

October
ABC — Chronological Bible (Back to the Bible format--2018)

October 1 — Luke 1, John 1:1-14 — **Questioning God.** We move today from a chronological reading of the Old Testament to do the same with the New Testament, encountering events roughly in the order in which they occurred, after a gap of over 400 years. Two people in this opening New Testament passage had questions for God. In a sense, they were both the same, asking, “*How ...?*” There are significant differences between them, however. After being told that Zechariah and his wife would have a son in their old age, Zechariah’s question was, “*How shall I know this?*” (Lk. 1:18). It sounds like an innocent question of ignorance but Gabriel’s reply and his 9-month punishment of muteness, show that he apparently questioned God’s ability. Gabriel said, “... *you did not believe my words*” (v. 20). Mary’s question had a very similar form: “*How will this be, since I am a virgin?*” (v. 34). This was not a question of unbelief, however, but a question for information. After Gabriel explained how the miracle was to be accomplished, Mary accepted it in faith, submitting to the process: “*let it be to me according to your word*” (v. 38). God can handle our information questions, but He recoils at our questions of unbelief. Remember that as you communicate with God in prayer this week.

October 2 — Matt. 1; Luke 2:1-38 — **The Christ.** We are so accustomed to hearing the term “*Jesus Christ*” (Matt. 1:1) that we tend to lose the significance that “*Jesus*” is the name and “*Christ*” is more of a title. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew word for “*Messiah*,” meaning “*anointed*,” and refers to the much-predicted and long-awaited divine Savior (e.g., Psa. 2:2; Isa. 9:6-7). When the shepherds were visited that night by an angel of the Lord, they were informed that a Savior was born, “*who is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11). The announcement was that the Messiah had arrived. At the manger, the shepherds “*made known the saying ... concerning the child*” (Luke 2:17), which was that “*Christ the Lord*” had been born. That is why “*all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them*” (v. 18)—the Messiah had finally come. That fact was confirmed soon after by righteous Simeon who took the baby “*in his arms and blessed God*” (v. 28), saying that the promise to him had been fulfilled that “*he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ*” (v. 26). Like Mary, he held the Messiah. In a different way, we hold Him in our hearts.

October 3 — Matt. 2; Luke 2:39-52 — **The King.** There are two very different kings mentioned in our reading for today. The wicked, scheming murderer, King Herod (Matt. 2:1), was called “*king of Judea*” in Luke 1:5. The divine Son of God was called the “*king of the Jews*” (Matt. 2:2). Notice that when the wise men came from the east looking for Him, it was because they had “*come to worship him*” (v. 2). Worship a king?! Yes, it was both unusual and significant. Even Herod recognized the divine quality of this searched-for King when he asked the scholars, “*where the Christ was to be born*” (v. 4). He connected this King with the divine “*Christ*” or “*Messiah*” that we read about yesterday. This Messiah-King, at the age of 12, suggested his divinity when He asked his searching parents, “*Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?*” (Luke 2:49). He called God “*my Father*.” The “*king of the Jews*” was God.

O worship the King all-glorious above, O gratefully sing his power and his love: Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days, Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise. — Robt. Grant (1833)
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October 4 — Matt. 3; Mark 1, Luke 3 — **Be Silent!** Jesus commanded silence twice in Mark 1. The first was to the unclean spirit in a man who attended the Capernaum synagogue. The evil spirit cried out, “*I know who you are—the Holy One of God*” (v. 24). That very public statement was true but Jesus commanded the spirit, “*Be silent, and come out of him!*” (v. 25). It was Jesus’ general practice

that He “*would not permit the demons to speak*” (v. 34) and the reason given was, “*because they knew him*” (v. 34). We are not told why Jesus didn’t agree with that free advertisement, and there have been many suggested reasons, but we know that the demons obeyed Him. The other command to be silent was given to a leper who was healed. Jesus “*sternly charged him ... say nothing to anyone ... But he went out and began to talk freely about it*” (vv. 43-45). The leper did not obey, probably because he didn’t understand the reason Jesus wanted him to be quiet about the greatest thing that had ever happened to him. The result of his verbal enthusiasm, however, reveals a reason for Jesus’ command for silence: “*... Jesus could no longer openly enter a town ...*” (v. 45). We also may not understand the reason for every command to us in Scripture but we must remember that God knows what is best. Let’s just do it and perhaps the reason will become obvious later.

October 5 — Matt. 4; Luke 4-5; John 1:15-51 — **Who are you?** The question the Pharisee leaders twice asked John the Baptist was, “*Who are you?*” (John 1:19, 22). John mostly told them who he was *not*, including, “*I am not the Christ*” (v. 20). A very similar, but resentful question was asked about Jesus by the Pharisees: “*Who is this ...?*” (Luke 5:21). Jesus had just said to the paralyzed man lowered through the roof, “*your sins are forgiven you*” (v. 20). His accusers were right on target when they asked, “*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” (v. 21). Answer: No one! But Jesus was “*God alone*”! The demon in Capernaum knew it and said, “*I know who you are—the Holy One of God*” (Luke 4:34). Satan knew it and challenged Jesus with temptations, saying, “*If you are the Son of God ...*” (Matt. 4:3, 6). John the Baptist knew who Jesus was (“*... this is the Son of God*”—John 1:34), and he declared it to others (“*Behold, the Lamb of God ...*”—v. 29). If someone asks us, “Who are you?” we could respond, “I am not the Christ but Christ is living within me!”

October 6 — John 2-4 — **Signs.** The subject of signs is mentioned six times in these chapters. The first miraculous sign that Jesus did in the northern territory of Galilee was changing the water into wine (2:1-11) at Cana. He then went to Jerusalem for the Passover feast and performed many miraculous signs there (2:23; 3:2). Returning to Cana for his second sign performed in that area, he remotely healed the dying son of an official from Capernaum (4:46-54). These signs for some people were crowd-drawing entertainment but for others, they were needed as evidence to authenticate the person and message of Jesus. Nicodemus acknowledged that “*no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him*” (3:2). The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus to prove that He had the authority to cleanse the temple of merchandizers by asking, “*What sign do you show us for doing these things?*” (2:18). Jesus expressed concern about those seeking signs: “*Unless you see signs ... you will not believe*” (4:48) but still, “*many believed in his name when they saw the signs ...*” (2:23). Christians do not need to see miraculous signs from God, and we do not need to seek them. When they do come, however, in answer to prayer or as an expression of God’s grace and love for us, we rejoice in His power and loving concern.

October 7 — Mark 2 — **A Forgiving Spirit.** I was struck by the forgiving spirit of Jesus in this chapter. It begins with His surprising statement to the paralyzed man who was let down through the roof: “*Son, your sins are forgiven*” (2:5). He could have shown His power and concern for his physical needs by just saying, “*rise, pick up your bed, and go home*” (v. 11) but He chose to focus on the man’s spiritual needs. He also showed His forgiving spirit by eating with “*many tax collectors and sinners*” (v. 15). The scribes criticized Him because that appeared to be an inappropriate association but Jesus said, “*I came ... to call ... sinners*” (v. 17). He was also forgiving by not requiring His disciples to fast during His earthly ministry (v. 18). Finally, He was forgiving in letting His disciples “harvest” and eat grain as they walked through a field on the Sabbath, saying, “*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*” (v. 27). I have a hard time being that forgiving. How about you? Would you be forgiving toward four men who took apart your roof? (Jesus was “*at home*”—vs.1.) Are you willing to hang out with obvious sinners in order to deal with their spiritual needs? Probably all of us ought to be more driven by forgiveness.

October 8 — John 5 — **The Father's Son.** Jesus ruffled the feathers of the Jewish leaders who were criticizing Him for healing the invalid at the Pool of Bethesda and telling him to carry his bed on a Sabbath day (5:10). He said, "*My Father is working until now, and I am working*" (v. 17). Their response was to seek to kill Him "*not only ... [for] breaking the Sabbath, but ... [for] calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God*" (v. 18). That would be blasphemy—unless it were true. Then, as if He were intentionally irritating them, He called God "*the Father*" 13 times in the next 28 verses and referred to Himself as "*the Son*" ten times, capping it off with "*the Son of God*" (v. 25) and "*the Son of Man*" (v. 27). This was not only a unique son; it was *the* unique Son! Jesus didn't back down from accusers nor did He back down from the truth. We should also be bold in declaring that Jesus was much more than a good man or even a prophet; He is the Son of God. Some of the people who challenge us will persist in their attitudes, like those Jewish leaders whom Jesus described as not having "*his word abiding in you*" (v. 38) nor "*the love of God within you*" (v. 42).

October 9 — Matt. 12:1-21; Mark 3; Luke 6 — **The Blasphemy.** There is a statement in Mark 3:29 that has disturbed many people: "... *whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.*" There have been some Christians who have feared that they may have committed this "unforgivable sin" in the past. Also, I have heard preachers give their own ideas about what constitutes this sin (e.g., never receiving Christ) but that is not what Jesus said here. This sin is mentioned in Matthew 12:31 and in Luke 12:10 but only Mark offers a clear description of what it is. Here, the sin-statement is followed immediately with the connecting clue: "... *for they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit'*" (Mark 3:30). As the ESV Study Bible points out clearly, this sin has been committed "if a person persistently attributes to Satan what is accomplished by the power of God." The context of Jesus' definition was preceded by the statements of the opposing scribes from Jerusalem: "*He is possessed by Beelzebul*" and "*by the prince of demons he casts out the demons*" (v. 22). No person who is now sincerely following Christ has ever committed this "unpardonable sin" because if they had, they would have no interest in knowing Jesus.

October 10 — Matthew 5-7 — **Shining Your Light.** Jesus gave a command for us to "*let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works ...*" (5:16). That is the approval for publicly showing good works. Yet, later, He warned us to "*Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them ...*" (6:1) or not to be like hypocrites who pray publicly or fast openly that they "*may be seen by others*" (vv. 5, 16). Those statements criticize the public display of good works. The difference, it seems to me, is that of motive. The first one is in the context of persecution by enemies (5:10-11) where one might be tempted to hide the fact that they are Christians in order to avoid persecution, so we should be open about it. The second is in the context of a religious community of people who might be impressed with your commitment and sacrifice, so we should play down displaying before them the good that we do. There is another hint to a motive in 5:16 with the addition of, "*so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" The motive there is wanting to see God glorified, rather than us.

October 11 — Matt. 8:1-13; Luke 7 — **Faith in Jesus.** There are three people in our reading for today who possessed great faith. The leper who met Jesus said, "*Lord, if you will, you can make me clean*" (Matt. 8:2). He had faith in Jesus' *ability*. The centurion from Capernaum was the greatest example of faith according to Jesus (v. 10). Being a man with authority over others, he understood the chain of command, and told Jesus, "... *only say the word, and my servant will be healed*" (v. 8). He had faith in Jesus' *authority*. The third person was the sinful woman who wept on Jesus' feet and "*loved much*" (Luke 7:47) because she was forgiven much. Jesus said to her, "*Your faith has saved you ...*" (v. 50). She had faith in Jesus' *forgiveness*. Jesus is still great in ability, in authority, and in forgiveness, and much more. Whatever we need, we can trust Him to help us. Nothing is impossible with God.

October 12 — Matt. 11 — **Refusing Evidence.** As we read yesterday, so we read today, that John the Baptist had some doubts about Jesus, even after he “*heard ... about the deeds of the Christ*” (Matt. 11:2). Was this really the One? In response, Jesus sent word back to John, pointing to His deeds: “*Go and tell John what you hear and see*” (v. 4). The deeds were the evidence Jesus assumed would prove to be enough for John. There were three whole cities, however, that were denounced by Jesus “*because they did not repent*” after seeing “*most of his mighty works*” (v. 20). Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum just to the north of the Sea of Galilee had seen all the evidence they needed in order to acknowledge that Jesus was from God but they refused. In fact, Capernaum became Jesus’ primary place of residence after leaving Nazareth. Several of Jesus’ disciples came from Bethsaida and others from Capernaum. These places knew about Jesus and His ministry. They had heard His teaching and seen His miracles, but they still refused to believe. Do you know people who claim that they would believe in God if they could see some clear, concrete evidence of His existence? They are probably people like those in northern Galilee who wouldn’t believe even with the evidence. The problem is not with evidence but faith.

October 13 — Matt. 12:22-50; Luke 11 — **Woe to you, too!** The political climate in America and in the Philippines is quite similar right now (2018). Each has a strong leader in power who is being bitterly attacked by the opposition. I was reminded of this as I read today about the opposition of the lawyers and Pharisees to Jesus. Their overall purpose in following Jesus around was because they were “*lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say*” (Luke 11:54). They were not only criticizing His words; they also criticized His actions. When Jesus first arrived at the Pharisee’s house who invited Him, he “*was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner*” (v. 38) in keeping with a ceremonial tradition. Jesus, being no respecter of persons, rebuked his host three times by declaring, “*Woe to you!*” for the hypocritical practices of the Pharisees as a group (vv. 42-44). Then, the lawyers (scribes) were offended as well, saying, “*Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also*” (v. 45). Doesn’t that sound just like our modern easily-offended political climate?! In response, Jesus also gave them three woe-statements for their hypocritical actions (vv. 46, 47, 52). Are you easily offended by others? We should each check our “hypocritical quotient.” Are we being critical of others when we hide similar faults? Woe to us!

October 14 — Matt. 13; Luke 8 — **Enduring Fruit.** I was interested today in Jesus’ description of the makeup of what might be considered the visible church today. Jesus called it “*the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 13:24). Who are those people who sit around you in church every Sunday? Are they all part of God’s kingdom or not? It may be hard to tell. Someone may be like the seed that fell on rocky ground that “*endures for a while*” (v. 21)—*temporary* believers. Others may be like the seed threatened by “*the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches*” (v. 22)—*fair-weather* believers. Some may be look-alike “weeds” that won’t be revealed for who they really are until harvest time (v. 26). The key to recognizing the difference is the “fruit.” For one, “*it proves unfruitful*” (v. 22), and for another, it “*bore grain*” (v. 24). Our job in the church, however, is not to be so much fruit inspectors as it is to be plant nurturers. Our attitude and action toward some of these people may help bring them into that vital relationship with Jesus that we enjoy. We should obey God by doing good things to all church-goers around us, like loving them (John 13:34), instructing them (Rom. 15:14), showing care (1 Cor. 12:25), comforting (2 Cor. 13:11), being kind (Eph. 4:32), admonishing (Col. 3:16), doing good (1 Thess. 5:15), and encouraging them, all for this purpose: to “*build one another up*” (1 Thess. 5:11).

October 15 — Matt. 8:14-34; Mark 4-5 — **Beggars.** Yesterday, we read in Luke about the demon-possessed man called “Legion.” Today, the same story is told in Matthew and Mark but with some differences. Matthew tells us that there were actually two men involved. As I read the story again, I noticed that the word “*beg*” was used several times and in different contexts. First, it was the demons who begged Jesus to send them into the herd of pigs on the hillside (Mark 5:12). They were begging *to leave*. Then, the townspeople who came to witness the aftermath of the drowned pigs and the

healed man, *“began to beg Jesus to depart from their region”* (v. 17). They were begging *to be left alone*. Finally, as Jesus was about to leave in the boat, *“the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him”* (v. 18). He was begging *to be with Jesus*. The demons wanted *freedom* the townspeople wanted *familiarity* (the status quo), and the healed man wanted *fellowship*. Which do you want today? Do you wish Jesus would just let you do what you want to do? Do you just want Him to leave you alone and quit bugging you about something? Do you mostly want to be with Him?

October 16 — Matthew 9-10 — **Chronological Hiccups**. Since we are reading through the Bible chronologically, you have probably noticed that we often read a story in one of the Gospels and several days later we read about the same story from another Gospel. One of the reasons for this disjointed experience is that not all the Gospels are written chronologically. Especially Matthew seems to have been organized more with themes in mind rather than time. Today, we see the story of the healing of the paralytic, but we have already read more detailed descriptions in Mark 2 (9 days ago) and Luke 5 (11 days ago). Where to position Matthew's chapters was a problem for those who organized the reading schedule we are following. A better way to do it is to read through the Gospels in a much more parallel way, keeping each story in its chronological place so they can be compared in more detail. That is often called a Gospel Harmony.

October 17 — Matt. 14; Mark 6; Luke 9:1-17 — **Getting Away**. Life can get stressful and ministry can get tiring. Sometimes we just need to get away. This happened three times in our reading for today. The first time was after Jesus heard about the death of his relative, John the Baptist: *“Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew ... to a desolate place by himself”* (Matt. 14:13). Dealing with grief often requires us to spend time alone. The second get-away occurred after preaching for hours to a huge crowd and then filling them with physical food from the five loaves and two fish: *“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray”* (v. 23). Ministering to others can get exhausting and one needs to get alone to spend time with God in fellowship and for strengthening. The third retreat was for the twelve apostles after they returned from being sent out two by two to preach, cast out demons, and heal. Jesus said to them, *“Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while”* (Mark 6:31). Rest after ministry. This is probably why so many pastors take Monday as their day off, resting after a packed and stressful Sunday. Times for getting away are necessary to plan into our lives.

October 18 — John 6 — **Sign? What Sign?!** The biggest draw about Jesus for the large crowd following him was, *“because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick”* (John 6:2). It was a miracle-seeking crowd. They recognized that only God could do these things, so when the people saw the sign of the feeding of the 5,000, they said, *“This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”* (v. 14) and they wanted to make him king (v. 15). That same belly-filled crowd got into boats and *“went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus”* (v. 24). Jesus revealed their basic motive by saying, *“you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves”* (v. 26). They were a food-following crowd. Three times it was said that they “saw the signs” but four verses later, the same people asked, *“Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you?”* (v. 30). The signs they saw of Jesus healing the sick were not enough for them, nor the feeding of the 5,000, nor miraculously showing up on the other side of the lake. Do you have friends who say they would believe if they could see some physical evidence of God? No, they probably wouldn't believe! It is all around them in creation but they will not believe. The problem is not evidence but attitude.

October 19 — Matt. 15; Mark 7 — **Rubbing the Wrong Way**. It was almost as if Jesus intentionally irritated the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem. He called them hypocrites (Matt. 15:7), which they were because they preferred following their manmade rules of tradition rather than the commands of God. Culture is a powerful force that guides conduct because it applies peer pressure. Follow the crowd! But God's ways are not man's ways (Isa. 55:8). The question about Jesus'

disciples not washing their hands was not a hygiene issue but a manmade ceremonial one, and Jesus refused to follow it. The second event in our reading also seemed like Jesus was intentionally back-rubbing the fur of the Gentile Canaanite woman. She was in desperate need with a daughter who was possessed by a demon but Jesus refused to respond to her plea, telling His disciples that “*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matt. 15:24). It sounds like prejudice but He was only following the command of His Father. The woman got what she wanted, however, partly because of her persistence, but mostly because of her faith. Jesus responds to faith then and now, to Jew and to Gentile.

October 20 — Matt. 16; Mark 8; Luke 9:18-27 — **From Blessed to Blasted.** Probably Peter’s highest and lowest points are only six verses apart in Matthew’s account. When Jesus asked the disciples, “*Who do you say that I am?*” (Matt. 16:15), Peter responded with this wonderful declaration: “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (v. 16). Jesus then praised him for his spiritual sensitivity. Then, Jesus began to tell them that He “*must go to Jerusalem ... and be killed*” (v. 21). But this “spiritually-sensitive” Peter rebuked Jesus for saying that, and insisted, “*This shall never happen to you*” (v. 22). This information, however, was not revealed to him by the Father, as was true with his previous statement (v. 17), but it came because he was “*setting [his] mind ... on the things of man*” (v. 23). Even having the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we suffer from the same tendency—being sensitive to God but also relying on our own human understanding. As sons of God, we are not to “*walk ... according to the flesh*” (Rom. 8:4) but are to be “*led by the Spirit of God*” (v. 14). We need to make sure we are listening to the right voice.

October 21 — Matt. 17; Mark 9; Luke 9:28-62 — **Help My Unbelief.** I can identify with the man whose only child (Luke 9:38) was possessed by the destructive evil spirit but not because any of my children have experienced that. In Jesus’ absence, the man brought his son to nine of the apostles for healing but “*they could not heal him*” (Matt. 17:16). The reasons had to do with prayer and faith. Mark’s account focused on the lack of faith of this “*faithless generation*” (Mark 9:19). The man brought his son to the disciples because he had faith that they could help him. When they could not, by faith he brought the boy to Jesus. He had faith but it wasn’t pure—he had doubts as well. He asked Jesus, “*If you can do anything ... help us*” (v. 22). When Jesus told him that anything is “*possible for one who believes*” (v. 23), the man confessed and pleaded, “*I believe, help my unbelief!*” (v. 24). Here is where I can identify with the man—I find myself in that position a lot. My faith is not pure; I believe but I doubt. I want to believe and try to believe but am hampered by the reservation of circumstances in the past when my prayers were apparently not answered. It is important to note that the man received what he requested from Jesus. The limited faith that he had was enough and Jesus recognized and honored it.

October 22 — Matt. 18 — **Hard Lessons.** In this chapter, Matthew grouped together two important difficult principles to accept and apply: humility and forgiveness. They are hard lessons to learn because they go against our sinful tendencies of pride and accusation. The disciples were interested in who would be “*greatest in the kingdom of heaven*” (v. 1) but, in contrast, Jesus presented a little child as a model of humility, saying that we must “*turn and become like children*” (v. 3). We must learn to “*turn*” because the pride of wanting to be “*great*” is our default desire. Turning is part of repenting; it recognizes the wrongness of one focus and the value of another and acts to shift that focus. The second lesson is about forgiveness. Jesus gave the classic procedure for handling the situation when one believer sins against another in vv. 15-17. Peter then personalized and quantified it in vs. 21 by asking how many times one must forgive another. He thought seven times would be generous, but Jesus greatly multiplied that number. We need to be forgiving way more than we want to and we also need to be much humbler than what feels comfortable.

October 23 — John 7-8 — **“Who are you?”** The question that the Jewish leaders asked Jesus, revealed their fundamental ignorance: “*Who are you?*” (8:35). The sad thing is that Jesus had just

told them that “*I am the light of the world*” (v. 12) and that they needed to “*believe that I am he*” (v. 24). They were ignorant about Jesus’ human history, thinking that he was a Galilean but being unaware that He was a descendant of David and was born in Bethlehem as required for the anticipated Messiah (7:52). They were also ignorant about His eternal history, wanting to stone Jesus because He had said, “*before Abraham was, I am*” (8:58). They were also ignorant about their own cultural history, if they were sincere when they said, “*We ... have never been enslaved by anyone*” (v. 32). Their forefathers had been in Egyptian slavery for 400 years. Jesus showed that they were even ignorant about their true spiritual history. Jesus told them: “*If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did*” (v. 39) because their father was really the devil (7:44). People around us are also ignorant about very important things. They hold a collection of misinformation about what the Bible says and have developed their own philosophy about God and eternity. Our job is to point them to the truth, to show them what the Bible really says about the things that cloud their thinking.

October 24 — John 9, 10:1-21 — **Sent to Sent.** I like this born-blind man. He was a man of certainty, courage, wisdom, and sensitivity. When people were confused about his identity, he said, “*I am the man*” (9:9). When asked his opinion of who Jesus was, he declared, “*He is a prophet*” (v. 17). While his parents “*feared the Jews*” (v. 22), he stood up to these hypocritical religious leaders’ refusal to believe in Jesus, boldly saying, “*Why, this is an amazing thing!*” (v. 30), and pointed to the fingerprints of God relating to his healing. When Jesus found him later and challenged him to believe in Him, “*He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him*” (v. 38). Let us be more like this healed blind man today! He was sent to Sent (the meaning of “*Siloam*”) and he went (v. 7). Let’s do what God tells us to do! Let’s grow in wisdom and certainty about who we are in Christ and what we believe about God’s Word. And let’s be sensitive to our wonder-working Savior, worshiping Him with gratitude.

October 25 — Luke 10; John 10:22-42 — **“Tell us plainly!”** When Jesus sent out the teams of 72 disciples, their assigned message was, “*The kingdom of God has come near to you*” (Luke 10:9). The Jewish leaders heard the same kind of message but they refused to believe. In John 10:24, they said to Jesus, “*If you are the Christ, tell us plainly.*” Okay, so He told them plainly, “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30), and their response was to pick up stones to stone Him. Not plain enough? He then added, “*I am the Son of God*” (v. 36). How clear was that?! Their response was still negative: “*...they sought to arrest him*” (v. 39). Their problem was not about *information* but about *belief*. Our message is also like the message of the 72: “*The kingdom of God has come near to you.*” We need to tell people that Jesus is the divine Son of God and hope that they respond with faith instead of stones.

October 26 — Luke 12-13 — **Hypocrisy.** The dictionary defines hypocrisy as “a feigning 1) to be what one is not or 2) to believe what one does not.” Jesus points out three shades of hypocrisy in today’s reading. The first is that of the *secret* hypocrite, like the Pharisees, who “*covered up*” (12:2) what would have shamed them if it were known. We act like that when we pretend to be holier than we actually are. The second might be called a *superficial* hypocrite, who could interpret the changing weather patterns (v. 56) but was insensitive about more important spiritual matters. We sometimes do that when we publicly pretend that we understand a biblical concept but we really don’t and are too embarrassed to admit it. We might call the third kind, the *indignant* hypocrite, like the ruler of the synagogue who objected that Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath but would be willing to help his ox on that holy day (13:14-15). We do this when we impose standards on others that we don’t demand of ourselves. It is easy to act in hypocrisy because it is natural to try to protect ourselves but that is not being open, genuine, or humble.

October 27 — Luke 14-15 — **Response to Forgiveness.** There are two very opposite responses to forgiveness in these two chapters. Those who represented the “righteous” (the Pharisees dining with

Jesus and the older son who remained faithful) were both repulsed at the idea of forgiveness. Forgiveness was unnecessary for them; they felt that they didn't need it and were disgusted at those who did. On the other side were "*the tax collectors and sinners ... drawing near to hear him*" (15:1). These people, along with the disgraced and wayward son, knew that they needed forgiveness and were drawn toward the giver of grace. They were not like the one "*who exalts himself*" but like the one "*who humbles himself*" (14:11). God is a rescuer of needy people. He rejoices over "finding" what was lost, like the shepherd's lamb (15:6), the woman's coin (v. 9), and the father's son (v. 23). We who are "found" need to rejoice with our Finder that we recognized our need for forgiveness and found it in our Forgiver.

October 28 — Luke 16—17:10 — **Loving Money.** Chapter 16 has a lot to say about money and people's attitude toward it. The rich man in Jesus' parable had some problems with protecting his wealth, as he discovered when one of his managers "*was wasting his possessions*" (16:1). He had a *stewardship* problem—not taking care of what he had. Next, there were the Pharisees "*who were lovers of money*" (v. 14). God could see their hearts and they probably also knew it was wrong but they ridiculed Jesus' parable in an effort to justify themselves (v. 15). They had an *integrity* problem—not admitting their sinfulness. Lastly, there was the rich man who had Lazarus begging at his gate. It became clear after his death that he had a *belief* problem—not listening to God's message through Moses and the prophets (v. 29). His wealth desensitized him from being concerned about needy people and about what God desired. Money is a potential danger for us as well. We can try to reason our way around it, like the Pharisees, but this remains an immovable law of God: "*You cannot serve God and money*" (v. 13). Since "*The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils*" (1 Tim. 6:10), we need to obey the command, "*Keep your life free from the love of money*" (Heb. 13:5).

October 29 — John 11 — **Even-now Faith.** Martha and her sister sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. They had faith that He could help. Jesus, however, purposely delayed coming for two days and by the time He arrived, Lazarus had been dead four days. Jesus told His disciples that part of the purpose for His delay was "*for the glory of God*" (v. 4). When they saw Jesus, both Martha and Mary expressed their prior hope for healing by saying, "*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died*" (vv. 21, 32). Was all hope gone? Not quite—Martha added to her if-only statement that "*even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you*" (v. 22). That even-now faith was not too strong, but it expressed some hope. When they all arrived at the tomb, Martha showed some doubt when Jesus told them to take the stone away from the entrance: "*Lord, by this time there will be an odor ...*" (v. 39). Her even-now faith had a yes-but element. Faith is often a struggle for us as well. We know that God can do anything, but we often have trouble trusting that He will answer a particular prayer of ours. Our even-though negative circumstances still have even-now potential. With God, it is never impossible.

October 30 — Luke 17:11—18:14 — **Finding Faith.** Three times in this reading, people cried out for mercy: the ten lepers (17:13), the tax collector in Jesus' parable (18:13), and the blind man (v. 38). These were cries of desperation from people who felt degraded and isolated. There are some interesting parallels in the stories of the lepers and the blind man. Both had heard about Jesus. The lepers were isolated from society but somehow they still recognized Jesus and knew His name. The blind man was visually isolated but also knew about Jesus, calling him "*Son of David.*" They were also similar in that they had faith. To both of them, Jesus had an identical comment: "*your faith has made you well*" (17:19; 18:42). The last similarity was that their healing resulted in worship. One leper "*turned back, praising God*" and fell at Jesus' feet, "*giving him thanks*" (17:15-16). The worshipful response of the blind man was that he followed Jesus, "*glorifying God*" (18:43). In both cases, they knew they needed something that only God could provide, so they cried for mercy. But also, in both cases, Jesus said that it was their faith that healed them. God's mercy and man's faith. We know we need *mercy* from God but how much do we know about our need for *faith*? Jesus asked

this question that remains for us today: “*when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*” (18:8).

October 31 — Matt. 19; Mark 10 — **Tough Love.** Although the story of the rich man coming to Jesus in anticipation and going away in sorrow was shared in three Gospels, only Mark records something important about Jesus’ attitude toward him: “*Jesus, looking at him, loved him ...*” (Mark 10:21). Jesus loved him but what He said next was tough to hear: “*Sell all that you have ... and come, follow me.*” It was not a penalizing message but a loving one. The man had asked, “*what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” (v. 17). He wanted salvation and Jesus wanted him to have it. In order to gain salvation, the man was probably willing to sacrifice somewhat but Jesus required surrender. He knew that the man loved wealth more than he loved God. It was keeping him away from the kingdom of God. Surrendering to God always involves giving up what is precious to us but it also provides what is of greater value, which we will recognize on the other side of surrender. What is holding you back from a greater relationship with God and a greater ministry to others? Lovingly but toughly, Jesus asks you to be willing to give it up.