

March 21: Luke 10-11

Chapter 10

Vs. 1-24, The Lord's mission is expanded, now instead of sending the 12 apostles, he sends the 70 out in pairs of two, to prepare the towns and villages for Jesus' ministry to arrive. Jesus had a very specific plan of all the places he would visit before arriving in Jerusalem. Jesus lays down ground rules for his apostles (sent ones), which include being single minded for the mission Jesus gives them (greet no one on the road), and being good guests (enjoying the hospitality set before them). They are utterly dependent on those whom they are visiting to supply their basic needs. They are also supposed to stay in the same house for the duration of their visit, this would have built up a strong relationship with one family rather than creating surface level relationships in multiple homes. Curing the sick is the sign that "the kingdom of God has come near". Jesus issues a series of woes (condemnation) on those towns who reject the apostles' message. It's worth remembering that the sin of Sodom is inhospitality, so similarly those who do not welcome the apostles would be guilty of the same sin. Tyre and Sidon are Gentile cities, so Jesus is lamenting that the Gentiles would have been quicker to repent than God's own people. The apostles mission was successful, they return with great joy at the deeds of God they were able to perform. Yet Jesus says the most important and exciting thing is being in relationship with God, the authority to repel "sin, death, and the devil" should come secondary.

Vs. 25-42, A lawyer would not be the kind of lawyer we think of today, but rather more like an interpreter of the scriptures (like a scribe or Pharisee). He responds with the Shema (the Apostles Creed of Israel). Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to illustrate what it means to love one's neighbor. Jesus never calls the Samaritan "good", but rather he has come to be known as good through his actions of mercy and compassion toward the wounded man. Samaritans were hated by Jews (and vice versa) because of their disagreement over where the appropriate place to worship God was (the Temple in Jerusalem or Mt. Gerazim). When telling this story, the audience would have expected the priest and the Levite to be "good" as they were the experts in the faith. However, as experts in the faith they knew that touching a dead body (and the man was left half dead) would have rendered them unclean and unfit to perform their priestly duties. So, instead of loving their neighbor, they preserve their ritual purity. The Samaritan would have been the last person expected to help, but he did in fact help, bandaging the man's wounds himself and then taking him to an inn and paying for his rehab. Two denarii would have been 2 days wages, a lot of money for an average laborer!

Mary and Martha lived in Bethany, one of the closest towns to Jerusalem. But, Jesus isn't ready to enter Jerusalem just yet (he will not make it there til chapter 19). Martha wanted to be a good hostess and fulfill what was culturally expected of her, whereas Mary wanted to be a disciple (student) and sit at the Master's feet and learn. This was definitely not culturally acceptable for a woman in the home to sit and learn alongside the men, but Jesus not only condones Mary's presence, but encourages Martha to similarly sit and learn.

Chapter 11

Vs. 1-26, God desires to give good gifts to us. When teaching his disciples about prayer, Jesus urges persistence in prayer. He teaches the disciples "the Lord's Prayer" as an example of HOW to pray, what kinds of things to include in our prayers.

Beelzebul is a variant on Baalzebub, the same god of Ekron whom Elijah defeated as a false god in 2 Kings 1: 2-6. Jesus tries to teach his opponents with common sense. The "finger of God" is how the Pharaoh's magi described the source of Moses' power in casting the 10 plagues of Egypt in Exodus 8:19. This teaching serves as a warning for those who try to oppose God and God's work on behalf of the vulnerable (as Pharaoh opposed God in Egypt).

Vs. 27-36, Asking for a sign from God is akin to testing God, whereas as are called to TRUST God. Jesus is the only sign we should need. Jesus is the "sign that will be opposed" as was mentioned in 2:34, for like Jonah, he will emerge on the 3rd day victorious. Jesus condemns the faithlessness of this generation by comparing them to foreigners from antiquity (the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites) who repented and came to faith, believing in the Word of God and God's prophets.

Vs. 31-54, Jesus now moves from his role as teacher to his role as prophet, speaking hard truths to people in power (Pharisees and scribes). He accuses both groups of utter hypocrisy. The Pharisees get bent out of shape over ritual cleanliness, but don't seem to care about internal spiritual health. They observe the letter of the law only, and neglect the most important spiritual work of justice and love of God. To walk on an unmarked grave would have rendered a person ritually unclean, so Jesus is saying that the Pharisees teachings do more harm than good to the people, and the people don't even realize it. Then he starts with the lawyers, the scribes, who heap heavy burdens upon the people while limiting their access to the word of God (the key to knowledge).