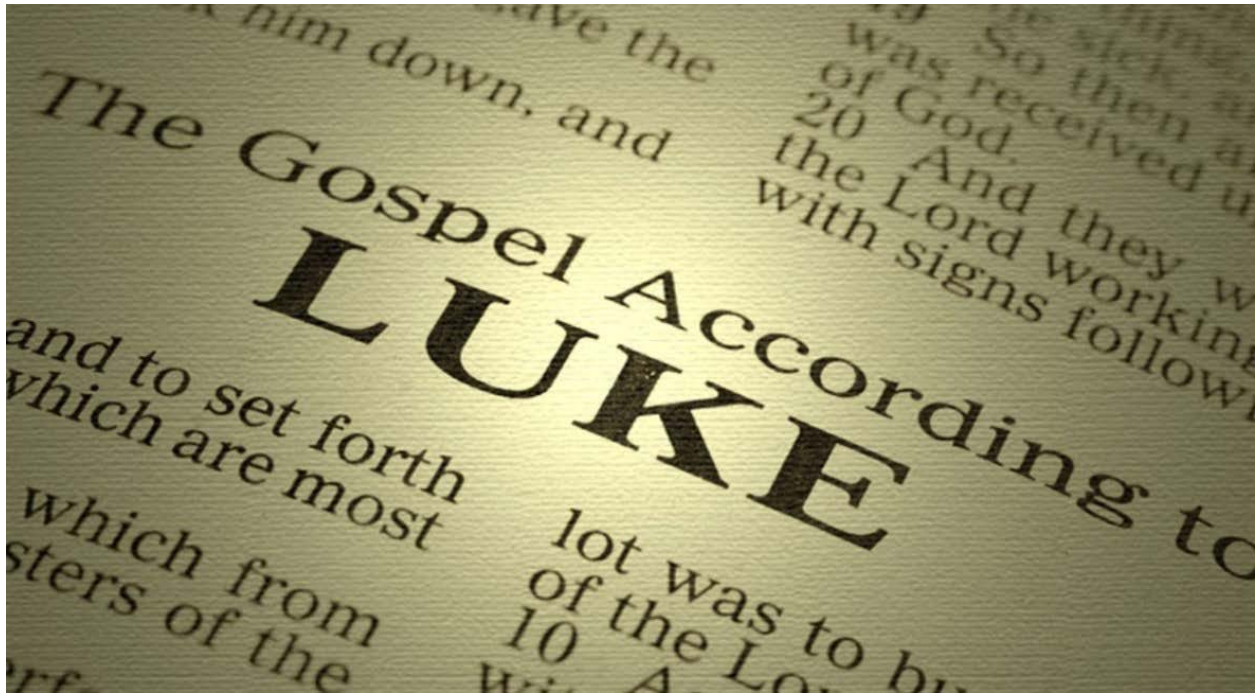


Luke 7



T. M. AND SUSIE MOORE

A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

Luke 7

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Introduction to Luke 7

Jesus identified Himself as the Wisdom of God (v. 35). Unlike the pompous, strutting, holier-than-thou presumed keepers-of-wisdom in His day, Jesus proved, by the “children” He begot, that He is the true Wisdom of God, He is the great Savior of God’s people.

Jesus is the Wisdom of God, and this is proved by His “children” – a multitude of followers, sick people healed, the dead raised to life, demons sent packing, the prideful put in their place, the humble taught, sins forgiven, and the report of Him spreading throughout all the world.

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We hope you find this study of the gospel of Luke instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Such Great Faith

Pray Psalm 47.7-9.

For God *is* the King of all the earth;
Sing praises with understanding.
God reigns over the nations;
God sits on His holy throne.
The princes of the people have gathered together,
The people of the God of Abraham.
For the shields of the earth *belong* to God;
He is greatly exalted.

Sing Psalm 47.7-9.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God is the King of all the earth; sing praise to Him with glorious psalms!
He rules the nations by His worth, and on His throne receives their alms.

Princes of peoples gather all to Abraham and to our God.
Exalt the Lord, and on Him call – the earth is His, so praise our God!

Read and meditate on Luke 7.1-10.

Preparation

1. How did Jesus know about the centurion's servant?
2. What did He say about the centurion's faith?

Meditation

This vignette contains many important teachings to help us in seeking and advancing the Kingdom of God, the new regime of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit that Jesus came to bring near and establish.

The grace leading to abundant life, which is the power of this new Kingdom, is available to all who seek it from Jesus – Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, healthy and sick. We note the mindset of the Jews of Jesus day: They considered that the favor of God was something to be earned (vv. 4, 5). Wherever we see these people in the gospels it is clear they consider themselves to have earned the favor of God more than the crowds and certainly more than the Gentiles. Jesus' whole ministry was designed to demonstrate the folly of that thinking and to exalt the grace and mercy of God instead. The centurion had, indeed, done good works; but he did not regard himself as deserving anything from the Lord.

We note his humility (v. 6). He had faith to send for Jesus, faith to request only that He speak from a distance, and faith to understand the great authority Jesus wielded (vv. 3, 7, 8). He sought nothing for himself, only that his beloved servant might be healed. He believed because he had “heard about Jesus” and reckoned that He had the grace and power to heal his servant. Jesus “marveled” at his “great faith”, like nothing He had seen thus far throughout Israel (v. 9). He made sure to impress this on those who were following Him (v. 9), so they would follow the centurion's example of faith working out of humility and love.

Jesus is looking for “such great faith” from us. He calls us to humble ourselves before Him, seek His Kingdom power for making all things new, and rest in His authority and love to do for us whatever He deems best.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162.

Jesus is so much bigger and grander, wiser and more powerful, than any of us finite creatures can imagine. To

make Him more manageable and understandable, we mistakenly try to cram Him into a box of our own making; to make Him easier to follow. But we do greatly err to attempt this: As Jesus said, “No one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins...” (Lk. 5.37). He gloriously bursts the boundaries into which we put Him and does the unexpected. He is to be praised and honored!

The Pharisees tried to do this. They kept expecting Him to be what they expected Him to be. But He wasn't. In Matthew 15.21-28 we read of a similar encounter. When in the region of Tyre and Sidon, a woman of Canaan cried out to Him, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David!” She too, was appealing to Him based on His relationship with the Jewish nation, just as the centurion did, by sending Jewish elders to plead his case. At first, Jesus chose to ignore her. Then He answered her by saying, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Unexpected? Yes, in a way, as it seems like a harsh response. But it was merely the set-up for her daughter's healing, and His praise to her for her great faith.

Jesus' life was continually lived in unexpected ways, but He always did just what the situation demanded. The point being to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and how it works outside the box of man's contriving. We may not always understand why, but we will do well to learn from Him. Our dependence on His Holy Spirit is the key to wiser behavior.

Both the Canaanite woman and the centurion were at a point of dire need. “My soul melts from heaviness; strengthen me according to Your word” (Ps. 119.28). They both knew where to turn for help. They both had the faith to believe that Jesus could accomplish their greatest desires. They were both commended by Jesus for their complete trust in Him.

Such great faith can be ours; but only as we put our full hope in Him. We cannot put Him in a box of our imaginations and dreams, almost “helping” Him try to figure out the best way to run our lives for us. Because the truth is, “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me. When as yet there were none of them” (Ps. 139.16). He's got this under control.

May we have the faith of these two unlikely people. And let us rest assured that God is God, and He will do what He wants, when He wants, and how He wants. He is not constrained by our fancies, nor our rules and regulations, nor our expectations. “For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!” (Is. 12.6)

For reflection

1. What was so great about the centurion's “great faith”?
2. What are your expectations of Jesus? Do they line up well with what He has promised?
3. What do we learn about life in the Kingdom from the story of the centurion's faith?

How great is the sign of divine humility, that the Lord of heaven by no means disdained to visit the centurion's servant! Faith is revealed in deeds, but humanity is more active in compassion. Ambrose of Milan (333-397), Exposition of the Gospel of Luke 5.84

Pray Psalm 47.1-6.

Praise the Lord Jesus, exalted in glory! Call on Him to subdue nations and peoples under the power of the Gospel, that they might praise Him gladly with us.

Sing Psalm 47.1-6.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

O clap your hands, you peoples all, with joy to God your songs intone!
Shout out to Him, and on Him call, He is the mighty, sovereign One!

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High is the Lord, O, fear His Name! He rules, a King o'er all the earth.
Nations and peoples He has tamed, the heritage of His holy worth.

God has ascended with a shout, the Lord with sound of trumpet bold!
Sing praise to Him, let praise ring out! Let praise through all the world be told!

2 Such Great Grace

Pray Psalm 107.1-3.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is* good!
For His mercy *endures* forever.
Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*,
Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the enemy,
And gathered out of the lands,
From the east and from the west,
From the north and from the south.

Sing Psalm 107.1-3.

(Faithfulness: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*)

Lord, You are good, we give thanks and we praise You!
Your steadfast love will forever endure.
Let the redeemed, who from trouble You rescue,
gather and say that Your mercy is sure!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
we give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,
boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

Read Luke 7.1-15; meditate on verses 11-15.

Preparation

1. How did Jesus look upon the dead man's mother?
2. What did He do next?

Meditation

Here is the very picture of the grace of God at work. Three aspects of grace may be discerned. First is the divine disposition, an attitude or inclination of favor which arises from within God Himself. Here that gracious disposition takes the form of compassion for a weeping mother (vv. 11-13). Jesus knew neither this woman nor her son, and certainly they had done nothing "deserving" of the grace He would show them. This attitude of grace welled up from within Jesus out of the nature of Who He is.

Second, grace is a divine communication fraught with hope and promise. Here we see this in two ways, first, when Jesus comforts the dead man's mother: "Do not weep" (v. 13); second, when He speaks to the dead man, calling him to arise (v. 14). It will do us no good to know that God looks favorably upon us unless He Himself deigns to tell us so. As Jesus does here with this woman and her son, God does with us through His Word and Son and Spirit.

Finally, grace is divine operative power to accomplish the loving purposes of God. We see this as the dead man sat up and began to speak (v. 15). How could he do this? Only by the grace of God, just as, only by the grace of God we are able to come alive in Jesus and call our gracious God "Father!" (Gal. 4.6)

That we are forgiven, justified, born again, adopted into the family of God, and conveyed into His Kingdom is all by the grace of God – His favorable disposition toward us, His life-giving Word, and His powerful work of salvation. We realize this great grace by faith, which is itself a gift of God's grace (Eph. 2.8, 9). We were

dead in our trespasses and sins, and God, by His great grace, made us alive in Jesus. Oh! The wonder of it all!

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The scene set for us is a noisy, chaotic one. As Jesus traveled to Nain, many of His disciples and a large crowd went with Him. Then, with the widow and her dead son was another large crowd. At some point they all converged. Can you hear the sounds? Lots of talking, people jostling about, animals braying, folks shouting, and weeping. And then amidst all this noise and chaos, Jesus saw this brokenhearted woman, and His heart overflowed with compassion for her. “Do not weep”, He said to her. And then He remedied the cause of her weeping. “Young man, I say to you, arise” (Lk. 7.14).

All through Jesus’ time on earth He was doing the very things that He said He would do. He was fulfilling the prophecy about Himself which He had read to those in the synagogue: “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Lk. 4.18, 19; Is. 61.1, 2). The brokenhearted woman of Nain would certainly attest to that.

In the hubbub of life we must seek to have the same grace that Jesus possessed for the downtrodden. Noise and busyness and crowds are no excuse. This is yet another good reason to get that plank out of our own eye (Lk. 6.42), so we can better see those in our Personal Mission Field who are in need.

We have all experienced what this woman experienced. Without asking for it, we have been showered with the blessings of God’s grace. Each draw of breath is given by Him, and the sun shines. And of course, we have all had very personal encounters with the Lord Jesus. Didn’t He see us amidst the chaos of our own lives? Didn’t He hear our needy hearts? Weren’t we that bereft woman? “Do not weep”, He said to us. “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (Jn. 11.25, 26). “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev. 21.5). For the woman of Nain, and for me and you.

“Such Great Grace!”

For reflection

1. How would you explain the idea of grace to an unbelieving friend?
2. How do you experience the grace of Jesus in your life each day?
3. What does it mean for you to be an agent of grace in the world (2 Cor. 4.15)?

Observe how he joins miracle to miracle. In the former instance, the healing of the centurion’s servant, he was present by invitation, but here he draws near without being invited. No one summoned him to restore the dead man to life, but he comes to do so of his own accord. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444), Commentary on Luke, Homily 36

Pray Psalm 107.33-43.

Praise God for the abundance of His grace toward you day by day. Be specific in enumerating the many ways His undeserved love reaches, refreshes, and renews you.

Sing Psalm 107.33-43.

(Faithfulness: *Great Is Thy Faithfulness*)

You make the desert a river o’erflowing;
You make a wasted life fruitful and strong!
You bless the hungry with fields for the sowing;
Bless and increase us who to You belong!

Refrain vv. 1-3

Lord, for Your wondrous works, and for Your steadfast love,
we give You thanks, we exalt Your great Name!
We who from east and west, north and south gather,
boldly redemption in Christ we proclaim!

When we are low, are oppressed and in sorrow,
You pour contempt on our fierce, angry foes.
We will rejoice at the hope of tomorrow:
He shall be wise who Your steadfast love knows!

Refrain

3 Such a Great Witness

Pray Psalm 22.23.

You who fear the LORD, praise Him!
All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,
And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

Sing Psalm 22.23.

(Darwall: *Rejoice, the Lord is King*)

All you who fear the Lord, now praise His holy Name!
You children of His glorious Word, declare His fame!
We stand in awe of our eternal God, and on His mercy call.

Read Luke 7.1-17; meditate on verses 16, 17.

Preparation

1. How did the people respond to Jesus?
2. What happened next?

Meditation

Let's try to put ourselves into the situation described in verses 11-15. The people, who doubtless had already heard about Jesus and His many amazing works, had just witnessed a Man exercising power over death. By a simple word He raised a dead man to life. He Who had power over death also had power over life, and none of those people had ever seen anything like this. That fear came upon – literally, *seized* – them all should not surprise us. In their fear they considered that Jesus was a great prophet, but more than that, that God Himself had visited His people (v. 16).

And in their fear they honored, extolled, and glorified God because of Jesus, and gave great witness to Him “throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region” (v. 17).

Should we fear God? Does He still have power over life and death? To judge and condemn sinners? To discipline wayward saints? Yes, He does. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111.10). Fear coupled with praise is the proper response of all who truly know the Lord. To fear God and love Him are two sides of the same coin, keeping us mindful of His holiness and might, and sheltering us safely within His mercy and grace.

They who fear and glorify the Lord will naturally spread the word about Him. How could they not tell what they had seen and experienced (cf. Acts 4.20)? How can we keep silent about the great grace we have received through Jesus? Fear God and glorify Him in Jesus, and let your witness to Him be great throughout your Personal Mission Field.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, ‘A great prophet has risen up among us’; and, ‘God has visited His people’” (Lk. 7.16).

Another prophecy was fulfilled. “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’, which is translated, ‘God-With-Us’” (Is. 7.14; Matt. 1.23).

We have much to learn from the large crowd in Nain: Their amazement and fear led them to glorify God. The wonder of it all. They did what was required but weren't even filled with the Holy Spirit yet. That should give us great hope for our ability to accomplish this, because we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Our chief end

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in life, our main goal and calling, as the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* reminds us, is *to glorify God and enjoy Him forever*. When His glory is the foundation, the rest of the building stands secure.

“I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145.1-3).

The announcing angels at Jesus’ birth also taught us by example how to glorify God:
“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Lk. 2.14).
They came straight out of heaven to do His will on earth—as it is always done. Glory.

Paul wrote, “For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6.20).

And Peter reminded us that, “by your good works which they observe, glorify God...” (1 Pet. 1.12).

Our good witness to God and to others is found through glory. His glory. “...to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever” (Rom.16.27). Glory to God for everything.

*To God be the glory, great things He hath done, so loved He the world that He gave us His Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin, and opened the Lifegate that all may go in.*

*O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood, to every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes, that moment from Jesus a pardon receives.*

*Great things He hath taught us, great things He hath done, and get our rejoicing thro’ Jesus the Son;
But purer, and higher, and greater will be our wonder, our transport, when Jesus we see.*

*Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the earth hear His voice!
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father thro’ Jesus the Son,
And give Him the glory, great things He hath done.
(Fanny J. Crosby, 1875)*

For reflection

1. Why is it necessary both to fear and love God?
2. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to glorify God?
3. What is the relationship between our witness for Jesus and our calling to glorify God?

*A sense of the divine presence must have brought fear along with it: but there is a difference between the kinds of fear. Unbelievers either tremble and are dismayed; or, struck with alarm, murmur against God: while devout and godly persons, moved by reverence, willingly humble themselves. Fear, therefore, is here taken in a good sense, because they gave the honor which was due to the power of God which they had beheld, and rendered to God not only homage, but thanksgiving. John Calvin (1509-1564),
*Commentary on Luke 7.16**

Pray Psalm 22.27, 28.

Pray that the Lord would revive His people all over the world, and that we would take up our calling to be witnesses for Christ. Pray that multitudes of people would come to faith in Jesus, to fear Him and to live for His glory.

Sing Psalm 22.27, 28.

(Darwall: *Rejoice, the Lord is King*)

All nations shall repent and hasten to the Lord.

All those to whom His truth is sent shall praise His Word.

The Lord is King! His sovereign rule on high now we His people sing!

4 Such a Great Prophet

Pray Psalm 33.13-17.

The LORD looks from heaven;
He sees all the sons of men.
From the place of His dwelling He looks
On all the inhabitants of the earth;
He fashions their hearts individually;
He considers all their works.
No king is saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.

Sing Psalm 33.13-17.

(Truro: *Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns*)

God from His throne looks down on men;
He knows our works and made our hearts.
Let not Your Church, let none depend
on strength or skill or human arts.

Read Luke 7.1-28; meditate on verses 18-28.

Preparation

1. What did John want to know?
2. What did Jesus say about John?

Meditation

John probably knew that his days of ministry – and life – were soon to be at an end. Yet faithful disciples attended to him, even as he languished in prison. John needed to make sure these friends were not left without a teacher and guide, so he sent them to Jesus with a specific question: “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?” (v. 20).

Jesus sent them back to John to report all they had seen of His ministry. And what they had seen would be convincing. Can you see John, smiling at his friends, as they shared the report Jesus gave them? Even as they spoke, they would have understood, John had no doubts about Jesus, and the mission he sent his friends on was all about assuring them that Jesus was “the Coming One”.

If John had been expressing doubt, as some suggest, would Jesus have gone on to commend him so powerfully as a prophet and even more than a prophet (vv. 24-28)? I don’t think so. Jesus knew what John was doing, because it was what John had been doing from the moment Jesus showed up and the Jordan River where John was baptizing. Jesus must increase, John knew, and he himself must decrease (Jn. 3.30). This is good counsel for all of us. He was the messenger, the forerunner. Jesus was the Coming One, the Anointed One, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world. John simply wanted his followers to be convinced of this, just as he wants us to be convinced as well.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

But what if he did have a fleeting moment of doubt? What if John the Baptist was displaying a touch of humanity? What if maybe he was experiencing fear? What if he knew in his heart that Jesus was, in fact, the Coming One, but he was discouraged at the way things had turned out? “Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief” (Prov. 14.13). Life is like that sometimes. And sometimes even

godly people experience moments of shaky faith.

I hope, for John's sake, that instead of feeling doubt, fear, and discouragement, he was merely trying to bravely turn his disciples over to Jesus, and that his purpose in this exercise was to strengthen his disciples' faith and turn their allegiance to the true Coming One.

Either way, Jesus had John's back. He defended him to all around by dramatically declaring:

"What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

"But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments?"

"But what did you go out to see? A prophet?"

"Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet" (Lk. 7.24-26).

He is My messenger who prepared the way before Me; and there has never been a greater prophet than John!

Jesus' intention was to encourage John and his followers, regardless of the reason that they were sent. And He wants to encourage us. He is aware of our frailty, "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103.13). He understands that we may have a bad day or two, but He recommends that we trust Him. Fully. Completely. Constantly. And what if we cannot always accomplish that? He still has our back. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matt. 11.28-30).

This One Who wants to give us rest, Who wants us to labor in the Kingdom fields with Him, encouraged John, and encourages us with the Truth about Himself: "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me" (Lk. 7.22, 23).

We are not offended, but amazed at the love and healing power He extends to the blind, the lame, the lepers, the deaf, the dead, and the poor—to us. Whether John was weak or strong does not negate the truth: "Jesus was the Coming One, the Anointed One, the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world."

For reflection

1. What has persuaded you that Jesus is "the Coming One"?
2. What should we do when doubts creep into our relationship with the Lord?
3. Why was John so great in Jesus' eyes?

[Jesus] affirmed that [John] is a prophet, or rather above the measure of the prophets. Christ also says that among those born of women no one had arisen greater than him in the righteousness that is by the law. Cyril of Alexandria (375-444), Commentary on Luke, Homily 38

Pray Psalm 33.18-22.

Thank the Lord for all those who feared Him in the past, and who have made it possible for the Gospel to come down to us today. Trust in Him to lead and empower you for His service today.

Sing Psalm 33.18-22.

(Truro: Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns)

God watches those who fear His Name,
who hope upon His grace and love:
He keeps their souls from death and shame
who trust in Him Who reigns above.

God is our Helper and our Shield;
upon us let Your grace descend!
We hope in You; to You we yield;
we trust in Jesus to the end.

5 Such Great Wisdom

Pray Psalm 111.1-3.

Praise the LORD!

I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart,

In the assembly of the upright and *in* the congregation.

The works of the LORD *are* great,

Studied by all who have pleasure in them.

His work *is* honorable and glorious,

And His righteousness endures forever.

Sing Psalm 111.1-3.

(Manoah: *When All Your Mercies, O My God*)

Praise the Lord! O let my heart give praise here amid His chosen race!

Your works are great, O Lord, and sought by all who know their grace.

For Your work is full of splendor, Lord, and of majesty most pure;

Your righteousness, O glorious God, forever will endure!

Read Luke 7.1-35; meditate on verses 29-35.

Preparation

1. Why did the religious leaders reject John?

2. Why did they reject Jesus?

Meditation

“No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!” Job’s biting retort to his self-righteous, know-it-all friends (Job 12.1) could have been spoken to the religious leaders of Jesus’ day. Divided into opposing camps, they were determined to maintain their perceived priority of place, and they were not open to any new or merely popular beliefs.

Especially not from wine-bibbing locust-eaters or unschooled, rabble-friendly, self-styled rabbis.

They were, Jesus said, like children, holding stubbornly to their own preferred agenda, unable to persuade those with differing ideas, and looking out only for themselves (vv. 31, 32). They demonized John for his abstinence and austerity; and they denounced Jesus because He drank wine and befriended the friendless. They considered themselves the keepers of God’s wisdom, so to admit that John or Jesus might have had something important to say would have exposed their house-of-cards status.

Yet for all their supposed wisdom, the people they served lived miserable, poor, fearful lives under the boot of a foreign Gentile power and the intimidating eye of jealous priests and scribes.

Where wisdom really resides, Jesus insisted, wise fruit – “children” – will be in evidence. Everyone could know where true wisdom lay by comparing Jesus and His ministry to Solomon’s poem on Wisdom in Proverbs 8. Who was more like what Solomon described? Jesus or the Pharisees?

No-brainer, no contest. The great wisdom of Jesus was on display for all to see. And that *really* irritated the religious leaders of His day.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

And what is different about today? We still have avid turf-protectors for pastors and awful self-serving

politicians for leaders.

Truly:

“That which has been is what will be,
that which is done is what will be done,
and there is nothing new under the sun” (Ecc. 1.9).

If “wisdom is justified by all her children” (Lk. 7.35), then where are we? Where do we fit into this equation? “Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing” (1 Pet. 3.8, 9).

We dare not be turf-protecting or self-serving for any reason; but we must be compassionate, loving, tenderhearted, courteous, and not vengeful. To this we are called; and to this we must agree, as we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Eph. 2. 10).

Jesus clearly was not amused by “those children sitting in the marketplace” (Lk. 7.32). May we instead behave in a way that delights Him.

“...the blameless in their ways are His delight” (Prov. 11.20).

“...those who deal truthfully are His delight” (Prov. 12.22).

“...for the LORD delights in you” (Is. 62.4).

“I delight to do Your will, O my God,
and Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40.8).

Instead of being unamusing, turf-protecting, self-serving children in the marketplace, we can change our status simply by being pleasing to Him, by doing His will. “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 Jn. 3.1 NIV)

For reflection

1. What was wrong about the religious leaders of Jesus’ day?
2. As “children” of Wisdom, what fruit should we bear in our lives?
3. How would you counsel a new believer to learn what was pleasing to God?

The Lord made a truly necessary addition to these words when he said, “And wisdom is justified by her children.” If you ask who those children are, read what is written, “The sons of wisdom are the church of the just.” Augustine (354-430), Letter 36

Pray Psalm 111.4-11.

Praise and thank the Lord for His many wondrous works, for His work within you and the power He gives you to be His witness, and for His sure and reliable truth.

Sing Psalm 111.4-11.

(Manoah: *When All Your Mercies, O My God*)

You have caused Your many wondrous works to remain before our face.
For You are full of mercy, Lord, and abounding all in grace.

For all who fear You, You provide; Your covenant endures.
Your pow’r You show Your people, Lord, and make the nations theirs.

The works of Your all-sovereign hands are faithful, Lord, and just.

Luke 7

Your precepts ever more are true and worthy of our trust.

You have sent redemption, to us, Lord, in Christ of cov'nant fame,
and we in wonder, grace, and awe adore Your holy Name.

All they who would true wisdom know must learn to fear You, Lord,
and in that wisdom daily live and praise You evermore.

6 Such a Great Forgiveness

Pray Psalm 25.6, 7.

Remember, O LORD, Your tender mercies and Your lovingkindnesses,
For they *are* from of old.
Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions;
According to Your mercy remember me,
For Your goodness' sake, O LORD.

Sing Psalm 25.6, 7.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

Remember mercy, Lord, and steadfast love to me!
And all my sins before You let them not remembered be!

My sins have been of old, Your love is new each day.
According to Your goodness, Lord, regard my sinful way.

Read Luke 7.1-50; meditate on verses 36-50.

Preparation

1. How would you describe the attitude of the woman with the flask of oil?
2. How would you describe the attitude of the Pharisee?

Meditation

Sin is a terrible affliction, and it strikes every person. Sin makes self the center of the world and seeks to supplant God as lawgiver and judge. Sin blocks our prayers, poisons our soul, imprisons virtue, and deprives others of lovingkindness. Sin is a terrible affliction.

The woman with the flask of oil understood this. Note her responses to her sinfulness (vv. 37, 38). First, she wept. She was deeply distressed and troubled by her sin. Second, she appealed to Jesus, giving Him not only her tears but her most precious possession. She honored him by her humility and her selflessness.

Her actions revealed the condition of her heart – contrite, self-giving, seeking the Lord. Jesus forgave her sins, though they were many. The Pharisee scoffed because he regarded himself to be above such degrading behavior (v. 39). He had spent years convincing himself of his righteousness, and he had no sympathy for anyone who was not like him.

Jesus' parable pinned an indictment on Simon the Pharisee's chest (vv. 43-47): "You are the man!" And He did this publicly, at the same time, forgiving the woman her many sins (v. 48). Simon and his guests were shocked – shocked! – that Jesus forgave her sins. But they asked the right question: "Who is this who even forgives sins?" (v. 49)

The great forgiveness of Jesus is available to us always, no matter how many or how heinous our sins. But we must perceive the terribleness of sin, deplore and despise it, and long to be rid of it now and forever. Then come to Jesus and give yourself to Him anew. He will forgive, and He will grant you peace.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The woman was mightily aware of her sin, and it not only made her sorrowful, it led her to be civil, by showing great love, care, and attention to Jesus and His needs. On the other hand, Simon's hypocrisy displayed itself in rudeness, neglecting the little niceties that Jesus was expecting from His host.

Simon, Jesus said, “I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet...you gave Me no kiss...you did not anoint My head with oil” but this woman “has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head” and she “has not ceased to kiss My feet” and “has anointed My feet with fragrant oil” (Lk. 7.44-47). Courteously and politely.

Furthermore, she planned ahead. “When she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, [she] brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil” (Lk. 7.37). She had a plan, a heart full of love for Jesus, and the means to show Him.

Civility is defined as “formal politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech.” Merriam-Webster defines it as “civilized conduct or a polite act or expression.” Both definitions describe behavior befitting believers. Jesus certainly praised it. If He expected Simon to be civil and courteous, then He also expects that from us.

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another” (Rom. 12.10).

“...all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous...” (1 Pet. 3.8).

“...add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Pet. 1.5-7).

Ask anyone who has been hurt by the church and they will tell you that Christians can be a very rude lot and uncivil to boot. Considering that, let us always make sure that we are never behaving toward others, or Christ, like Simon did; but that we are always prepared, like the woman, to show love to our Savior and to those in our Personal Mission Field.

We are sinful people owing far more than five hundred denarii (Lk. 7.41), who are forgiven by God through the gracious work of Jesus Christ—so let us love much. Courteously and civilly.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Ps. 51.17). “Such a Great Forgiveness.”

For reflection

1. Why is it important that we not lose sight of the fact that, though forgiven, we are still sinners?
2. How would you expect people in your Personal Mission Field to respond to your courteous and civil demeanor?
3. How do you show Jesus that you are grateful for the great forgiveness He has extended to you?

... without free forgiveness none of us can escape the wrath to come; this our gracious Savior has purchased with his blood, that he may freely bestow it on every one that believes in him. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), *Commentary on Luke 7.36-50*

Pray Psalm 25.11-18.

Thank God for forgiving your sins. Confess and repent of any sins He brings to mind. Call on Him to guard your steps today and to keep you through every temptation and trial.

Sing Psalm 25.11-18.

(Festal Song: *Rise Up, O Men of God*)

For Your sake, Lord, forgive. All they who fear You, Lord,
shall know Your blessings day by day and follow in Your Word.

Luke 7

Your friends are they who fear and seek Your holy face;
Your covenant with them You share and save them by Your grace.

Be gracious, Lord, to me; my heart is weighed with woe.
My troubles and affliction see; let my transgressions go.

7 Such a Great Savior!

Pray Psalm 136.1-5.

Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!*
For His mercy *endures* forever.
Oh, give thanks to the God of gods!
For His mercy *endures* forever.
Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords!
For His mercy *endures* forever:
To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His mercy *endures* forever;
To Him who by wisdom made the heavens,
For His mercy *endures* forever

Sing Psalm 136.1-4.

(Plainfield: *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*)

Thank the God of gods and kings, for His love endures forever!
Let us our thanksgiving bring, for His love endures forever!
Wonders from Him abound; none other can be found
for whom our praise will sound, for His love endures forever!

Read Luke 7.1-50; meditate on verse 35.

Preparation

1. Who is wisdom?

2. Who are wisdom's children?

Meditation

Jesus identified Himself as the Wisdom of God (v. 35). Unlike the pompous, strutting, holier-than-thou presumed keepers-of-wisdom in His day, Jesus proved, by the “children” He begot, that He is the true Wisdom of God, He is the great Savior of God's people.

Even a cursory glance at Proverbs 8, where Wisdom speaks (don't be put off by the feminine pronouns Wisdom uses; abstract nouns, like “wisdom”, are feminine in form in Hebrew), will point us undeniably to Jesus. Wisdom cries out and teaches on a high hill (Prov. 8.1, 2; cf. Lk. 6.12ff.). Wisdom teaches along the ways and in the entrance of the city, speaking excellent things and denouncing wickedness (Prov. 8.3-8; cf. Lk. 6.20-49). Wisdom blesses those who listen and obey (Prov. 8.32; cf. Lk. 7.1-10); gives life by the grace of God (Prov. 8.35; cf. Lk. 7.11-17); is the cure for sin (Prov. 8.36; cf. Lk. 7.36-50); exposes wickedness and pride (Prov. 8.12, 13; cf. throughout Lk. 4-7); and speaks the truth plainly for all to understand (Prov. 8.8-14; cf. Lk. 4.22, 32).

Jesus is the Wisdom of God, and this is proved by His “children” – a multitude of followers, sick people healed, the dead raised to life, demons sent packing, the prideful put in their place, the humble taught, sins forgiven, and the report of Him spreading throughout all the world. John had paved the way for Jesus, just as Isaiah had long ago prophesied (Lk. 7. 27; cf. Is. 40.1-3), and Jesus came to straighten the crooked places, smooth the rough ones, and bring the glory of God to earth (Is. 40.4, 5) in the Good News of God's Kingdom and salvation (Is. 40.9-11). The Wisdom of God is Jesus. Such a great Savior!

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“But wisdom is justified by all her children” (Lk. 7.35).

As we bear the name of Christ (Ex. 20.7), now that we are His, we will either leave a fragrance of goodness (Lk. 7.38; Jn. 12.3) or a stench of hypocrisy (Lk. 7.39) in the nostrils of those with whom we come in contact. Our prayer must be that “surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...” (Ps. 23.6).

We have been given the most wonderful gift possible—the gift of Jesus Christ, and through Him, present and eternal salvation. We dare not squander or besmirch the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Wisdom of God.

God has given us the Holy Spirit so that we will justify Jesus’ wondrous works to others. For this we were created, and for this we live. “Known to God from eternity are all His works” (Acts 15.18). “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (Jn. 1.12, 13). “Beloved, now we are children of God...” (1 Jn. 3.2).

As His children, and beneficiaries of such a great Savior, God promises to be with us and teach us and guide us in the way He wants us to go, so that we will be pleasing children to Him. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (Ps. 32.8).

*All the way my Savior leads me; what have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy, Who though life has been my guide?
Heav’nly peace, divinest comfort, here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate’er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well;
For I know, whate’er befall me, Jesus doeth all things well.*

*All the way my Savior leads me; O the fullness of His love!
Perfect rest to me is promised in my Father’s house above;
When my spirit, clothed immortal, wings its flight to realms of day,
This my song through endless ages, Jesus led me all the way.
This my song through endless ages, Jesus led me all the way.
(Fanny J. Crosby)*

For reflection

1. What does it mean for you to be a child of the Wisdom of God?
2. With whom will you share the work of Jesus today?
3. Jesus is such a great Savior. How will you thank and praise Him today?

Let us study to prove ourselves children of Wisdom, by attending the instructions of God’s word, and adoring those mysteries and glad tidings which infidels and Pharisees deride and blaspheme. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Luke 7.35

Pray Psalm 136.6-26.

Thank God for His work of creation, providence, and redemption. Praise Him for delivering you from death to life through the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Wisdom of God!

Sing Psalm 136.6-26.

(Plainfield: *Nothing but the Blood of Jesus*)

He the heav’ns and earth commands, for His love endures forever.
He made both by His own hands, for His love endures forever!
He Who the waters made, sun, moon, and stars obey,
sure in their paths each day, for His love endures forever!

Luke 7

Our redemption He has wrought – for His love endures forever –
by our Jesus' suffering bought, for His love endures forever!
Down went our spirits' foes, crushed by the Savior's blows!
See! He before us goes, for His love endures forever!

When we languished in our sin, for His love endures forever!
He redeemed and took us in, for His love endures forever!
Rise we above our foe; blessings we daily know;
grace He will e'er bestow, for His love endures forever!

Luke 7

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why did Jesus marvel at the centurion's faith?
2. How do we see the grace of Jesus at work in the raising of the widow's son?
3. How did people respond to the grace of Jesus? How should we respond?
4. Why did Jesus regard John the Baptist as more than a prophet? In what ways is your calling similar to that of John the Baptist?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from our study of Luke 7?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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