said it as evidenced by the gospel accounts.