




## ***Theme: The Art of Salvation – Jesus in the Gospel of Luke “Salvation in Forgiveness”***


### **Weekly Memory Verse:**

***<sup>9</sup> Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today... <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”– Luke 19:9a and 10***

***During Lent, the 40 days and 7 Sundays before Easter, the Meditation Moments will lead us to read the entire gospel of Luke. To reach that goal, some daily readings are longer than usual. Have an extra cup of coffee, or maybe use your lunch break, to make the time to read the whole gospel with us.***

**Monday, April 4** – Read Luke 16:1-3.1 Jesus told of a crook commended for cleverly buying off “friends” to help him after he lost his job. Jesus was against fraud, but asked: if that cheater thought ahead, wouldn’t you be wiser to use your means for eternal values than for earthly gain? Then Jesus told a parable about a certain rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. (The poor man, not the rich, got the dignity of a personal name.) The “rich man” shared nothing with Lazarus “at his gate.” After earthly life, the beggar was with righteous Abraham, while the wretched rich man asked him to warn his brothers about his sad fate.


 Jesus said no one can serve two masters—“you cannot serve God and wealth” (16:13). He was not against wealth, but strongly opposed giving wealth a higher priority than God. That challenged the rich religious leaders who saw their wealth as a sign of God’s favor and sneered (16:14). No matter your current financial status, which takes up more of your energy and time: money or God?


 Jesus’ second story (16:19-31) used some ideas about the afterlife common in his day to talk about our values in this life. Jesus said Moses and the prophets could show the rich man’s brothers (and, in real life, the self-enriching religious leaders) a better way to live in verses 27-31. What helps you to build your social, financial and spiritual values on the teachings of Moses, the prophets—and Jesus? What forces push against those values?

***Prayer:*** Lord Jesus, deliver me from all the other masters that try to lure me to make them supreme in my heart. I surrender my life to your gracious and loving rulership forever. Amen.

**Tuesday, April 5** – Read Luke 17:1-37. Jesus told his disciples in verse 4 that they should forgive “even if someone sins against you seven times in one day.” In Matthew 18:21-22, Jesus said to


forgive “seventy-seven times” or “seventy times seven.” In any form, that’s more forgiving than we do naturally! “Increase our faith!” the disciples said. Jesus told them even a little faith is powerful. He healed ten lepers who showed just a little faith. Asked when in the future to expect God’s Kingdom, Jesus instead spoke of the need to trust God today to be ready for any trial that might come.


 On his way to Jerusalem, somewhere near the border between Galilee and Samaria, Jesus met the ten lepers. After Jesus healed and delivered them all, only a Samaritan praised God. Are there any experiences or obstacles that make it harder for you to express gratitude? Are there things you have forgotten or neglected to thank and praise God for?

 In verse 21, Jesus said either that God’s kingdom is “among you” or “within you.” Luke used the Greek *entōs humōn* which could mean either or, maybe, both. What different significance do you find in the two possible meanings? To what extent does each of them ring true to your experience of belonging to the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, I too wonder about the future in your kingdom. Help me focus on your presence among us, and within me right now, and trust you to take care of the future. Amen.*


**Wednesday, April 6** – Read Luke 18:1-43. Jesus contrasted God with an unjust human judge. The issue, he said in verse 8, was not if we can trust God, but if God can trust us. Jesus’ culture didn’t value tax collectors or children. Jesus said those “nobodies” were more apt to receive God’s favor than an arrogant Pharisee or a ruler who loved his wealth more than God. “Who then can be saved?” his startled hearers asked. Anyone, Jesus implied, because “What is impossible for humans is possible for God.” In verse 31, Jesus said, “We are going up to Jerusalem” They were close as the next stories happens in Jericho in verse 35 and it would be his last stop before Jerusalem.


 In verses 1-8, Jesus used a “how much more” image, as many rabbis did. “If even an unjust judge will do justice if pressed hard enough,” he asked, in effect, “how much more can we trust God to do justice?” His question about finding faithfulness on earth meant, can we keep trusting God to do justice even when disappointments or delays happen? How are you answering Jesus’ question?

 When the young ruler whose riches “owned” him turned away, Jesus said it was very hard for the wealthy to enter God’s kingdom. As we’ve seen, most people in Jesus’ day equated wealth with God’s favor. So, the hearers asked, “Then who can be saved?” Are you confident that whatever your social status, your salvation is “possible for God”? How does that shape the way you live each day?

**Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, help me to give up trusting in my own righteousness, much less in my material possessions. Be the center and source of my life, now and forever. Amen.*


**Thursday, April 7** – Read Luke 19:1-10. Jesus defied social prejudices by saying, “Zacchaeus, come down—I must stay in your home today.” He offered this despised man his friendship when he went to the man’s house. He told the upset crowd (many of whom Zacchaeus had likely cheated) that he “came to seek and save the lost.” Zacchaeus responded with a profound heart change, one that no doubt paid money back to many who had grumbled about Jesus being “the guest of a sinner.”


 Did Zacchaeus have a richer, more “successful” life, at the start of this story, or at its end? You know the answer you’re “supposed” to give. But honestly, how do you define your own “wealth” and “success”? Would you ever even consider adjusting your values as Zacchaeus did when you realize how much Jesus wants to be your friend and Lord?

 Zacchaeus, a wealthy but short official, was so eager to see and hear Jesus that he climbed a tree in public. Have you ever felt desperate for forgiveness? If so, this story is for you! Jesus was so eager to reach Zacchaeus that he publicly invited himself to the house of one of the town's most despised "sinners." What parts of your social dignity and status are you willing to lay aside to "see" Jesus more fully, or to reach others with Jesus' love?

**Prayer:** *Lord, when I seek you, I learn that you have been seeking me as eagerly as you sought Zacchaeus. When I feel "outcast," remind me that I'm always an "insider" with you. Amen.*


**Friday, April 8** – Read Luke 19:11 to 20:8. Jesus told a story about faithful service. Like a similar story in Matthew 25, this one praised servants who went all out to serve their king and received more duties. It warned against playing it safe as the king scolded the servant who was afraid to risk. Jesus set out for Jerusalem in Luke 9:51. His entry echoed Hebrew history in 1 Kings 1:32-39 and prophecy in Zechariah 9:9-10, a claim to peaceful kingship. His tears in verse 41 said he loved the city's people. But their heedless leaders did not love him.


 Jesus' listeners would have seen a story about kings and servants as an image of God's dealings with Israel. God had given Israel a task—to show God's glory and love to all nations in Genesis 12:1-3. How has God gifted you? In what ways do those gifts point to the task God calls you to? Are you ever tempted to keep your gifts safely in a "scarf," rather than using them actively to do God's work in the world?

 The prophet Zechariah wrote that a righteous king would ride a donkey's colt and bring Jerusalem salvation and peace. Who sang and praised Jesus in verse 37-39? Who found his entrance into the holy city offensive? Would you more likely have been with "the establishment" who didn't want the orderly status quo upset, or with the upstart rabbi from Galilee's disciples?

**Prayer:** *King Jesus, I want to serve you faithfully. Help me to see in what ways you have gifted me and help me to use those gifts to serve you boldly and faithfully. Amen.*

**Saturday, April 9** – Read Luke 20:9-21:4. As Jerusalem's religious leaders plotted his death, Jesus told a story that exposed the murder in their hearts. They saw themselves as "somebodies" and they tried urgently to create a cause for his execution. They tried to get him to criticize paying Roman taxes, or to agree with them that faith in a resurrection was absurd. But neither their trick questions nor their great outward show of piety fooled Jesus. For him, worth and power lay not in earthly rank, but in people like the humble widow, whose tiny gift only he noticed.

 Jesus' vineyard story drew on a beloved Hebrew Scripture in Isaiah 5:1-7, which called Israel God's vineyard. But like Isaiah's image, it had a sad ending. Hatred surrounded and stalked Jesus during his last week in Luke 19:47 and 20:19. We, like the Jerusalem leaders, can have blind spots. Is there anything God's spirit is nudging you to face honestly in your life? Do you have the courage to face it, to grasp "the things that lead to peace"?

 The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection and tried to make the idea sound ridiculous. What made absolute trust that death was not the end, that "the worst thing is never the last thing," of crucial importance to Jesus? Do you share his confidence? If so, in what ways does it shape your day-to-day life for the better?

**Prayer:** *King Jesus, your piercing insight made some powerful people very angry. But your purpose was always to redeem. Give me a measure of your insight, and a large dose of your redemptive heart. Amen.*