Women’s Bible Study

December 7, 2021

Luke 15-16: The Heart of the Father

This Year:

* The Gospel of Luke (Chapters 9-24)

Goal of Bible study:

* Every time your community gathers for worship, conversion needs to happen. Not only for unbelievers, but for believers. Everybody, in the context of worship, needs to be reconverted to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to talk about the continual conversion of the church. We need to stop thinking we’ve got it right and we’ve got it done. Every time, I don’t care what text you’re in, in the preaching of the Word of God with the Spirit of God blowing in the room, and the power of the God-breathed living Word, we are brought to the central redemptive events of history, and we stand under the cross again, and we hear the Savior say to us, “You’re not your own, you’re bought with a price. Therefore, glorify Me in your life.” And we commit allegiance and loyalty to Him and Him alone once again. And we leave having been reconverted to the Gospel.” (Grier)
* We come together to realign to the King.

Review:

🡪Overarching theme of the Kingdom=Restoration through the King (4:18-19)

* Announcement of the coming kingdom (1:32-33)
* Birth of the king (2:11)
* Presentation of the king (2:22)
* Way of the king prepared (3:4)
* The genealogy of the king (3:23-38)
* The anointing of the king (3:21-22)
* The victory of the king over the enemy (4:13)

-Rule of the king begins (4:21)

-The authority of the king (4:32, 36)

-The mission of the king (4:43)

* The Kingdom Community (5:32)
* The King is Lord of the Sabbath (6:5)
* The King appoints new leadership (6:13)
* The Ethic of the Kingdom (6:27)
* The Scope of the Kingdom and the Compassion of the King (7:2, 13)
* Evidence for the King (7:22)
* Love for the King (7:46)
* Those who follow the King must have ears to hear. (8:8)
* “Who do you say that I am?”-The response to the King (9:20)
* The Dividing Line-Between those who believe and those who reject the King (11-12)
* Repent or Perish: The Urgency of the Message (13-14)

Summary of Luke 13:

As Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem, He warns His audience that time is fleeting so they ought to repent before judgment comes and they perish. The message of releasing those in bondage is urgent. He calls them to enter the narrow door before it’s too late and they are cast out unexpectedly. He is unwavering in His mission but there is grief and lament that the people and city He is sent to will reject Him.

Summary of Luke 14:

What is exalted in the kingdom is humility, not presumption. Many are invited but not all come. There is a cost to discipleship that one ought to weigh carefully. Yet there is urgency in His message, and He bids his audience to respond.

Luke 15

Luke 15:1-10: Joy in Repentance

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him.****2****And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”****3****So he told them this parable:****4****“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?****5****And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.****6****And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’****7****Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.****8****“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?****9****And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’****10****Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

* *Who does Jesus tell these parables to and why? What were they complaining about?*

-The three parables in Luke 15 are in response to the Pharisees’ accusation that Jesus eats with sinners.

* *What is the flow in each of these 2 parables? (Look for repeated words or phrases)*

-They all move from loss to recovery/restoration and celebration.

* *What does this section show us about the heart of the Father?*

-These parables are theological-giving insight into God’s own heart regarding sinners.

* *Give this section a title*

-Joy in Repentance

~The first 2 parables are very closely related in language. In both, Jesus is drawing a bridge between the parable and the kind of rejoicing that takes place in heaven when a sinner repents.

~Jesus is contrasting the Pharisees’ complaint about sinners vs. God’s characteristic of joy and celebration over repentance.

~The parables escalate from 1 in 100 sheep to 1 in 10 coins. In the next section, it will move to 1 in 2 sons.

🡪In these parables, the focus is on the ensuing celebration after what has been lost is recovered or found. The point is joy over restoration. The point is not just that God seeks and saves the lost but that there is great joy in repentance.

Luke 15:11-24: A Father’s Compassion

***11****And he said, “There was a man who had two sons.****12****And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them.****13****Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.****14****And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need.****15****So he went and hired himself out toone of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs.****16****And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.****17****“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger!****18****I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you.****19****I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’****20****And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.****21****And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’****22****But the father said to his servants,[*[*d*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2015&version=ESV#fen-ESV-25602d)*] ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.****23****And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate.****24****For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.*

~Jesus then moves to a more extended account of a lost and found son. As valuable as sheep or coins are, the loss and recovery of a son are of greater importance.

* *What does the younger son ask for and what does he do with it?*

*-*The younger son presumptuously asks for his inheritance in many ways signifying his rejection of his family. Dividing an estate was occasionally done but the younger son then liquidated it, took the money, and left.

* *What happens and when does the son have a change of heart?*

*-*A famine occurs after he’s squandered all his money, leaving him destitute, shamed, and degraded. At first, he tries to fix the problem himself-hires himself out. But then he “came to himself” and said, “I will arise” signifying a change in action, and repentance through which restoration will be found.

* *What does the son say to the father and how does the father respond when he sees his son? What is the heart of the father in this parable?*

*-*The son forms a plan, but it is quickly superseded by the father as his confession is overshadowed by the father’s joy, compassion and orders for a feast. While his confession is an important part of the story, it is his return that leads to reconciliation as he is met with his father’s compassion and forgiveness after the son had rejected him.

*-* Additionally, the father’s response is like the response in the first 2 parables-celebration!

* *Give this section a title*

-A Father’s Compassion

Luke 15:25-32: The Self-Righteous Brother

***25****“Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.****26****And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.****27****And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.’****28****But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him,****29****but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.****30****But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’****31****And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.****32****It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.’”*

* *What is the older brother’s response to hearing that a feast is being given for his younger brother?*

*-*The older son hears the celebration after working diligently in the fields and when he finds out what is going on, he proceeds to lay out all the offenses of the younger son to his father.

*-*While the father responds with compassion, the brother responds with anger. His refusal to enter the home was to refuse to share in the meal or table fellowship with his brother.

*-*While the servant calls him “your brother,” the older brother refuses to call him that, rather he calls him, “this son of yours.”

* *How does the older brother view his relationship with his father?*

*-*In spite of what it may appear, the older son is alienated from the father-refusing to come in, stressing his servitude to his father, complaining about not getting what he deserved, etc.

* *How do we see the heart of the father in this section?*

*-*The father graciously comes after his son and invites him to celebrate the recovery of his lost brother.

* *Give this section a title*

-The Self-Righteous Brother

🡪The Pharisees are invited to see themselves in this parable as the older son-outwardly obedient but failing to find joy with the Father in His redemptive purposes. As the parable is open ended, so too is their response. How will they respond?

Summary of Luke 15:

After Jesus warns His listeners to repent or perish (Luke 11-12), the Pharisees criticize Him for eating (table fellowship) with sinners. His response is to tell 3 parables that highlight the heart of the Father which show that rather than criticism, there is joy and celebration in repentance and restoration. We see the heart of the Father to forgive and to compel the self-righteous to join in the celebration of the restoration of the lost.

**Luke 16**

Luke 16:1-9: The Example of the Shrewd Manager

*He also said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions.****2****And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’****3****And the manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg.****4****I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.’****5****So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’****6****He said, ‘A hundred measuresof oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’****7****Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He said, ‘A hundred measuresof wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’****8****The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this worldare more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.****9****And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.*

* *Who is Jesus speaking to here? What does the manager do when faced with a crisis?*

*-*Jesus now turns his attention to the disciples but He is still teaching the larger group as well. Rather than an allegory, here Jesus is drawing an example from everyday life and “the way the world works.”

*-*Having found himself about to be fired from his position as manager because of his poor choices, the manager finds himself in a crisis situation. “What shall I do?” He takes steps which will build relationship with others so he will be welcomed into their homes when he is in need. He has taken advantage of his short-lived status to secure his future.

* *Does Jesus commend the manager? What is the point of this example?*

-While the “master” commends the manager, Jesus does not but he uses his story as an example of how even people of this age operate with a future mindfulness.

* *What would it look like for sons of light to follow this manager’s “example”?*

-Using unrighteous wealth (belonging to this world) the sons of light are to make friends, show hospitality, share table fellowship in order to store up a treasure in an eternal dwelling.

* *Give this section a title*

-The Example of the Shrewd Manager

🡪The analogy breaks down though because Jesus repeatedly says we are to give with no expectation of return. Rather than look to those who you give to for repayment, our focus is to be on God and His eternal reward to come.

Luke 16:10-18: Praise of Man or Praise of God

***10****“One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.****11****If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches?****12****And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?****13****No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”****14****The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him.****15****And he said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.****16****“The Law and the Prophets were until John; since then the good news of the kingdom of God is preached, and everyone forces his way into it.****17****But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one dot of the Law to become void.****18****“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.*

* *What does Jesus contrast here? (Look at words that are opposites or set in contrast to one another)*

-Jesus contrasts faithfulness/dishonesty, faithful/not faithful, little/much, dishonest wealth/true riches. All of these are in the context of how one handles worldly wealth. Faithfulness is seen in using wealth in the context of the coming kingdom purposes vs. according to the present world value system.

* *What does Jesus say about wealth and serving God?*

-Wealth is not inherently evil but we are not neutral in our relationship with it-it is either used faithfully in the service of God or in ways which reflect this world’s values.

* *What is the Pharisees’ response to Jesus’s words and why? What does Jesus say about them?*

-The Pharisees’ grumblings have evolved into ridicule and mockery which Luke attributes to the fact that they are “lovers of money.”

-Jesus condemns them as those who justify themselves before men, and warns them that God knows their hearts.

* *What does Jesus say about the Law and Prophets and what example does He use?*

-Jesus contrasts their attitudes with the proclamation of the kingdom of God and the “new order” in which the marginalized are brought in by the redemptive purposes of God. “Everyone” is now compelled to come which is what the Pharisees are opposed to. But this is not a departure from the Law, rather the Scriptures are meant to be understood in light of God’s purposes in the ministry of Jesus.

-Jesus uses the example of marriage and divorce to point to the need for the Scripture to be understood in relation to the inbreaking kingdom of God. He upholds the authority of the law (Deut. 24:1-4) but makes the regulations even more stringent rather than relax them. The Pharisees seek to uphold the Law, but they are unable to do so because they lack understanding of God’s heart and design.

* *Give this section a title*

-Praise of Man vs. Praise of God

Luke 16:19-31: Temporal vs. Eternal Focus

***19****“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day.****20****And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores,****21****who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores.****22****The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried,****23****and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side.****24****And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’****25****But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.****26****And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’****27****And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house—****28****for I have five brothers—so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’****29****But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’****30****And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’****31****He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”*

* *Describe the life of the rich man vs. the life of Lazarus*

*-*The rich man is depicted as excessive while Lazarus is among society’s outcasts. Like the younger son, Lazarus longed to eat what even the dogs scavenged from the rich man’s table. He is lying at the gate of the rich man, he is a neighbor to him.

* *What happens when they die?*

*-*The rich man is even honored in death-being buried. However, following death, Lazarus is taken to a position of honor at Abraham’s side (Abraham’s bosom) while the rich man experiences Hades as torment. Yet, the wealthy man continues to assume Abraham is his “father” and knowing Lazarus by name, asks him to carry out service on his behalf.

*-*Note: That gate that could have been crossed in this life to help Lazarus has now become fixed and uncrossable.

* *Give this section a title*

-Temporal vs. Eternal Focus

~Jesus highlights again that “hearing” is equated with obedience. If they do not “hear” Moses and the Prophets, they will not “hear” anyone else.

🡪What opens as the Pharisee criticizing Jesus for eating with sinners ends with Jesus’ indictment against them-in neglecting the poor, and self-righteously not celebrating the repentance of sinners, they have disregarded the heart of the Father laid out in the Scriptures.

Summary of Luke 16:

Jesus tells a story of a shrewd manager to make a point that even the people of this age know to be forward thinking when faced with a crisis. He warns against loving money over serving God or seeking the praise of men over the praise of God. He then tells another story of a rich man who didn’t use his wealth to help the poor and his heart is revealed after he dies. Jesus closes the story with a warning that if people don’t hear Moses and the Prophets, they won’t hear anything else.

Thoughts on Luke 15-16:

* Jesus’s call to repent or perish and the Pharisee’s criticism that he eats with sinners is followed by 3 parables that share the Father’s heart when someone repents. **There is great joy and celebration in repentance.**
* An example of the **Father’s compassion** and joy is seen in the parable of the Prodigal Son.
* The younger son’s recognition that he is in “**need**” goes back to Jesus’s words that He came for the sick, and the sinner.
* Even the world understands imminent danger and warning. Jesus uses that example to point to the urgency to **live for the future** to come.
* We are **not neutral to money**. We either use it for God’s purposes or this world. We either seek to justify ourselves before God or man.
* We can live for temporal comforts or **eternal** purposes.

Discussion Questions:

1. How ought the truth that God’s heart is compassionate and joyful at repentance lead us to be people who humbly come to Him when we sin? How do we often view God’s posture towards us when we sin?

2. Do we recognize the imminent crisis of having to give an account for our stewardship? How can we live more urgently for the “future to come?”

3. What is our relationship with money? If we are not neutral to wealth, are we using it for God’s purposes or the purposes of this world? How can we live for eternal purposes vs. temporal ones?

🡪Be encouraged tonight that our Father is heaven is ready to restore us when we come to Him in repentance. He is the compassionate Father and the Good Shepherd who seeks and saves that which is lost, not just at the moment of salvation but day by day as we walk, fall, and walk again throughout this life of faith. Christ’s birth reveals God’s heart of compassion and seeking of His people. Reflect on that this Christmas season!

Homework:

* Review your discussion question answers and reflect on what God is showing you.
* Read Luke 17-18
* Consider getting additional resources to help in your study time.
* Next Study: Tuesday, January 25 (4th Tuesday)

Sources Used:

G.K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd, *The Story Retold*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2020.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997.

Gundry, Robert. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.