

A Study of Luke's Gospel
Week Twenty-Three
Luke 14:28

Day One

28 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' 31 "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? 32 If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. 33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.

vs. 28-30 – These next two stories were told after Jesus said, “And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.” So these stories must help explain what Jesus meant when He said that. And once again, Jesus goes to real life situations to help explain spiritual truths. As we have said before, Jesus was in touch with every day life and drew on those lessons to help people understand what God required of them.

Someone building a tower will first sit down and estimate whether he has the money to finish the tower. We must also determine whether we have the resources to finish the job as a disciple of Jesus. It is not those who start but those who finish who are followers of Jesus. The letter to the Hebrews was written to Jews who had begun to follow Jesus but were considering a return to Judaism. The writer spent a lot of time encouraging them to finish “building the tower,” so to speak. Are you finding out how much it costs to follow Jesus now that you have begun? Finish your journey with Him and don't give up.

vs. 31-33 – Then Jesus added another explanation to these two stories: His disciples must give up everything they have. Do you have what it takes to give up everything for Jesus? If not, it is better not to begin to follow Him and then back off. I am not sure anyone understands what it means to give up “everything” when that person gives their life to Jesus. People ask me all the time if I am afraid with all the traveling I do. My standard response is: “I gave my life to Jesus on May 18, 1973. I didn't loan it to Him; I gave it to Him. If he chooses to claim that life on a plane, in a foreign country or in my bed at home, that is none of my business.”

When I started to follow Jesus, I didn't know I would travel to some dangerous places. But I don't make the decision to go when the invitation comes, the decision to go was made on May 18, 1973. By God's grace, I want to finish what I began in 1973. Help me, Lord, to finish building my tower.

Day Two

34 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

v. 34 – Jesus referred to His followers as salt in Matthew’s gospel:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (Matthew 5:13).

Salt was used both as a flavoring and preservative in Jesus’ time. But if salt loses its “saltiness,” it was and is useless. And there is no way to replenish or refurbish salt. Once it is ruined, it is useless.

Keep in mind once again that Jesus shared this in the context of giving up everything to be His disciple. One cannot keep the name of salt (or Christian) and be ineffective. The usefulness isn’t in the name, but the essence of what it is to do and be. As believers we are to give up everything for the sake of the Kingdom. I think of two directives that will allow us to maintain our saltiness. How are you doing in these two areas?

1. **Missions** – Do you pray, give or go? Are you supporting or actively involved in preaching the gospel to all nations? If not, then your saltiness may be limited. Remember what Jesus said: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20),
2. **Teaching** – Are you involved in teaching others what you have learned, what God has worked in you? The writer of Hebrews wrote: “We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil” (Hebrews 5:11-14).

Are you teaching? Are you involved in missions efforts? If not, then I would say that your salt isn’t what it should be. Salt exists to benefit others, not for its own sake. Does your existence benefit others? Does your relationship with the Lord benefit others? If not, what can you do about it?

v. 35 – Do you have ears? Do you want to do the will of God? Then you should hear. You may want to go to Revelation and read what the Spirit says to those who have ears. The references are Revelation 2:1,11,17,29; 3:6, 13, 22.

Day Three

15:1 Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. 2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." 3 Then Jesus told them this parable: 4 "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? 5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders 6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' 7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

v. 1 – The sinners loved to listen to Jesus and many of them repented and turned to God. This was Jesus purpose: to seek and save the lost. He said that a physician doesn't come for the well people, but the sick. Do sinners like to be around you? Do you like to be around sinners?

I wonder why the tax collectors weren't included among the sinners; they received a special mention. From what I know, the Jews had a special hatred for these tax collectors, for they collected money for Rome and enriched themselves in the process. The Pharisees would not receive money for the poor if they knew that it came from the tax collectors, for their money was viewed as "unclean." Yet this group of men, whom society hated, came to hear Jesus and He welcomed them.

v. 2 – The Pharisees muttered when the sinners came to Jesus. Is there anyone muttering about what you are doing for God? If not, why not? If you aren't making someone unhappy in your service to God, then you have to question whether you are doing enough for Him. You shouldn't do things just to get people angry, but you should do things for God whether or not you make everyone happy.

Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe (Proverbs 29:25).

Don't be afraid of men who criticize you. Do what God wants you to do.

v. 3-6 – As was His custom, Jesus told a parable in response to the muttering of the Pharisees. This time He borrowed a story from the world of sheep herding. And of course the story made sense, for any good shepherd would try to find one lost sheep and be happy when he found his lost property. This is a touching analogy that mirrored Jesus' ministry. He had "taken off" from heaven in search of God's lost sheep. He did

not apologize for doing that, and indirectly rebuked the Pharisees for not doing the same. Are you seeking any lost sheep?

v. 7 – Jesus then made a factual statement based on what He knew from firsthand experience. Heaven rejoiced greatly over the recovery of one person who repents from their sin. Jesus did not endorse the sin of those who were listening to Him. Heaven did not turn a blind eye to sin, but rather reached out to sinners and rejoiced when they turned to God. You and I can make heaven happy as we help turn sinners back to God. I hope a party breaks out in heaven today because of the work that you do. Heaven doesn't rejoice when you read your Bible or pray. Heaven rejoices when you cause more people to read their Bible and pray.

Day Four

8 "Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' 10 In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

vs. 8-10 – Jesus told another parable to reiterate the joy in heaven when sinners turn from their sin to serve God. Did you ever lose something in your house, but you knew that it was somewhere? You conducted a diligent search and when you found it, you were happy. That is the analogy that Jesus used to identify the process of seeking and saving sinners.

It isn't enough that we befriend sinners. We must allow God to use us to turn them back to Him. Are there any sinners in your life with whom you have a relationship—from work, school or neighborhood? Why not make a list of who they are, and begin to pray for them regularly. Then make an effort to get with them every now and then, for coffee, to play a game or just to talk. See if the Spirit of Jesus won't help you do what He did—find them and bring them home to God. What have you got to lose?

Don't overlook any group with which you are not particularly fond—homosexuals, atheists and ethnic minorities. Do the work that Jesus did and feel the joy of heaven when you do.

Remember, repentance is the goal. But only God can give someone the ability to repent—it is a gift. Your graciousness toward a sinner doesn't condone what they do, but it is an expression of God's kindness that will hopefully lead them to repent.

God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might *give* repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel (Acts 5:31-32 emphasis added).

Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will *grant* them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim 2:25-26, emphasis added).

Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? (Romans 2:4).

Repentance literally means to turn and move in the opposite direction. That is what God wants every sinner to do and that should be our desire as well, not in judgment and condemnation, but in the love of God.

Day Five

11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. 13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! 18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' 20 So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. 25 "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 27'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' 28 "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. 29 But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' 31 "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

vs. 11-32 – Today we have one of the finest stories that Jesus ever told. Many have used the parable of the prodigal son as a teaching tool, and the story has taken on a life of its own outside the Bible. As we have said many times, Jesus was a magnificent teacher.

I decided not to break this story down into parts today, but rather to have you read it in its entirety. Remember that Jesus told this story in the context of the Jews not welcoming sinners and Gentiles into God's kingdom. They thought they had "exclusive rights." So we can easily see that the older brother could be Israel, the prodigal anyone who is far away from God who wants to come back, and the father represents our heavenly Father. What lessons do you see in this story? How can you apply those lessons to your life? What does this story tell you about God's grace and how we should respond to it, especially when we see it working in the lives of other people?

Day Six

16:1 Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. 2 So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' 3 "The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg- 4 I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' 5 "So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6 "Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. "The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' 7 "Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' "A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. "He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' 8 "The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. 9 I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings."

v. 1-9 – Once again I am hesitant to break up this story into a verse-by-verse analysis. A parable should be looked at in its entirety unless Jesus Himself broke it down by explaining the specific details. What is the lesson of this story? The first thing that I notice is that the Lord told this to His disciples, so the lesson applies to His followers only. The unjust steward was wise in the ways of, well, unrighteousness—if there is such a concept! He knew how to use his position and skill to win the favor of those with whom he worked.

How much more should we be wise to use what we have to build ourselves friends among men and eternal rewards? Are you using your gifts, money and time to prepare your place in eternity? If not, you should be. Just as a worldly manager uses position and power to improve his lot, so should you be using all that is at your disposal to win favor among men and with God. I think the lesson is as simple as that. Verse 9 sums this

up for us. Use the natural things you have to build up heavenly returns. I think this lesson is related to what Jesus said in Matthew:

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:19-21).

Does this make sense to you? Do you agree or disagree with my interpretation? If you agree, are you doing all you can do to lay up treasure in heaven? Are you as wise with spiritual things and opportunities as this unjust steward was with his business dealings?

Day Seven

10 "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. 11 So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? 12 And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?"

v. 10 – I know of no more important verses for leaders and disciples than these three verses. These three statements are simple and straightforward, but profound. The first statement is the key to how you will handle much is how you are now handling a little. Are you punctual? Do you pay your bills on time? Do you keep your word? Do you do your job thoroughly? If you think that what you are doing is insignificant and “beneath” you, or that you will do better when you have something more important to do, then you are mistaken.

The issue here isn't your quality of work, but your trustworthiness. Can people and God trust you to do everything to the best of your ability with excellence? If so, then God will promote you. If not, then you have a roadblock to success that you must remove.

v. 11 – How you handle money is the second key to promotion and success in God's kingdom. Are you honest in your business and personal monetary affairs? Do you pay your debts? Your bills? Do you give to the work of the Lord? Money, according to Jesus, is an indication of how you will handle “true riches.” What are true riches? I think they are spiritual opportunities and open doors for ministry. How you handle your money will determine how God uses you to advance His kingdom on earth.

v. 12 – The final key to promotion and success is how you handle someone else's property and that includes someone else's money. One time I had used paper clips, tablets and other office supplies where I worked. One day I sensed the Lord strongly prompt me to write a check and send it to our financial office to pay for what I had used (well, let's be honest: what I had stolen!). I did so and learned a valuable lesson. I had to treat others' stuff better if I wanted to stay out of trouble with God.

How about you? Do you have any books or tools long overdue to their owner? Do you treat your employer's property like it is your own? There is a verse in Corinthians that speaks to these three keys:

“The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:46-47).

God uses natural things to train and test us before He gives us spiritual assignments. He did this with Moses, Joseph, David, Daniel, Jesus, and Peter. If those men were trained for great things through natural situations, then you and I will be as well.

Don't overlook these three principles and expect God to use you. Rather renew your commitment to be faithful in these areas and in time you will see God promote and use you. Ignore them and risk being left on God's bench as He puts more faithful players in the game of life.