



my grandma time

...doing simple things together!

Week 44, Day 1 --- Luke 16:1-17:10

Week 44, Day 2 --- John 11

Week 44, Day 3 --- Luke 17:11-18:14

Week 44, Day 4 --- Mark 10 - Matthew 19

Week 44, Day 5 --- Matthew 20-21

Week 44, Day 6 --- Luke 18:15-19:48

Week 44, Day 7 --- Mark 11 - John 12

Week 44, Day 1 --- Luke 16:1-17:10

There are two difficult to understand parables in today's reading. The first parable is about our relationship with money. The second parable is really not all that different. It is about our desire for good things in this life.

The difficulty in the first parable is that in most parables God is the principle figure. In this case He would be the rich man, but there is no reason to think that. Jesus is contrasting the way the world deals with money with the way followers of Jesus should deal with money. The wise people of the world use money as a tool. They use it to get what they want. If we believe in Jesus we should use money in a similar way. It should not be our master or the first thing we desire. Instead, we should use the money we have been given to manage to store up treasures in heaven. There are two really important principles here. The first is that everything we have or see belongs to God. We are given material things to manage, but they do not belong to us. The second principle is really the important one. Jesus says that the way we manage God's money here in this life will determine how much we are given to have as our own in the next life. He is instructing us to be generous and to care for the poor. This should be a very familiar message after reading through the Old Testament.

The second parable speaks to how powerful our desire is to be comfortable in this life. The Lazarus in the parable was a beggar all his life. The rich man knew he existed, but did nothing to help him. I'm certain the rich man could have made a significant improvement in Lazarus' life with a small percentage of his own wealth. He didn't. His selfishness resulted in his going to hell. Jesus makes it very clear that those who are selfish will not believe even the most incredible evidence. He was predicting his death and resurrection. Many people would know for certain that Jesus came back to life and still would not believe. We should not be surprised today that there are many people who know in their hearts that God exists, but who continue to reject Him.

Week 44, Day 2 --- John 11

John 11 – The Raising of Lazarus

In each of the gospels there is a point where the story shifts. The focus shifts from following Jesus through His three years of ministry to anticipation and preparation for the crucifixion. This miracle is the tipping point that leads to His arrest and crucifixion. It takes place just a few miles from Jerusalem, the center of Jewish power and the seat of the Roman government in Israel. There are many witnesses and the crowd is polarized as a result of what Jesus does.

Many believe, but many also realize that the power of Jesus could result in the loss of power for them.

In addition to the cast of characters that we looked at in John 9, there are a few additional new characters.

Martha – She is the sister of Lazarus and a very good friend of Jesus. She is a doer. Tasks are more important to her than relationships. She is very direct in her speech. She also has a deep faith and a very good understanding of who Jesus is and what He is capable of.

Mary – She is also a sister of Lazarus. Beyond being a friend of Jesus it would probably be accurate to say that she is in love with Jesus. This is not a sexual love. She would just rather spend time being close to Jesus than doing anything else. People and relationships are much more important to her than tasks. (see Luke 10:38-42 for a story that will confirm this)

Lazarus – We really don't know much about Lazarus except that he was a very good friend of Jesus.

This chapter contains the shortest verse in the Bible, but one that has generated a great deal speculation and comment. John 11:35 says "Jesus wept." Why did He weep? There are many reasons given, but the one that I think fits the story best is this. Lazarus had died and was on his way to spend eternity with God. He was headed to and might have already experienced the joy of heaven. To force the issue of who was going to rule in Israel, Jesus had to bring Lazarus back. When Jesus did this He knew that eventually Lazarus and his family would have to go through this all over again. Also, Lazarus would have to come back to earth and deal again with the life he had just escaped.

- Who are you most like in this story?
- Which group would you be in if you saw Jesus raise a man from the dead: the group who believed or the group that reported the event to those who wanted to kill Him?
- What were the Jewish leaders afraid of?

Week 44, Day 3 --- Luke 17:11-18:14

Yesterday the gospel lesson for our worship service was the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. When I think that something I am doing will justify me, make me right before God, I do not understand either God or myself. All I can ever do is to trust in God's grace and mercy. This parable is a definite warning to those of us who visit men in the jail. Satan would tempt us to believe that we are in some way superior to those we visit, but the truth is that we are all the same. We all need God's grace and stand condemned without the sacrifice that Jesus made for us.

Week 44, Day 4 --- Mark 10 - Matthew 19

The story of the rich young ruler is not difficult to understand. It is just very difficult to apply. There are very few people in America who are not rich by the standards of Jesus' day. If Jesus were physically still here then it would be easy to figure out what it means to follow Him. Following Jesus certainly means

putting Him first in everything. This story is another illustration of the fact that God owns everything. The rich young ruler thinks his stuff belongs to him and he wants to keep it. He would rather have his stuff than have eternal life. I would rather have Jesus and eternal life than all my stuff, but it is still hard to keep stuff from getting in the way of my relationship with Jesus. What would Jesus ask you to give up if you asked Him the same question the rich young ruler did?

Week 44, Day 5 --- Matthew 20-21

We are now entering the last week before the crucifixion. There are many things that happen during this final week. If we were given this much detail about the entire 3 years of Jesus' ministry the Bible would be a much thicker book. The last parable in today's reading is a summary of God's plan. Israel is the vineyard that was expected to produce a crop of blessing for God and for the nations. Israel's leaders refused to follow God and they killed multiple prophets who came to deliver God's message. Jesus is the son who has come to make the request one last time. In this parable He predicts His own death again.

How would you react if someone told you very plainly that you were planning on killing him? How would you treat people that you knew were going to kill you? What is Jesus capable of doing to the Pharisees? How does He treat them?

Week 44, Day 6 --- Luke 18:15-19:48

The story of Zacchaeus is a favorite children's story in Sunday School. There is a fun song that goes with the story and I have been singing it since I was a child. It may make a fun story for children, but the lessons in this story are for everyone. The first lesson is that there is hope for everyone. In Jewish society there was no one lower than the tax collector. This was especially true if the person claimed to be a Jew. The tax collectors worked for the Romans. They worked on commission. Many tax collectors charged more than was right and pocketed the difference. This made them wealthy and hated. Jesus doesn't care. Zacchaeus wants to see him, so He want to see Zacchaeus. The second lesson is that faith makes the right response. Zacchaeus believed in Jesus. He believed that Jesus was the source of life. He didn't ask Jesus what he needed to do. He didn't assume he was good. Instead, he responded with generosity in giving half his wealth to the poor. Paying back 4 times was not generous. This was the proper restitution for theft under Jewish law. In this case he was simply doing what was required.

Week 44, Day 7 --- Mark 11 - John 12

John 12 – Anointed, Triumph, Death, and Unbelief

In this chapter John puts together a number of stories that show us a wide variety of reactions to Jesus. It is very clear that Jesus knows He is soon going to die. Everything is moving in that direction. I think that Jesus could have left the Jerusalem area and extended His teaching career on earth. However, while His teaching was important, the reason he came to earth was to die for our sins and He is very focused on that.

If someone had brought your brother back to life, how would you say thank you? How would you say thank you if you knew that the person who had done such a great thing was soon going to die? We often wait to honor a person until after he dies. Mary decides to honor Jesus before His death.

The next day the people of Jerusalem and all the visitors who are there for the Passover also get to honor Jesus. This entry into Jerusalem was predicted in the Old Testament, hundreds of years before (Zechariah 9:9). Notice that at the end of each of these stories John records the reaction of the Jewish leaders. They are becoming more and more determined to get rid of Jesus.

Some people have questioned whether or not Jesus really knew who He was and why He had come to earth. I think that Jesus response to the Greeks that are brought to Him by Philip makes it very clear that He did. He had performed many miracles and now He was going to die and rise again.

Even after all of this, the Jewish leaders did not accept Jesus as the Son of God. The Pharisees were so powerful that the people were very afraid of them. The situation is not so different in our time. Powerful people do not accept Jesus as God and see Him as a threat to their power. They cannot directly harm Jesus, but they can threaten and harm His followers. Physical harm is not very common in the U.S., but there are many followers of Jesus who lose their lives every day in other parts of the world.

Jesus wants you to have eternal life. Through the rest of the book of John you are going to see how much He wants you to have eternal life. There are many questions that I could ask about the chapter, but there is only one that is really important. Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and are you willing to follow Him?