

The Weekly Word
March 13-19, 2017

Luke continues to show us Jesus. I pray that Jesus touches your life this week as He did mine. Happy reading...
Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, March 13: Luke 5- Working with the sick...

After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him. Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick (27-31).

This brief vignette has me wondering this morning...

Do I spend too much time trying to convince the healthy they need a doctor rather than spending time with the sick who need a doctor?

Do I spend too much time with people who have ready access to 'doctors' rather than going to places where people are desperate for doctors?

I am wondering if I spend too much on life living among 'healthy' people who have little or no spiritual need.?

I don't know. I am conflicted.

Where I live we have MANY wonderful doctors and although I am generally healthy, I do need my doctor and other specialist-doctors during every year. So, though I am generally healthy, I appreciate having doctors here when I need them. Then I travel to developing nations where there is a shortage of doctors and the need is HUGE. One doctor can make a difference for many, many people.

Jesus' words have me wondering about living among people with spiritual needs... who are they and how can they be 'found.'

I get the analogy; I am wondering about practical application and what God may be saying to me...

Lord, provide me clarity on this as I go about my day and ponder Your words more throughout my day. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, March 14: Luke 6- The upside down world of Jesus ...

So much of this chapter presents the upside down world of Jesus.

This upside down world of Jesus is not a perfect world, or a utopia. Some people will take advantage of other people, evil exists and creates havoc and pain for others but the people following Jesus will (are supposed to) respond in beyond natural human ways. It is a world where the poor today are the rich of tomorrow, where love is a person's response to evil people and their hurt-filled actions, and where the appropriate response to a curse is to bless. This upside down world of Jesus understands that the Sabbath is a gift to humanity and one aspect of loving

God on the Sabbath is caring for a fellow human beings and relieving his/her suffering. It is a world where people stop judging and where forgiveness is a way of life.

Living the upside down life of Jesus takes guts. The Jesus-follower will at times, —maybe often or even always, loose according to the rules of the normal world. Evil people may take advantage of her/him. This happened to Jesus. The Jesus follower may not amass wealth because they have helped those in need. **However, But** the Jesus follower will make the world a better place, a more loving place **and**; a kinder, gentler place.

Thinking and writing all of this I realize I have a Long, LONG way to go to be like Jesus...

Oh, God, give me strength to live like Jesus, to live in the upside down world of Jesus teaches us about. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Wednesday, March 15: Luke 7- An act of grace...

I find the second story, the raising of the widow's son (vv11-17) fascinating.

We know nothing about this woman beyond the basic facts that she is a widow and her only son has died. We don't know if she is a faith-filled Israelite or not. Actually we don't even know that she is Israelite, except by inference... she lives s-sin Israel.

She does not ask or beg for a miracle. We don't know if she knew who Jesus was. She is simply a woman in grief with a low life status; she is a widow and now has no son to care for her.

Jesus makes the first move motivated by compassion, *his heart went out to her* (13), and so **Hhe** acts. Sovereignly and decisively Jesus acts. Jesus interrupts the funeral procession and heals the dead man. Barely a word spoken to the widow and only a single command given to the dead man, *Young man, I say to you, get up* (14). The man sits up and speaks; he is alive.

What a crazy moment that must have been. At the word of Jesus a dead man is made alive. The apostles were likely as open-mouthed as the woman and the funeral procession.

Awe for God, wonder and praise rise up spontaneously. God gets all the glory. **TA**nd the fame and news of Jesus spreads like wildfire.

What can I take into my life?...

Jesus can and does work miracles and when **Hhe** chooses, miracles happen.

Another thought is that I must be wary of creating some formula about how, why, and when Jesus acts miraculously. He acts at **Hhis** own prompting. He acts according to **Hhis** own will.

Oh, God, remove my unbelief... help me to believe You fully. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen

Thursday, March 16: Luke 8— You can be God's dearest family...

In the middle of this chapter filled to overflowing with Jesus' exploits —teaching and healing —there is a pause in the action. During the pause Jesus makes a stunning statement. Listen as Luke records the event. *Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice"* (19-21)

I allowed Jesus' words to sink in. Everyone who is a true Jesus follower —hears and does His will —is His closest family. We are as close to Jesus as his mother and brothers. We are **Hhis** intimate family.

There is no human closer to Jesus than you are if you listen to and do **Hhis** will.

Do you care for your mom and siblings? I think we all do. ~~I~~And that is the relationship Jesus uses to explain His care for you and me and everyone who hears and does His will.

As I sit I am humbled by Jesus' love for me, for us, for his family.

I hope you are part of Jesus family₂ too...

O_h Jesus, thank you for this incredible statement of Your love for me, for us. Amen.

Friday, March 17: Luke 9- ...

There is so much content in Luke's chapters I often do not know where to sit and meditate. I am struggling again with this today.

O_h Lord, as the sun is shining outside, may Jesus' words shine into my heart and life...

After my brief prayer, I decided to meditate on the final vignette of the chapter.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." He said to another man, "Follow me." But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father." Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God." Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family." Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (57-62).

I feel a bit inadequate or deficient in my discipleship as I read this account, particularly the two pointed comments by Jesus I put into read. Jesus is demanding everything, absolute allegiance. Having buried both parents and a mother-in-law in the last few years, I cannot imagine not being there to bury them. Jesus' words seem harsh. Now maybe I am missing some cultural piece, but if the man's father had truly just died, would Jesus reject him for taking part in family obligations of burial?

Then again, if his father just died, why is he there with Jesus at all... could this be an "I'll follow you later, Jesus, when it is more convenient" comment?

Am I rationalizing this Jesus story or trying to make cultural sense of it? Sometimes it is hard to tell what is driving my reactions to the text.

Absolutes aside, Jesus is making a strong case for total allegiance to Him. Allegiance stronger than cultural and family bonds. Allegiance to Jesus that trumps any and all other human allegiances, stronger than

- Family ties
- National ties
- Country of origin ties
- Neighborhood, party, collegiate, race or ethnic ties.

Jesus is saying that my connection and following of Him is more important than anything else in my life.

This is so difficult to fathom as well as live out.

Even Paul recognizes that a husband has more responsibilities and pressures than a single person. And balancing these responsibilities affects service availability to King Jesus (read 1Corinthians 7:32-35, particularly 33-34).

This I realize is where faith, listening to the voice of the Lord and understanding His word comes in. We need to be living in God's will and following Him. ~~I~~And if He asks us to choose between Him and any other loyalty₂, we must choose Jesus.

Lord God, I lay down my life to You. I seek to be the best husband, father, pastor, human being I can be and following You is essential. ~~S~~~~A~~~~n~~~~d~~ should You call me to choose between obedience to You and cultural functions of any of my other facets of life, I pray for strength to follow You totally and unequivocally. I pray this in Jesus' -name. Amen.

Saturday, March 18: Luke 10- A slap in the face from God...

Uuuugh. Sometime God just slaps me when I open His word. Today was just such a day. He slapped me with the story of the Good Samaritan. When my eyes first noticed the headline, I instantly thought, “Oh, I like this story.” Then as I read it, immediately the rancor of the political turmoil in our country over immigrants flashed in my eyes. Next thoughts erupted, “Hhow would I react if Samaritan was changed to Muslim, and particularly a Muslim from one of those terrorist producing countries.”

Uuuugh, that's when the slap of the Holy Spirit hit me.

Samaritan's were hated by Israel, so to make His point Jesus puts a Samaritan in the lead role of His parable.

Today's Samaritan might be a Muslim from Somalia!

Oh Lord, forgive me for my hardened heart...

for not treating everyone and anyone as my neighbor...

for selective love...

Help me, Lord, to Hove my neighbor as myself as You direct. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Sunday, March 19, 2017, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.