



Sermon Based Curriculum

10th to 31st August 2025

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Introduction

The gospel according to Luke presents Jesus as both the promised Saviour of Israel and as the Saviour of the whole world. Luke 4:18-19 records that Jesus was called by the Spirit of the Lord to preach the Good News to the poor, so this gospel is filled with a concern for people with all kinds of needs. The note of joy is also prominent in Luke, especially in the opening chapters that announce the coming of Jesus and again at the conclusion when Jesus ascends to heaven. Throughout the gospel great emphasis is placed on prayer, the Holy Spirit, the role of women in the ministry of Jesus, and God's forgiveness of sins.

Good News Bible – Today's English Version

'Kingdom of God' (basileia tou theou)

This phrase is a central concept in the Gospel of Luke and refers to the reign or dominion of God. It is often used to describe the future and eschatological kingdom, but in the chapters 12-14 it seems to refer to the present, inaugurated kingdom of God. This Kingdom is one of love and generosity, sharing the life and action of God. The treasure is where love for God, love for others and love for self, converge. That is the heart of the promise.

The core message of Luke 12-14 revolves around the importance of faith, humility, and discipleship, with specific emphasis on spiritual priorities over material ones and the need for humility in spiritual service. Jesus stresses the dangers of greed and hypocrisy while emphasizing the importance of confessing him openly and seeking God's guidance during times of persecution. Another point stressed is the importance of being ready for Christ's return, and the call to live a life of generosity and compassion. Jesus emphasizes that true security lies in trusting God.

Living in readiness

Worship Psalm 33:12-22

Word Luke 12:32-40

1. Notes on the theme

Luke 12:32-40 is a passage that speaks about the kingdom of God and the importance of being prepared for it. The passage is situated within a larger context of Jesus' teachings on the kingdom of God, which is a central theme in the Gospel of Luke. The passage is also closely related to the previous section (Luke 12:13-21), where Jesus teaches about the importance of seeking God's kingdom and righteousness.

Certainly the opening verse sets the framework for what follows: God wants to give us the kingdom!

To long for the kingdom is to long for something which is promised and promising. Our ultimate hope then rests in God's own being as one who wants to give. This is trust which sets us free. It sets us free to deal with wealth creatively. 12:33 speaks of selling property and using the proceeds for others. Today this is complex, but the principle is simple. The complexity of our situation can be our cover-up for inaction. The reality is that we need to address the underlying possessive anxieties which our world has a way of escalating.

There is something liberating in the honesty of the passage. There is no pretending here that we cease caring about ourselves. The passage even uses monetary metaphors to make the point. Go for wealth that will pay dividends. Go for purses that will not wear thin and lose your money. In other words, the sayings challenge people to act in their own best interests and within the framework of the gospel that means to merge inseparably together: love of self, love of others and love of God.

The verses 35-40 may sound like a confused merging of the parable of the girls in Matthew 25, warnings about returning householders. The household slaves would need to stay up waiting for whenever the party would come. The imagery is unmistakably filled with expectation and

joy, even if it is being described within the hierarchical framework of the ancient household of slaves. Notice the extraordinary behaviour of the bridegroom. He will come and serve the slaves as if they are the masters and he, their slave. This may refer to an unknown tradition linked with the ceremony. We do not know. Certainly, it fits the image of the kingdom as Jesus develops the image. For the kingdom is not about power and control but about compassion – where love and caring rules.

The passage encourages believers to rejoice in the presence of God and to be prepared for His return.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Which of the Sunday services did you attend or watch this past Sunday? What were the main points of the sermon?
- b. What does it mean to you that Jesus calls his followers a "little flock" and assures them they have no reason to fear?
- c. How does the promise of God's kingdom influence your perspective on material possessions and security?
- d. What does it mean to you that God's "good pleasure" is to give you the kingdom?
- e. Trinity Methodist Church's vision for year 2025 is 'Integration' What does it mean for our Church that God want us to be rich towards him (v. 21, referenced in v. 32-34)?

3. Reflections questions

- How can you cultivate a greater sense of readiness for Christ's return, both personally and as a community?
- What does it mean to "have your lamps burning" (v. 35) in the context of your daily life?
- How can you stay spiritually alert amid the distractions and busyness of life?
- What are some practical ways you can be more attentive to the needs of others and participate in God's kingdom work

4. Close in prayer

Sunday 17 August

The vision of justice and peace for all

Worship Psalm 80:1-2, 8-19

Word Luke 12:49-56

1. Notes on the theme

If there is a place for 'harmony' in the teaching of Jesus, it is about unity with God and what God is doing in the world. With all of the divisiveness present in society these days, it seems like the last thing we need is a gospel text that seemingly encourages more division.

On the face of it, Jesus calls for or predicts that very thing. Yet, as we dive into this text, there are certainly other interpretations available.

'Peace at all costs has no place here, instead we face a full scale conflict, taken right into the heart of human formation: the family. The family is being dethroned from its absolute claims. It is not an invitation to the kind of fanaticism which dislocates sectarians from family and friends and all else for obsession with an unrelated cause. Rather this passion springs from the heart of the human condition. It is the passion for love, for change, for justice, for renewal. These are not the fanatical tenets of a cult, but the foundations of hope. So Jesus is confronting the gods of family and warning that this is very dangerous territory.

It was not that Jesus sought to subvert families as such. It was rather that he espoused a vision of God and God's agenda for change which often stood in direct conflict with other absolute claims, like wealth, possessions, land, culture, religion and family. He appears to have deliberately encouraged some to dislocate by leaving behind the claims of their local communities, clan, and family. Like him they travelled with him as a kind of entourage of protest against the prevailing systems. But he also encouraged others who stayed where they were to put the kingdom first. Everything else has its place but falls into proper perspective when the 'God part' is taken care of. That is not a guarantee of peace and harmony, but an involvement in change which will have its

own rewards. It will encounter resistance and rejection from the powerbrokers of the gods of family and tradition.

As Christians remembered and retold these sayings, they might have been consoled by the warnings as they reflected on their own painful experiences. Some may have used such predictions to rationalize their clumsiness at relationships. Nothing much has changed in this regard. The real thing can so easily be twisted into another form of self-indulgence.

The passage ends by talking about the weather, as conversations sometimes do when they run out of steam. In its present context the exhortation focuses on looking for signs of danger of conflict. Reading the signs of the times is a way of saying: recognize what is really going on and likely to happen. Today it means helping people probe beneath the surface of events, to recognize the gods and hidden agenda which drives the world in which we live. The same caution about families applies to all other systems.

A passage like this underscores the need for a deep commitment to following Jesus and living according to his teachings. It also provides an opportunity for reflection on centres of powerful influence in our local communities. What are these gods? We need to name them.

Word Studies

Fire. In this context, fire represents God's judgment and purification. Jesus is saying that he has come to bring a fire that will separate the righteous from the wicked.

Baptism. Jesus is using a metaphor to describe the intense suffering and passion he will experience on the cross. He is saying that his baptism is a baptism of fire, which will purify him and bring about his glorification.

Divided. This word means to divide or separate into two parts. Jesus is saying that his message will cause division among people, separating those who are committed to following him from those who are not.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

1. Jesus says, “I have a baptism to undergo” How does this baptism, which leads to death on the cross for Jesus, connect to the idea of division and the challenges faced by believers?
2. Fire was meant to destroy the reigning religion and religiosity that people used was a way of “guaranteeing” their salvation, yet, which ironically actually distanced people from God (v 49). Which acts on injustice do we pray that God bring his fire to?
3. How does understanding baptism as a call to discipleship, not just a joyous event, impact your understanding of your own baptism and its implications for your life?

4. Reflections questions

- What aspects of your life or beliefs might be challenged or disrupted by following Jesus?
- Do we allow ourselves to hear God’s call again and again, or do we rest comfortably in our perfect church attendance or other human work? Why do we insist on pretending to ignore the injustices (racial and otherwise) around us?
- Many churches, families, organisations and groups have experienced division at some time in their histories. How have you or respond to the divisions that happen in your life? Have you ever felt that God is at work in all your realities, and that division is not the problem.

5. Close in prayer

Sunday 24th August

God's will is focused on people's well being.

Worship Psalm 103:1-8

Read Luke 13:10-17

1. Notes on the theme

This story recalls a number of other healing stories which happened in a synagogue. Luke also knew the healing of the man with paralysis in Mark 2:1-12. The story he brings here stands on its own and must have come to him from independent sources. The synagogue leader voices the objection we might surmise could have been raised in the other synagogue healing on the sabbath. Why couldn't the woman have waited for another day? No one objects to healing. But why not do it on a work day?

Jesus' reply points to the need to water animals on the sabbath. One could argue that that was necessary for survival. But the woman would have survived another day. She had been in this state for eighteen years! It is not a very good argument. In fact the real issue lies elsewhere. Jesus' basic assumption is that God's will (in the Law as elsewhere) is focused on people's well being. Elsewhere he states: 'The sabbath was made for people; not people for the sabbath' (Mark 2:27).

Luke reports that Jesus said: 'It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for stroke of a letter of the Law to be dropped' (16:17). Jesus upheld biblical law. His conflicts were over how to interpret it. But the issue was not argument about specific points, but about the underlying theology of the Law, of Scripture. Such conflicts still play themselves out today in such fundamental questions as: how do we approach the Bible?

What is God really like? What if God's chief concern is not to be obeyed, but something else? What if God's chief focus is love and care for people and for the creation? Then the focus moves from God's commands to God's people and world. It is as though God is telling us to get our priorities right. Commandments, rules, guidelines, traditions, laws, scriptures are also subordinate to that purpose: love. God's focus is not

self-aggrandizement as it is with so many who have power and wealth and want to keep it, but generosity and giving, restoration and healing, encouraging and renewing.

Jesus spent much of his ministry, it seems, in a struggle to portray a different way of imagining God which more matched the reality. God is not to be modelled on the aloof king and powerful father, but on the mother looking for a lost coin and the dad running down the road to meet a lost son. The facades of dignity are dropped in favour of affection and caring. It is a very different model of God and produces a very different way of handling human life and biblical tradition.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a) What does the woman's immediate praise to God, after being healed, demonstrate and suggest?
- b) What can we say about the attitude of some of the religious leaders in the synagogue?
- c) What can we say about the grace and compassion of Jesus?
- d) What example does Jesus set in this passage?

3. Reflection questions

- Think of What does Luke 13:10-17 teach us about Jesus' authority and power?
- What does Luke 13:10-17 teach us about Jesus' compassion and inclusivity?
- What does Jesus' actions demonstrate for you?

4. Close in prayer

Sunday 31st August

*True greatness in God's Kingdom
comes from humility and selfless service*

Worship Psalm 112

Word Luke 14:1,7-14

1. Notes on the theme

Jesus' greatest conflicts were with those closest to him: the Pharisees. Why? Probably because they felt betrayed by his behaviour. He was observant of Torah but in a radically different way. Still, at least Luke believed his manner of observance still made him acceptable to some leading Pharisees. 14:2-6, the verses omitted from today's reading, illustrate the conflict. It was not about whether to obey Torah, but about how to set the priorities. The argument assumes common ground.

When we move to 14:7, we are confronted by another 'law'. It is not written law, but rather cultural law and was widely held. It belonged in that all important arena of meals. Meals are too easily obtained by most of us for us to appreciate their major role in the ancient world. Group meals, whether wedding banquets or communal meals, were an important community event. Jesus is present at such a meal, according to Luke, when he makes these comments. Some groups gave their meals such significance that they became representative of their life and identity. This was obviously so in the earliest Christian communities where the eucharist had its setting in a group meal. It was also true for many other groups, religious or otherwise.

Among the 'rules' for common meals of this kind we often find correct order of seating. There is a place for the most important and the least important and everyone in between. Some groups made a special point of reviewing the pecking order of seating every year. In first century Palestine, reclining on one elbow beside a very low table, or on low couches, had become the established fashion. It was common in the Hellenistic world of the time. It is reflected in most meals mentioned in the gospels. Disciples reclining beside Jesus would have a special place.

John's gospel puts the disciple whom Jesus loved into such intimate proximity with Jesus. He lay down with his head close to Jesus' chest according to John 13:23. Jesus had a corresponding position with God before the incarnation according to John 1:18.

Position was not just a matter of individual achievement. It was a community value. It was in some sense given by the group. Your value was inseparable from what others thought about you.

The lines of love – for God, for others, for oneself – need to meet. Destruction comes when any one element fails. Falsehood sells us the idea that our own best interests can only be served by denying the interests of others or by exploiting them to our own ends, for this life or for the next. It teaches us we can win only by beating others. Whether in materialist mode or spiritual mode, it leads to exploitation and abuse. The answer is, an inclusive love, all embracing, which is its own reward.

2. Questions related to the passage, sermon and notes

- a. Why did Jesus focus on the guests' behaviour at the dinner party?
- b. What does it mean to invite those who cannot repay you?
- c. What does Jesus mean by being repaid at the resurrection? How does this hope influence our actions and motivations in the present?

3. Reflection questions

- How often do you, in your own life, seek public approval or status.
- In what ways does this passage apply to you or Trinity Methodist Church and our evangelistic and social strategies? How should it affect our approach to ministry and community outreach?
- What character flaws do you see exhibited in this passage, and what virtues does Jesus want to flourish in their place

4. Close in prayer
