

GH 07 July

July 1 W — Reading 131 — Matt. 8:19-22; Luke 9:57-62

Matthew 8

¹⁹ And a scribe came up and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.”
²⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”
²¹ Another of the disciples

said to him, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”²² And Jesus said to him, “Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.”

Luke 9

⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”
⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”
⁵⁹ To another he said, “Follow me.”
But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”⁶⁰ And Jesus^[fn] said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”
⁶¹ Yet another said, “I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home.”
⁶² Jesus said to him, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”

ESV Footnote
(9:60) Greek *he*

Follow, but ... — Luke presents all three encounters with potential followers of Christ. Each one of them presents problems involved in being a full follower of Jesus. The first one was a volunteer: “*I will follow you wherever you go*” (Luke 9:57). Matthew tells us that he was a scribe, a teacher of the Law, but he addressed Jesus as his superior, “*Teacher*.” He was an exception to the majority of scribes who criticized, resisted, and rejected Jesus. The response he received from Jesus, however, was basically, “Wait a minute. Are you ready? Do you want to be homeless like Me? Okay, follow Me but count the cost.” Being homeless is a drastic and undesirable condition. Still willing? In this first encounter, it was “Follow, but consider...” The second man was already a disciple (Matt. 8:21) but Jesus challenged him with the command, “*Follow me*.” In this case, the man’s “but” was family. His father was apparently old or near death. Jesus’ response sounds insensitive but He was emphasizing that even family is not as important as following Him wholeheartedly. For this man, Jesus said that it was more important for him to “*go and proclaim the kingdom of God*” (Luke 9:60). Following Jesus involves recognizing and shifting priorities. The third man also had a following problem that involved his family. He wanted to say goodbye. Jesus’ response, however, showed that this man was not interested in a brief family farewell but would have a hard time letting them be in second place. In Jesus’ farming illustration (“*No one who puts his hand to the plow...*”), the verb for “*puts*” is in a Greek tense indicating a single action, which corresponds to commitment. But the verb tense for the farmer who “*looks back*” indicates a continuing action—always looking over his shoulder. That is divided commitment. Paul said, “*But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:13-14). Do you see yourself in any of these examples? Is something holding you back from being fully committed to following Jesus? Are there costs you haven’t been willing to pay? ...discomforts you are not willing to endure? ...family that draws you away from complete obedience?

July 2 Th — Reading 132 — John 7:11-31

¹¹ *The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "Where is he?"* ¹² *And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, "He is a good man," others said, "No, he is leading the people astray."* ¹³ *Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him.*

¹⁴ *About the middle of the feast Jesus went up into the temple and began teaching.* ¹⁵ *The Jews therefore marveled, saying, "How is it that this man has learning, [fn] when he has never studied?"* ¹⁶ *So Jesus answered them, "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me.* ¹⁷ *If anyone's will is to do God's[fn] will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.* ¹⁸ *The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood.* ¹⁹ *Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"* ²⁰ *The crowd answered, "You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?"* ²¹ *Jesus answered them, "I did one work, and you all marvel at it.* ²² *Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.* ²³ *If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?* ²⁴ *Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."*

²⁵ *Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, "Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?"* ²⁶ *And here he is, speaking openly, and they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Christ?* ²⁷ *But we know where this man comes from, and when the Christ appears, no one will know where he comes from.* ²⁸ *So Jesus proclaimed, as he taught in the temple, "You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.* ²⁹ *I know him, for I come from him, and he sent me."* ³⁰ *So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come.* ³¹ *Yet many of the people believed in him. They said, "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"*

ESV Footnotes

(7:15) Or *this man knows his letters*

(7:17) Greek *his*

Mass Confusion — Jesus presented a very solid position in the midst of the confusing ideas of the crowd that saw Him teaching in the temple. He had caused a stir among those who had seen Him heal and teach on previous visits to Jerusalem. Rumors of His healing and teaching ministry in Galilee had certainly reached their ears as well. They were first confused regarding His arrival—would He come? (v. 11). Then, they were confused about the quality of His character—was He a “good man” or was He “leading the people astray”? (v. 12). They were also confused about His education—how did He get his “learning … when he has never studied?” (v. 15). The crowd was confused about whether the Jewish authorities were seeking to kill Him or not (v. 25). There was also confusion about where the Messiah was to come from (v. 27). In contrast to this confusion, Jesus was certain. He knew the source of His teaching; it was “*his who sent me*” (v. 16). He knew that He was not seeking His own glory but that of the Father (v. 18). He knew who wanted to kill him (v. 19). He knew when “*his hour*” would come in the perfect timing of the Father (v. 30). Hopefully, we also present a picture of calm, understanding stability when the crowd around us are struggling with questions or circumstances. When the world was paralyzed with fear during the COVID-19 pandemic, many Christians reflected the peace they had because of their knowledge of and relationship with Christ.

Meditation: Take some time to evaluate your attitudes as you reflect on this statement of Jesus: “*The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood*” (v. 18). What is the authority behind the things you believe and say? Are you depending primarily on your own knowledge or reasoning ability? Are you aware of what the Scriptures say about the subjects you discuss? Are you reflecting the thinking of the world in contrast to what the Bible teaches? Is the impression you make on others more important to you than pointing them to God? Are you seeking your own glory or His?

July 3 F — Reading 133 — John 7:32-52

³² *The Pharisees heard the crowd muttering these things about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.* ³³ Jesus then said, “I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. ³⁴ You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come.” ³⁵ The Jews said to one another, “Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? ³⁶ What does he mean by saying, ‘You will seek me and you will not find me,’ and, ‘Where I am you cannot come?’”

³⁷ *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.* ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as^[fn] the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

⁴⁰ *When they heard these words, some of the people said, “This really is the Prophet.”* ⁴¹ Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “Is the Christ to come from Galilee? ⁴² Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” ⁴³ So there was a division among the people over him.

⁴⁴ Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

⁴⁵ *The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, “Why did you not bring him?”* ⁴⁶ The officers answered, “No one ever spoke like this man!” ⁴⁷ The Pharisees answered them, “Have you also been deceived? ⁴⁸ Have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹ But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” ⁵⁰ Nicodemus, who had gone to him before, and who was one of them, said to them, ⁵¹ “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” ⁵² They replied, “Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee.”

ESV Footnote

(7:38) Or *let him come to me, and let him who believes in me drink.* As

“No one ever...!” — I am impressed by the Levite temple police sent to arrest Jesus in order to stand before the governing Sanhedrin. The officers were more spiritually sensitive than the authorities who sent them. They were under orders but they apparently wanted to please God even more. They didn’t barge through the crowd to capture this teacher but they stopped to listen and were captured by Him. After some time, they returned to the chief priests and Pharisees. Why empty handed? Because “*No one ever spoke like this man!*” (v. 46). They were so right. Jesus was both God and man. He was the most perfect teacher possible. They had listened without closed-ears prejudice against the truth. That is the way we ought to approach the Bible. It is God’s Word—really! No one ever wrote like this before or after. We should not come to it to find answers to questions someone has asked. Rather, we should stop to listen to its truth, to let it sink into our minds and hearts, and to let it change us gradually into the likeness of Christ.

July 6 M — Reading 134 — John 7:53 – 8:11

John 7

^{53 [fn]} [[They went each to his own house,

John 8

¹ but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. ³ The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst ⁴ they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" ⁶ This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷ And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." ⁸ And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰ Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."]]^[fn]

ESV Footnote

(7:53 and 8:11) The earliest manuscripts do not include 7:53-81; others add the passage here or after 7:36 or after 21:25 or after Luke 21:38, with variations in the text

Sin No More — This passage seems to describe an actual event in the life of Jesus but it was apparently not written by the Apostle John, since the manner of writing is different than the rest of the Gospel and some ancient manuscripts even place it in the Gospel of Luke. It was written very early, however, and looks like an eyewitness account. One interesting statement in this story is Jesus' conclusion: "Neither do I condemn you; go and from now on sin no more." Obedience is to follow forgiveness. We are not forgiven just to avoid punishment for our sins; we are forgiven and given a clean sheet to write the next episode in the story of our lives. We must put that sin behind us—learn from it but don't let it burden us with guilt or bondage! When sin is discovered, it brings shame and destroys reputations and relationships. Even undiscovered sins produce guilt, regret, and mar our self-image.

July 7 Tu — Reading 135 — John 8:12-20

¹² Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." ¹³ So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." ¹⁴ Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶ Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father^[fn] who sent me. ¹⁷ In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸ I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." ¹⁹ They said to him therefore, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also." ²⁰ These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

ESV Footnote

(8:16) Some manuscripts he

The Light of the World — This is the second of seven “*I am*” statements in John’s Gospel: “*I am the light of the world*” (v. 12). He said it again later in John 9:5. The prophet Isaiah predicted this coming messianic light: “*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone*” (Isa. 9:2). In his first chapter, John gave this summary about Him: “*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it*” (1:5). Much later in the book of Revelation, John describes the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, which “*has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb*” (Rev. 21:23). The Lamb is the lamp. At that time, Jesus will supply the general light for the whole city but at His first coming, He was the light of the world in a different sense. He provided light for those who were willing to follow Him: “*Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life*” (John 8:12). That is the kind of heavenly light we have today as we walk in this transitional time between His first and second comings. Are you walking in the light? Later, John commands us in his letter, “*...walk in the light, as he is in the light*” (1 John 1:7). We walk in the light as we think about God, pray to Him, live in conscious obedience to His commands, and soak up the words of His Scripture. As we do that, we will reflect His light and become lights in this world to attract and guide others to Him.

July 8 W — Reading 136 — John 8:21-30

²¹ So he said to them again, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.” ²² So the Jews said, “Will he kill himself, since he says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?” ²³ He said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.” ²⁵ So they said to him, “Who are you?” Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. ²⁶ I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” ²⁷ They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” ³⁰ As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

Who Are You? — Jesus revealed three important things about Himself in this passage. The first is who He is. The unbelieving Jews asked, “Who are you?” (v. 25). He had told them “*from the beginning*” that “*I am he...*” This response reached back to God’s appearance to Moses at the burning bush when He identified Himself as the “*I AM*” (Ex. 3:14), connecting to the name Yahweh. The identity of Jesus is that He is God; He was sent by the Father to earth. What is our identity? If we are born again, we are children of God, a part of His family. We need to know who we are and be encouraged and empowered by it. Secondly, Jesus revealed what He heard, “*just as the Father taught me*” (v. 28). He did not rely on human knowledge, understanding, or reasoning; He communicated only “*what I have heard from him*” (v. 26). We have a similar source for what we share—the Bible. In it, God has given us all that we need to know about Him, about life, and about what we should tell others. We should always check what we have to say with what God has already said about the subject. The more familiar we are with Scripture, the more our sharing with others will be true and right. The third thing Jesus disclosed about Himself here is what He did: “*I always do the things that are pleasing to him*” (v. 29). In order for us to live like that, we first need to know what pleases God. It would be a good practice to have a place in your journal where you can accumulate statements in the Word of God that express what pleases God. After knowing what pleases Him, then we need to have the desire to do it. That is a big step but it is the effort a true disciple of Jesus is willing to make.

Meditation: There is a puzzle in this passage that should be considered. Jesus said that “unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins” (v. 24). That seems pretty clear—that avoiding the penalty of dying as a sinner requires prior belief in Jesus. However, Jesus also told these people that “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin” (v. 21). His “going away” looks ahead to His death, resurrection, and ascension. But why would they then seek Him? Would they seek for His physical body? Or, is this speaking of spiritual seeking? If spiritual, then why would God not respond to them positively? God had promised sinning Israel that “you will seek the LORD your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 4:29). Won’t God always respond to the repentant sinner? There is a window for the opportunity of grace that must be accepted when it is offered. Wisdom spoke in Proverbs about people who “will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD...” (Prov. 1:28-29). Isaiah warned, “Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6). The people Jesus spoke to were apparently like the dead rich man who futilely appealed to Abraham for mercy (Luke 16:24). It was too late.

July 9 Th — Reading 137 — John 8:31-59

³¹ So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” ³³ They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

³⁴ Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave^[fn] to sin. ³⁵ The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶ So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷ I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸ I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father.”

³⁹ They answered him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, ⁴⁰ but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹ You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.” ⁴² Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³ Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵ But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶ Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷ Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”

⁴⁸ The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

⁴⁹ Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰ Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹ Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” ⁵² The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ ⁵³ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” ⁵⁴ Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’^[fn] ⁵⁵ But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I

keep his word.⁵⁶ Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."⁵⁷ So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"^{[fn] 58} Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am."⁵⁹ So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

ESV Footnotes

(8:34) Greek *bondservant*; also verse 35

(8:54) Some manuscripts *your God*

(8:57) Some manuscripts *has Abraham seen you?*

True Believers — At the end of our previous reading, the result of Jesus' teaching was that "many believed in him" (John 8:30). Yet, at the beginning of this reading, Jesus presented a challenge for "the Jews who had believed him" (v. 31)—it was an explanation of what true-believing involves. The first characteristic of true believers is that they "abide in my word." What does that mean? Must we memorize it and quote it all day? Jesus gives us a later clue by suggesting that one who abides in His word "keeps my word" (v. 51). That is obedience. First, we have to *know* what God's Word says, and then we need to *obey* what it says. Another characteristic of a true believer is not only to read the Word of God but to also be one who "hears the words of God" (v. 47). This goes deeper than just hearing audibly; it is hearing with spiritual sensitivity. We know that these Jews who confronted Jesus did not hear in this way because He told them, "you are not of God" (v. 47). When an unbeliever reads the Bible, it is mostly an intellectual exercise, but when one is born again, it becomes a living, personal book. One result of abiding in God's Word is that it "will set you free" (v. 31) from practicing sin (v. 34), which is also a characteristic of true believers. Yes, we sin occasionally but we do not continue to practice sin; it does not become a part of our lifestyle. A true believer has a personal relationship with God, which is broken through sin. We feel guilty and God separates Himself from fellowshipping with us. Jesus said that a third characteristic for a true believer is loving Him ("you would love me"—v. 42). We want to be together with the God who loves us and has saved us. This is not an intellectual relationship but an intimate one. Are you a true believer? Have you really surrendered your life to God? Have you asked for His Spirit to dwell within you? Have you been changed?

Matthew 11

²⁰ Then he began to denounce the cities where most of his mighty works had been done, because they did not repent. ²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ²³ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. ²⁴ But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

Luke 10

¹ After this the Lord appointed seventy-two^[fn] others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. ² And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' ⁶ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. ⁷ And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. ⁸ Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' ¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, ¹¹ 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' ¹² I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

¹³ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴ But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. ¹⁵ And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

¹⁶ "The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

ESV Footnote

(10:1) Some manuscripts seventy; also verse 17

Kingdom of Peace — Jesus had sent out the twelve disciples earlier on a similar mission (Matt. 10); now He sends out 72 other disciples. In both situations, they were given the power to heal people but not much is said about the content of their message, except that it was kingdom oriented. The message of the Twelve was to be, “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matt. 10:7). The basic message of the 72 was, “*The kingdom of heaven has come near*” (Luke 16:9, 11). It was a kingdom that involved anticipation; better things were about to come. Jesus had sent them “*into every town and place where he himself was about to go*” (v. 1). They were Jesus’ advance teams; when He came, He would tell them more. This kingdom of God was also a kingdom of peace: “*Peace be to this house!*” (v. 5). Each team was to seek to stay with an individual who could be described as “*a son of peace*” and their peace was to “*rest on him*” (v. 6). This was not a mission of force where people were pressured to submit, like in Islam and Hinduism today; Jesus was sending them out “*as lambs in the midst of wolves*” (v. 3). They were to be more like victims than victors. It was a message of peace about a kingdom of peace. When that kingdom had more fully come at Pentecost, the message remained the same. Even today, we are to be as gentle as lambs in presenting the gospel of anticipation and peace. It is a message of future hope that can be experienced in this life and will extend throughout eternity. Others can see the peace we exhibit in our lives and desire it for themselves.

Matthew 11

²⁵ At that time

Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.^[fn] ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

ESV Footnote

(11:26) Or for so it pleased you well

Luke 10

¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" ¹⁸ And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹ Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. ²⁰ Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

²¹ In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.^[fn] ²² All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

²³ Then turning to the disciples he said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! ²⁴ For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it."

ESV Footnote

(10:21) Or for so it pleased you well

Surprised by Joy — C. S. Lewis wrote a delightful book with a double-meaning title, "Surprised by Joy," referring to discovering both a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and marriage to a lady named Joy, breaking his long bachelorhood. One could apply the same title to our passage for today. Jesus had sent out the 72 disciples in teams with the power to heal the sick (Luke 10:9) but they "returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!'" (v. 17). No comment is recorded about their reaction to healing the sick or the response to proclaiming the nearness of God's kingdom. Why the joy over casting out demons? Judging by Jesus' comment about seeing Satan fall from heaven, the disciples were apparently surprised that they had power over the devil. That is, indeed, a surprising and wonderful power but Jesus put it in perspective by

saying that their salvation was even more wonderful: "... rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (v. 20). How joyful are you about being saved? Is it really more joyful to you than anything else in life that brings you joy? King David declared, "in your presence there is fullness of joy" (Psa. 16:11); the prophet Jeremiah said that "your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16); and Habakkuk vowed, "I will rejoice in the LORD; I will take joy in the God of my salvation" (Hab. 3:18). There is nothing greater for us than salvation; let us rejoice in that today!

July 14 Tu — Reading 140 — Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ *And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"* ²⁶ *He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?"* ²⁷ *And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."* ²⁸ *And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."*

²⁹ *But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"* ³⁰ *Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead.* ³¹ *Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side.* ³² *So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.* ³³ *But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.* ³⁴ *He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.* ³⁵ *And the next day he took out two denarii^[fn] and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'* ³⁶ *Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"* ³⁷ *He said, "The one who showed him mercy."* *And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."*

ESV Footnote

(10:35) A denarius was a day's wage for a laborer

"What Shall I do?" — The lawyer (scribe), an expert in the Law of Moses, began with a good question but he was not sincere. His question about what he should do to inherit eternal life was a trick question: he came to Jesus "to put him to the test" (v. 25). The lawyer's emphasis was on doing—defining how to earn one's salvation. Jesus' do-this answer (v. 28) was to love God and others wholeheartedly. Further insincerity of the lawyer was shown in his second question: "who is my neighbor?" (v. 29). He wanted to know who was exempt from his love. Who was it that the Jews loved least? It was the Samaritans, who were half-breeds racially and religiously. So, Jesus told a parable featuring a Samaritan who knew how to genuinely love others. He then backed the lawyer into a corner by asking him, "[Who] proved to be a neighbor...?" (v. 36). The lawyer was trapped and had to admit that the good neighbor was the Samaritan but he couldn't even bring himself to say it directly, calling the Samaritan, "The one who showed him mercy" (v. 37). Jesus concluded the lawyer's works-focused question with, "You go, and do likewise." What shall you and I do? The same things: love God wholeheartedly and show practical love to others, even those we may consider to be enemies. We cannot earn salvation by doing but in obeying these commands to love, we show that we have been saved.

July 15 W — Reading 141 — Luke 10:38-42

³⁸ *Now as they went on their way, Jesus^[fn] entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.* ³⁹ *And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his*

teaching.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." ⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things,⁴² but one thing is necessary.^[fn] Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

ESV Footnotes

(10:38) Greek *he*

(10:42) Some manuscripts *few things are necessary, or only one*

Urgent vs. Important — Charles Hummel was the president of a Christian college who wrote a significant booklet in 1967 called, "Tyranny of the Urgent." In it, he said, "Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important." I wonder if he had Martha in mind? Martha was a good woman. She invited Jesus to her house to entertain Him and to serve a special meal. That was her thing—she was hospitable. Blissful Mary, however, seemed to have a different temperament. She was a devotional learner. She showed her love for Jesus by listening to His teaching. There is no indication in this passage that Mary was upset about anything, and Jesus supported what she her decision. She was focused on what she loved. The problem for Martha was that her specialty was bigger than she was; she needed help and it caused frustration. Many of you identify with Martha because you have a similar temperament, but you also need to be corrected by Jesus. There should be a balance between doing and resting, between serving and learning. We need to have not only a things-to-do list but also a things-to-learn list. We should set aside a special part every day to spend devotional time with God in prayer and reading His Word. That is both urgent and important.

July 16 Th — Reading 142 — Luke 11:1-13

¹ Now Jesus^[fn] was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." ² And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread,^[fn]

⁴ and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation."

⁵ And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves,⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; ⁷ and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? ⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence^[fn] he will rise and give him whatever he needs. ⁹ And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹ What father among you, if his son asks for^[fn] a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; ¹² or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

ESV Footnotes

(11:1) Greek *he*

(11:3) Or *our bread for tomorrow*

(11:8) Or *persistence*

(11:11) Some manuscripts insert *bread, will give him a stone; or if he asks for*

The Object of Prayer — Earlier in Jesus' teaching about certain aspects of prayer, He suggested a very similar prayer form (Matt. 6:9-13) as what we read today. Here, the disciples specifically ask Him, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1). There is more involved than the content of a prayer; there is also teaching about the Father to whom we pray. He is the object of prayer. First, the prayer shows us the *holiness* of God: "*hallowed be your name*" (v. 2). God is to be recognized and treated with honor and reverence. He is our friend but far more than our pal. We worship Him as our Creator and Savior. Secondly, this passage teaches us about the *willingness* of God. In contrast to the reluctant friend of the midnight visitor, God is eager to help us. The command for us to continue to ask, seek, and knock (v. 9) is not because of God's unwillingness but because of our lack of persistence. We are to be like the knocking midnight friend but God will not be like the reluctant sleeper with the bread. Keep on praying! The third thing we learn about God here is His *goodness*. As an earthly father would not give a bad substitute to his children, so God wants to give only "*good gifts*" to us (v. 13). When we pray, our object is often only on what we ask for. Please remember that the more important object of our prayer should be the one to whom we pray—the holy, willing, and giving God.

July 17 F — Reading 143 — Luke 11:14-36

¹⁴ Now he was casting out a demon that was mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke, and the people marveled. ¹⁵ But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons," ¹⁶ while others, to test him, kept seeking from him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and a divided household falls. ¹⁸ And if Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are safe; ²² but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoil. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

²⁴ "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and finding none it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' ²⁵ And when it comes, it finds the house swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there. And the last state of that person is worse than the first."

²⁷ As he said these things, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed!" ²⁸ But he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation. It seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

³³ "No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore be careful lest the

light in you be darkness. ³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

Repeated Teaching — Several lessons in today's reading were also taught at earlier times and in different circumstances. Jesus was now on His way to Jerusalem to face the Passion Week. The first lesson followed the healing of a mute man (Luke 11:14) and the charge against Jesus that He was casting out demons by Beelzebul. Earlier, the same charge and teaching followed His casting out a demon from a mute and blind man (Matt. 12:22-37; Mark 3:20-30). Both showed that God's spiritual kingdom had come to earth. The second repeated information in Luke (11:29ff) was about people seeking a cosmic sign to prove Jesus' messiahship (cf. Matt. 16:1-4). Something greater than Solomon and Jonah had come to them and they didn't recognize the many miraculous signs that accompanied it. That should remind us that we need to be careful not to miss what God is showing us because we are concentrating too much on what we expect to see. The third repeated teaching was about the hidden vs. the displayed lamp (Luke 11:33ff compared to the earlier Matt. 6:22-23). This reminds me of a song I learned as a child: "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine ... Hide it under a bushel, No! I'm going to let it shine..." We have the indwelling light of God's spiritual kingdom and the world around us needs to see it to expose their sinfulness and to point them to the truth of eternal life.

Meditation: Luke shares some additional information we might want to think about—the return of a cast-out demon (Luke 11:24-26). Why was it that the demon was "seeking rest" but "finding none"? Does this suggest that a demon cannot enter a person's body without being "invited" in some way? Why was the freed person still open to the demon's return after his/her "house" had been cleaned? Does that suggest that something was lacking in being "swept and put in order"? Is your "house" safe from demonic activity? In what ways might you be leaving the door open for Satan to promote his will? What does your "sweeping" include? How constant is it? How thorough is it?

July 20 M — Reading 144 — Luke 11:37-54

³⁷ *While Jesus^[fn] was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table.* ³⁸ *The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner.* ³⁹ *And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.* ⁴⁰ *You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?* ⁴¹ *But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.*

⁴² *"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.* ⁴³ *Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces.* ⁴⁴ *Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."*

⁴⁵ *One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also."* ⁴⁶ *And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers.* ⁴⁷ *Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed.* ⁴⁸ *So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs.* ⁴⁹ *Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,'* ⁵⁰ *so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,* ⁵¹ *from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation.* ⁵² *Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."*

⁵³ As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

ESV Footnote
(11:37) Greek *he*

Warning Woes — Jesus was not politically correct. He insulted the Pharisee who invited Him to his house for a meal. When the religious lawyers (scribes) complained about those insults, Jesus insulted them as well. This Holy Guest was not being mean; He was giving them desperate warnings that they were in trouble with God. He alerted the Pharisees about how unclean they were on the inside while they concentrated on external things like ceremonial washing of hands, tithing to the smallest detail, and wanting to be recognized as righteous by others. Jesus warned the lawyers about not helping others with the burdens they heaped upon them, hindering them from understanding God's true requirements for salvation, and having criminal attitudes toward truly godly people. Before we adopt Jesus' insulting approach, however, we need to remember that He knew the hearts of those He warned; we do not. We do need to point all people to the truth of God's Word, however. We can alert them to what God says about a particular subject of conversation. For example, one topic we often hear discussed reveals the common impression that a person gets to heaven by doing good things. We can point them to the rules set by the Maker of heaven—that He saves us, “*not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy*” (Tit. 3:5). Woe to those who think they can earn their way to heaven!

July 21 Tu — Reading 145 — Luke 12:1-12

¹ In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.

³ Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.

⁴ "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. ⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell."^[fn] Yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies?^[fn] And not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

⁸ "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, ⁹ but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

ESV Footnotes
(12:5) Greek Gehenna
(12:6) Greek two assaria; an assarion was a Roman copper coin worth about 1/16 of a denarius (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

Public Speaking — The fear of speaking before many people is something that almost all of us have experienced at some point in our lives. My first such speech ended as an embarrassing and dreadful

failure, even though it had been written out, practiced, and somewhat memorized in advance. It is about that kind of atmosphere that Jesus spoke when He instructed His disciples: “*do not be anxious about ... what you should say*” (v. 11). We are often paralyzed by fear when trying to speak to someone about faith in Christ. In those situations, it would be helpful to remember Jesus’ promise that “*the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say*” (v. 12). Don’t panic! Trust that the thoughts that come to your mind are being given by God. We should only panic when we are limited to our own thoughts and words. Relax, God is with us!

There is another kind of public speaking mentioned in this passage: “*...what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops*” (v. 3). This is also a fearful potential. Do you say things in private, with family or close friends, that you would never say in public? If you knew that you were being recorded by a Christian magazine for the next 24 hours, would it change the way you spoke privately? The statement that Jesus made was in the context of hypocrisy. We are being hypocritical if we are looser in our private language than we are before others. Picture yourself being recorded all day today and see if it doesn’t change the way you say things in private.

July 22 W — Reading 146 — Luke 12:13-34

¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." ¹⁴ But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or arbitrator over you?" ¹⁵ And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." ¹⁶ And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, ¹⁷ and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸ And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹ And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." ²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

²² And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! ²⁵ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?" ^[fn] ²⁶ If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ^[fn] yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! ²⁹ And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. ³⁰ For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. ³¹ Instead, seek his^[fn] kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

³² "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

ESV Footnotes

(12:25) Or a single cubit to his stature; a cubit was about 18 inches or 45 centimeters

(12:27) Some manuscripts Consider the lilies; they neither spin nor weave

(12:31) Some manuscripts God's

“Tell my brother...” — This is an interesting situation. If this man wanted Jesus to speak to his brother, his brother was likely also in the crowd. Which brother was wrong? The older brother was apparently withholding deserved inheritance from his brother but we don’t know the circumstances. The younger brother was brash enough to reveal the family’s dirty laundry in front of a crowd. From Jesus’ response to him, it seems like He knew that this man’s heart was filled with covetousness and greed. Jesus placed our desire for things against what is more important. First, He spoke of our relationship to things in this earthly life: *“one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions”* (v. 15). That is a lesson for our own time and culture as well. Life is not about things. Relationships are more important than things, especially our relationship with God. Seeking His kingdom is also more important than things (v. 31). Later, Jesus has us look at our possessions with an eternal perspective: *“Provide yourselves ... with a treasure in the heavens...”* (v. 33). Obediently doing God’s will accumulates treasure in heaven. One example is provided: *“give to the needy”* (v. 33). Give in order to get treasure! Wow, does that ever seem opposite to the attitude of our culture today! Do you dare to assess your own life’s values? What is most important to you in life? Be honest! What can you do today to add to your heavenly bank account?

July 23 Th — Reading 147 — Luke 12:35-48

³⁵ *“Stay dressed for action^[fn] and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶ and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those servants^[fn] whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! ³⁹ But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he^[fn] would not have left his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”*

⁴¹ Peter said, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?” ⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant^[fn] whom his master will find so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

ESV Footnotes

(12:35) Greek *Let your loins stay girded*; compare Exodus 12:11

(12:37) Greek *bondservants*

(12:39) Some manuscripts add *would have stayed awake and*

(12:43) Greek *bondservant*; also verses 45, 46, 47

Be Prepared! — The Boy Scouts of America was formed in 1910 with the motto “Be Prepared,” which was defined by the founder as meaning that “you are always in a state of readiness in mind and body to do your duty.” Jesus taught a similar subject in today’s reading, where two kinds of servants were told to be prepared. The first was the servants in general, who were prepared by being ready for action (v. 35) and being awake (v. 37) while waiting for their master’s return. Jesus identified the anticipated master as being “*the Son of Man*” (v. 40) at His Second Coming. Are you

prepared for His Coming? Hopefully, you are waiting in expectation of a sure thing instead of wondering about an apparent endless delay. Are you spiritually and morally “awake” as you wait, being obedient as true believers? Peter then asked Jesus if He was speaking only about the Twelve or about everyone. Although it seems like Jesus didn’t answer him, He somewhat did by going on to describe another kind of servant—a leader servant, like Peter and the other apostles would be. He would be a “*faithful and wise manager ... set over his household*” (v. 42). The focus on this kind of servant is not only on being prepared but on actually “*doing*” (v. 43) while waiting. How he treated the servants under him showed the level of his faithfulness. Has God placed you in a position of responsibility in your family, job, or church? How are you treating them? Are you meeting their needs? (v. 42). Hopefully, you are not using your position to take advantage of them in order to indulge yourself (v. 45). Jesus is coming again but we don’t know when and we will be surprised when it happens (v. 40), so it is futile to speculate about the timing. In the meantime, we need to concentrate on being faithful, whether we are followers or leaders.

July 24 F — Reading 148 — Luke 12:49-53

⁴⁹ “*I came to cast fire on the earth, and would that it were already kindled!*” ⁵⁰ “*I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how great is my distress until it is accomplished!*” ⁵¹ “*Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division.*” ⁵² “*For from now on in one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three.*” ⁵³ “*They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.*”

Anticipating Death and Division — Telling His disciples about “*the Son of Man ... coming*” (Luke 12:40) may have reminded Jesus of what He had to endure to complete His first coming. He was already distressed, even weeks before His prayer on the night of His arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. He was going to be “*baptized*” with suffering and death. As painful as it would be, He looked forward to its completion. The Greek verb in “*...until it is accomplished!*” (v. 50) is the same one He used later from the cross, declaring triumphantly, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). He looked forward to death, not for the negative experience, but for the positive effect that it would produce. We all have had less dramatic similar experiences. We have gone through the often-painful process of school in order to gain the result of a diploma or degree. We may have endured an unpleasant period of time working in a job position in hopes of being promoted to a desired kind of work. Are you in some difficult process right now? Can you see the good result waiting at the end? Pain is often followed by reward and God promised that He would see to it that “*all things work together for good*” for His saints (Rom. 8:28). The second painful future event that Jesus anticipated was the division His death would cause. People were already divided about Jesus but it would be multiplied greatly after His death and resurrection when the Church was formed. That division would be felt most painfully in the family. How could the Prince of Peace be the one to bring division? Jesus does bring peace internally to those who submit to Him but because of the rejection of the majority, He ends up also bringing “*a sword*” (Matt. 10:34) that divides people. Is there a division in your family because of faith? You feel the pain. Those family members who are still outside the household of faith are not hopeless. Keep praying for them! Keep loving them! Keep showing them what real life is all about!

July 27 M — Reading 149 — Luke 12:54-59

⁵⁴ *He also said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens.*” ⁵⁵ *And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens.*” ⁵⁶ *You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?*

⁵⁷ "And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ As you go with your accuser before the magistrate, make an effort to settle with him on the way, lest he drag you to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the officer, and the officer put you in prison. ⁵⁹ I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the very last penny." ^[fn]

ESV Footnote

(12:59) Greek *lepton*, a Jewish bronze or copper coin worth about 1/128 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

Why "Hypocrites"? — It seems strange that Jesus would call this crowd of people hypocrites because they could interpret the "earth and sky" but not "the present time." The Merriam-Webster dictionary has two definitions for a hypocrite: 1) one who puts on a false appearance of virtue, and 2) one who acts in contradiction to personal beliefs or feelings. Jesus seems to suggest that the people in this crowd considered themselves to be good interpreters. They could clearly see the outcome of a "cloud rising" and a "south wind" but they were overlooking the evidence of the kingdom of grace being brought by Jesus with the judgment of God coming at the end. The blessing of the shower is like the grace shown in the many miracles of healing that Jesus performed; the blazing heatwave following the south wind is like the punishing torment in hell. They were apparently hypocrites because they pretended that they didn't see Jesus' teaching and miracles as evidence of the promised Messiah. Why would they pretend? It must have been because they didn't want to believe it. They saw the evidence of God but dismissed it as having another cause. We see that today as our world refuses to accept the possibility of the miraculous. They must explain it by science or attribute it to chance. The psalmist David said, "*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork*" (Ps. 19:1). How will those displays be interpreted? The hypocrite says that it happened by chance.

July 28 Tu — Reading 150 — Luke 13:1-9

¹ There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

⁶ And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' ⁸ And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹ Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

"Unless you repent..." — Two stories are related here that emphasize repentance. The first involved a murder; the second was an accident. The first was in a religious environment; the second was in a secular one. Both were tragedies and both involved deaths. A common belief in those days felt that tragedies were God's punishment for particular sins but Jesus refuted that emphatically—"No, I tell you..." Those were not worse sinners. But Jesus broadened for all people the responsibility for repentance when He said, "*unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.*" The *call* is for repentance; the *warning* is of judgment. News about Pilate's murderous attack had come from Jerusalem and Jesus was headed for Jerusalem, so He then moved from speaking of the *decision* of repentance to telling a parable about the *fruit* of repentance. In this parable, the vineyard seems to represent all of

Israel, with the fig tree being Jerusalem; God is the vineyard owner, while Jesus is the vinedresser. For three years, the call for repentance had been going out, first from John the Baptist and then from Jesus. Now, Jesus was returning to Jerusalem to cultivate and fertilize for the tree's final chance to produce fruit, which would prove futile. Does your "tree" show the "fruit" of true repentance? Your willingness to spend time each day reading and thinking about the Word of God is some evidence of fruit. How about your reaction to being criticized by a friend? Do you show the fruit of repentance then? How do you respond when your finger gets caught in a closing door? Is the "fruit juice" of repentance squeezed out then? Inspect the quality of your fruit as you go through your day today. You may need to ask Jesus for more fertilizer.

July 29 W — Reading 151 — Luke 13:10-21

¹⁰ Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. ¹² When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." ¹³ And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? ¹⁶ And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" ¹⁷ As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

¹⁸ He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? ¹⁹ It is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches."

²⁰ And again he said, "To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? ²¹ It is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, until it was all leavened."

A Hypocritical Coward — Does it upset you when people don't do things "right," i.e., the way you do them? We often develop our own standards about how things ought to be done. The ruler of the synagogue in this story was like that. He had bought into the Pharisees' redefinition of the Mosaic Law, adding their own traditions to "clarify" the Law of God. God said that the Sabbath was to be a non-working holy day and the Pharisees intricately defined what "work" meant. I am sure that "healing" was not even on their list of work forbidden on the Sabbath but this ruler had no trouble including it. He was *"indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath"* (v. 14). Although his opposition was against Jesus, he indirectly scolded Him by warning the crowd not to come for healing on the Sabbath. He was too much of a coward to accuse Jesus directly, perhaps fearful of His recognized unusual power and authority. The ruler's indirectness was matched by Jesus' direct rebuke, calling him and those who sided with him, *"hypocrites"* (v. 15). Jesus revealed their hypocrisy by how they would untie their farm animals to lead them to water on the Sabbath, certainly more "work" than touching a bent woman. God's rules are pretty clear and we need to obey them but we can avoid His rebuke by resisting the urge to insist that other people do other things according to our own developed personal "rules." We must recognize the difference between precepts and preferences.

Meditation: Let's look at the great contrasts that Jesus presented in His argument against the hypocrisy of the synagogue ruler. He showed that there was a big difference between the value of the woman vs. the animals, humans vs. animals, and a chosen *"daughter of Abraham"* vs. ordinary

people. The animals' need was only for water; she needed relief from a painful, disabling condition. She was afflicted for 18 years; the animals were thirsty for less than one day. There was Satan's evil bondage of the woman vs. a single rope for the beasts. We are of great value to God and He loves and cares for our needs.

July 30 Th — Reading 152 — John 9:1-7

¹ As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" ³ Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴ We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." ⁶ Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud⁷ and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

Sent to Sent — There is a lot about being sent in this short passage. First, is the Sent One, Jesus, who spoke of "him who sent me" (v. 4). Then, we have the command of Jesus when he sent the blind man to wash his eyes: "Go, wash..." (v. 7). Finally, there is the pool of Siloam "which means Sent." It is interesting that the Greek translation of the Hebrew Siloam is not just "Sent" but literally, "the one having been sent." It somewhat ties together the other two ideas of sending. In a sense, the pool could be thought of as echoing that name when the blind man was sent there by Jesus: "the pool of the sent one." But it could also be seen as being named for the heaven-sent Jesus: "the pool of the Sent One." We are sent ones, too. His command to us is, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). Although he was not promised to be healed if he washed in the pool, he obeyed in faith and was healed. We, also, should be obedient in faith, even if we are not promised what will happen as a result. We might not have a pool named after us but wouldn't it be nice if our children would add this on our tombstone: "the sent one"?

Meditation: How about the disciples' idea that the cause of the man's blindness was either his sin or the sin of his parents? There was a strong desire to attach blame for suffering. If the man were to be blamed for his blindness, since he was born blind, he would have had to commit the sin before he was born, which is ludicrous. On the other hand, if it were one or both of the parents who committed the sin, the child would also have to suffer unfairly as a part of their penalty. Another human theory debunked! Occasionally, there was likely an apparent connection between sin and suffering, like when Jesus told the healed lame man at another pool, the Pool of Bethesda, "Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you" (John 5:14).

July 31 F — Reading 153 — John 9:8-12

⁸ The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" ⁹ Some said, "It is he." Others said, "No, but he is like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." ¹⁰ So they said to him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" ¹¹ He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed and received my sight." ¹² They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Your Story — I love the simplicity of this man as he explained what had happened to him. People had noticed the change—the blind man could now see. They asked him what happened and he told them the facts: "Jesus made mud ... anointed my eyes ... said ... 'Go ... wash' ... I went ... washed ... received my sight." It is appropriate to apply that to our spiritual encounters with people around us.

When you meet Jesus and He changes your life, people notice it. They wonder and sometimes ask, "What happened to you?" That is your opportunity to share your story. It doesn't have to be long or profound or theological. It can be as simple as, "I surrendered my life to Jesus, determined to follow and obey Him, and He changed me so that I am a different person on the inside." Notice that after sharing the basics of what happened to the blind man, the people had another question, "*Where is he?*" As we will see in our next reading, their motives were questionable but they wanted to know more. Some people will also want to know more about what happened to us and about the One who changed us. Do you have "your story" ready to share? It would be good to write it out, maybe a longer version and a shorter one. Peter tells us to be ready, "...*always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you*" (1 Pet. 3:15).