

Luke's Gospel

First Parish Church U.C.C.
Manchester By the Sea
March 23, 2023 – Session Three

Meeting at 4:00 p.m. Thursdays on Zoom

**Straight Talk for Real People,
Then ... and NOW!**

1

Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

Opening Prayer

O God, we praise you, we give thanks to you for your bountiful providence, for all the blessings and all the hopes of life. Above all we praise you for your unspeakable gift in your only Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Let the memory of your goodness fill our hearts with thankfulness to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

2

Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

- Before we begin our class I need some feedback.
- Our fifth week falls on April 6. Maundy Thursday.
- There will be a service for Maundy Thursday at 7:00 p.m.
- *Do we want to have our final session of this series at 4:00 p.m. that afternoon?*
- We could continue it through Thursday, April 13 at 4:00 p.m.

3

Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

Last week we ...

- We studied Luke and the connection with *Acts of the Apostles*.
- Luke was the most prolific author in the New Testament (27%).
- We reviewed several healing stories from chapters 5 and 6 (controversies).
- We read the story of the Good Samaritan in chapter 10 and all its complexities.
- We read the specific "Straight Talk from Luke".

4

Straight Talk for Real People, Then ... and NOW!!

Let's talk Parables ...

- Parables usually have one basic point to make the difficult obvious.
- Parables were used as a communication tool.
- The use repetition helps people remember the stories. Example is the parable of the talents.
- Contrast is used to make vivid the decisive point: example is the Good Samaritan compared to the priest, and the Levite.
- The story often uses the rule of three: It is told in a three-fold form in helping the hearer to remember.

5

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- Examples: the seed falls on three kinds of soils, while the fruitful seed produces three amounts in the parable of the sower.
- There are three travelers on the road to Jericho.
- The device of end-stress is used where emphasis falls on the final act of the story. Example: the vineyard owner sent out his son after the servants were repeatedly rejected.
- Uses an economy of words: the parables vary in length, but no matter what their length they are brief.

6

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

- The questions we need to ask when reading a parable ...
 - What is the setting for the parable?
 - Who is the audience when Jesus told the parable?
 - What are the cultural presuppositions of the story (first century culture)?
 - What is expected in response when the parable was told?
 - What is the theological theme (themes) or point of the lesson?

7

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

Read Luke 4:14-30

- Jesus has just experienced his forty days in the wilderness and the temptation events and it is time to begin his ministry!
- Vs 14-15: these two verses provide a summary of what is to come.
- Luke then places the story of the rejection of Jesus as the first major preaching event.
- Jesus affirms the Sabbath, the scriptures, and regular worship in the synagogue.
- There was one Temple, but many synagogues.

8

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

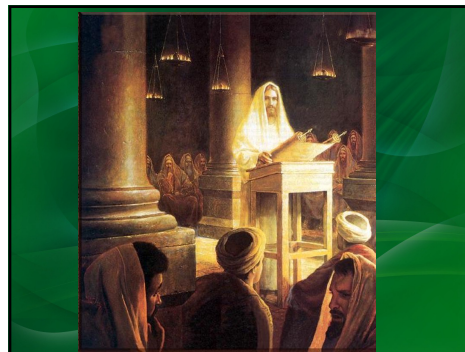
- Wherever ten adult males gather for worship there could be a synagogue.
- Jesus reads from Isaiah 61 and announces fulfillment of the prophecy and defines his messianic role.
- He speaks "today" ... God's reign is here and the ministries of Jesus and the church found in Luke-Acts demonstrate that presence.
- "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled."
- What is the response? Admiration, Wondering, doubt ...

9

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

- For Luke the response of the audience and the tension that comes with the teachings of Jesus is there ... and many more times.
- Luke seems to be bringing the message that the Jews should accept the message of Jesus.
- They have defended their tradition and now Jesus is bringing a new truth.
- *Straight Talk for Real People ... then and now!*

10



11

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

Luke 11:14-12:1

- Jesus has just promised the gift of the Holy Spirit: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"
- The mood shifts to conflict and controversy.
- Jesus performs a miracle: "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons."

12

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- Following the actions of Jesus the audience responds in three ways: the crowd marvels, critics question the source of Jesus' power, and others call for a sign as proof.
- No one denies that the man is free from his demon, *but by what power did this happen?*
- Jesus is charged with using the power of the devil to remove the power of the devil ... Beelzebul to remove Beelzebul.
- Re-read vs. 11:16-23

13

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- Jesus is literally suggesting that the Spirit and the spirits that hurt, maim and alienate do not walk together.
- The one "who is not with me ... is against me."
- Following Jesus calls one to "discern" and "understand" the presence of God in our lives.
- *Straight Talk for Real People ... then and now!*
- What might this say to our lives and our world today?

14



15

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- As we continue (vs. 24 ff) what is the metaphorical image suggested?
- Demanding a "sign" is not all that is "proof."
- It begs the issue: faith is not found just in evidence ... to the untrusting person faith has no proof.
- What Jesus is doing is what God wills and does in the world.
- Does this suggest that those who seek signs are the rebellious and unfaithful?

16

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- Jesus then follows with a statement that God's message is being delivered clearly, but there are those who "will not see."
- Luke pulls together three controversies ... and places the scene at the home of the Pharisee where he had been a dinner guest.
- He is not an outsider ... he is critical of the practice of his religion and its leaders.
- He calls for strong self-evaluation.
- Is it not true that all religion ... that our faith ... needs constant self-evaluation and correction?

17

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- Note that vs. 49 also includes the Apostles.
- This section ends with Jesus stating again that the Pharisees and the scribes felt convicted by Jesus and his teachings.
- They are clearly setting Jesus up for verbal ambush and Jesus goes on to warn his disciples.
- "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy." (12:1)
- *Straight Talk for Real People ... then and now!*

18

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

Let's read Luke 12:13-21...

- What do you hear from this interchange and the response of Jesus?
- The person approaches Jesus because he believes he will be a fair judge, but does Jesus respond as hoped for?
- The parable of the rich man.
- There is no hint that the "things" were accumulated in violation of the law.
- He is careful, conservative, and productive ... but he is a fool!

19

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- What is the problem here? He is living completely for himself, he plans for himself, and he even congratulates himself.
- "This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?"
- This story is about how a person uses the abundance that he/she has received.
- Is vs. 20 suggesting that the fool's soul is "on loan" from God ... and God is calling in his debt?

20

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- Jesus is talking about "standards" and suggesting God's standards are not the same as the world's standards.
- This is a warning about the lure of possessions and the possibility of substituting love of things for the love of God.
- What are the dangers of focusing on material possessions for us?
- *Straight Talk for Real People ... then and now!*

21



22

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Let's read Luke 8:5-15 ...

- This parable is the "classic parable" and is report in all three Gospels.
- Jesus is questioned about the meaning of his teaching ... so he explains the parable.
- Sometimes this parable is called "the parable of the soils."
- The teaching is based on a practice that the entire audience had experienced over and over again as the seeds were planted.
- Jesus is saying something very important!

23

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- Yet, the depth of the message is hidden ... "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"
- Then we come to vs. 11 and Jesus proceeds to explain the parable.
- What do we hear in the explanation?
- The explanation turns the parable into an allegory.
- The different soils could represent different hearers ... or the single hearer at different stages of "hearing."

24

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- The seeds falling on the road represent those who hear *the word* but dismiss it straight away.
- The seeds falling on the rocks represent those who hear *the word*, but only accept it shallowly.
- The seeds falling on *thorns* represent those who hear *the word*, and take it to heart, but allow worldly concerns, such as money and cares of this world, to *choke* it.
- The seeds falling on *good soil* represents those who hear *the word*, and truly receive it spiritually, causing it to *bear fruit*.

25

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- Questions: Why would Jesus want some to hear ... and other not to hear? Or why would Luke want Jesus to be saying that?
- Jesus tells the Parable of the Soils at a time when the crowds are increasing dramatically.
- It says something about how he evaluates the crowd of hearers.
- This parable is about the quality of hearing found in the growing audience.
- *Straight Talk for Real People ... then and now!*

26



27

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

Homework: Read Luke

A Message of Joy found in being lost

- 15:1-7, 8-10
- 15:11-31
- 17:11-19
- George Nickoless 124 Bridge St. Manchester 01944

And we will meet on April 6 at 4:00 p.m.

28

Straight Talk for Real People, Then and NOW!!

Closing Prayer

May the God who has overcome the world give us strength and courage to face and overcome the obstacles in your life. God who calls us is able. Go out in the power of the Spirit to wade into the waters and cross over on dry land. Hear our personal concerns and walk with us this week as we seek to faithfully respond to Christ's love in our lives. Amen.

29