

Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws

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Chapter 3 Discussion

Parables from the Underside (pgs. 37-58)

Biblical Foundations Luke 8-9

Opening Prayer

Creator God, your gift of imagination allows us to spin stories that reveal your surprising ways and proclaim your astonishing love. As we read and reflect on stories your Son told, may your Spirit grant us, through Jesus' ancient words, new insights into your reign and new understandings of how you call us to respond. Amen.

The Parable and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Read Luke 18:10-14

- What about this story most interests, surprises, and puzzles you?
- As we learned in session 2, Pharisees were respected as righteous observers of God's law. Tax collectors in the first-century Judea were widely regarded as traitors to their own people, collecting more money than Rome demanded and pocketing the extra.
 - How does this information affect your understanding of this story?
 - How does the context in which Luke places the Parable (verse 9) influence your understanding of it?
 - If Jesus were telling this story today, who would be in the roles of the Pharisee and the tax collector, and why?
- Describing religious hypocrisy, which many who claim no religion cite as a problem. Hamilton writes, "I've found the problem isn't that religious people sin... The problem is that religious people are blind to their own sin but are far too willing to communicate their judgement of the sins of others" (Luke pg. 42).
 - Do you agree?
 - Why or why not?
 - How does this align with your own experience?
 - Does this story of the Pharisee and the tax collector illustrate Luke's theme of "lifting up the lowly? If so, how? If not, why not?"

The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Read Luke 15:11-32

- Why do you think the younger son asks for his share of the inheritance?
- Why do you think the father grants the younger son's request?
- What prompts the younger son to return home to his father?
- Do you think the son's confessions of sin is sincere? Why or why not?
- What is surprising about the father's response when his son returns home?
- How much does the sincerity of his son's confession matter to the father?
- How much should it matter to us? Why?
- Why does the older son refuse to go into the house?
- Do you think the father's words to him persuade him to join the celebration? Why or why not?
- Do you identify more with the prodigal son or the older brother in this parable? Why?
- How does Jesus's parable relate to your experience of God's grace?
- Does this story illustrate Luke's theme of "lifting up the lowly"? If so, how? If not, why not?

The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

Read Luke 16:19-31

- What about this story most interests, surprises, or puzzles you?
- Why do you imagine the rich man failed to help Lazarus?
- How much, if at all, do the reasons for this failure matter?
- Abraham says, "a great crevasse" exists in death between Lazarus and the rich man.
 - How could the man have crossed this gap in life?
 - How do or how could you cross the gap between those who are rich and those who are poor in your own life?
- Why does Abraham say the rich man's brother would not have believed someone who returned from the dead?
- What does Abraham's statement tell us about how Luke saw Jesus's relationship to Israel's history with God?
- "The consequences of the rich man's disregard for Lazarus in life have eternal significance," write Hamilton (Luke, pg. 54).
 - What eternal significance, if any, do you believe regard and disregard for those like Lazarus has? Why?
- Hamilton shares some examples of how his congregation shares with those in need.

- What examples from your own lives or congregations could you offer?
- Does this story illustrate Luke's theme of "lifting up the lowly?" If so, how? If not, why not?

Closing

We are encouraged to ask two questions about each of these parables.

- Which character are you in this parable?
- What does Jesus want you to know, think, or do in response to this parable?

Closing Prayer

By your grace and power, Lord Jesus, may the stories of our lives conform always more closely to the story of your life, death, and resurrection. Make us living parables, that others may experience your love through us. Amen.