



THE GOSPEL OF
Luke

SESSION OBJECTIVE: LUKE 18:31-43

To understand more about the healing of the blind man.

The Last Prediction

In Luke 18:31-34, Jesus makes his final address to His disciples concerning the mystery of what will take place on passion week. Throughout the arc of Luke's Gospel, Jesus has been slowly making His way towards Jerusalem, which influences His words in verse 18: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." Jerusalem is an important destination because it is there that much of what was written in the Old Testament would be fulfilled. Jesus does not speak in riddles, nor does He hold back details of what He will experience: "For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise" (Lk. 18:32-33). He spells out His arrest, the brutal beatings He will experience, and most importantly, His death, burial, and resurrection. As clear as He is, however, His disciples are still unclear about what any of it means: "But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said" (Lk. 18:34). Somehow, without clear explanation, the words of Jesus were "hidden from them." This indicates the reality that sometimes things can be clearly articulated and still not understood apart from Divine help; the "natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him" (1 Cor. 2:14).

This passage does a couple of things for Luke's narrative. For one, it continues to heighten the anticipation of Jesus' so-called Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem in chapter 19. Throughout the first portion of Luke's Gospel, he has intentionally been building tension as Jesus draws closer and closer to the holy city. Beyond that, it

demonstrates the lack of spiritual clarity that His disciples had at this point. Though Jesus had already performed several supernatural miracles, the disciples still did not grasp the Messianic identity of Christ, nor did they understand why they were working their way towards Jerusalem. Verses 31 through 34 confirm that though they had been given many reasons to believe, they had not yet been given the power to do so.

The Healing of the Blind Man

In verses 35 through 43, Luke unfolds another healing of Jesus, this time in an area “near to Jericho” involving “a blind man” who “was sitting by the roadside begging” (Lk. 18:35). This sets the stage for the story. Below is a breakdown of some key themes and concepts.

SEEING AND BELIEVING

The blind man was unaware of Jesus’ presence for the obvious reason that he could not see, but “hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant” (Lk. 18:36). Apparently Jesus had drawn quite the commotion, presumably because of the reputation He had already gained (although the text doesn’t specify this). The crowds identified Jesus to the man: “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by” (Lk. 18:37). The crowds who can see Jesus recognize Him simply as a Nazarene miracle worker. This is not exactly a false title given that Jesus was born in Nazareth. Given the popularity of a name like “Jesus” in the ancient world, referencing Him as “Jesus of Nazareth” was a helpful way of specifying Him over and above anyone else with His name.

However, the blind man who cannot physically see Him recognizes Him with a much more exalted title in verse 38: “And he cried out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’” The Davidic title finds its roots in the Old Testament passage of 2 Samuel 7:11-14, wherein God promises the so-called Davidic covenant to not only King David, but to all of His descendants. This covenant establishes the Davidic ruler as one who will rule “forever,” and one who will enjoy a father-son relationship with God: “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son” (2 Sam. 7:14). This paves the way for a typological fulfillment in Christ who is not only of Davidic descent (Lk. 1:27; 32; 2:4), but who is truly the Son of God to God the Father (Lk. 9:35).

Luke is unfolding a bit of irony here in pointing this out. The people who can see Jesus do not rightly believe and the one who cannot see Jesus believes that He is the Davidic Savior. This is an example of what Jesus meant when He said to Thomas: “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (Jn. 20:29).

A SIMPLE REQUEST

Apparently the blind man’s description of Jesus offended the crowds: “And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’” (Lk. 18:39). This caught the attention of the Lord who “commanded him to be brought to him” (Lk. 18:40). In verse 41, Jesus asked the blind man plainly, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man responded, simply: “Lord, let me recover my sight.” This is a simple and yet important moment. Often people are chided for praying that God would do anything for them that isn’t “spiritual” in nature, but this fails to acknowledge a couple of things. For one, basic abilities such as seeing, hearing, or speaking are things for which we were created. God didn’t mess up when He made us with mouths, ears, and eyes. Because of the fallen world we live in, however, our bodies do not always work the way they should. So it isn’t wrong or spiritually immature to desire that God would heal that which doesn’t work the way it was intended to work. Beyond that, God desires to meet our basic needs. Just because He doesn’t always heal does not mean He doesn’t care. This story shows the mercy of Christ to mend that which was broken: “And Jesus said to him, ‘Recover your sight; your faith has made you well’” (Lk. 18:42).

AN IMPORTANT RESPONSE

Notice how the blind man responds to the healing actions of Jesus: “And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God” (Lk. 18:43). The blind man’s faith is not what allowed Jesus to heal, but it (like the one leper) saved him. This is evidenced by a shift in action towards Christ as Lord. The blind man immediately began to follow Jesus and glorify God, fruit that comes from being made alive in Christ. Often passages like this are used to weaponize faith in such a way where it becomes our fault if God does not heal because we did not have the faith. This misses the point of the story and inaccurately describes how God works. God is not held hostage by a lack of faith; He can heal when He so chooses. Faith does not enable God to heal. Faith enables salvation (Eph. 2:8-9).

What About Now?

One takeaway is the viability of praying for God to heal parts of our bodies that were designed to work one way that have been affected by the fall. It is not wrong to pray such a prayer. God is merciful and asks us to pray. However, another takeaway is the reminder that no amount of faith will force God into healing, and if God chooses not to heal it is not because you didn’t have enough faith.

Study Questions**Day One**

1. Read Luke 18:31-33. Who was Jesus with? What did He say to them? What was He describing?

2. Read Luke 18:34. How did the disciples respond? Why didn’t they understand?

Day Two

1. Read Luke 18:35-37. To what city were they drawing near? Who is introduced in this story? What was he hearing? When asked about the commotion, how did the crowds respond to Him? What title did they ascribe to Jesus?

2. Read Luke 18:38. What title did the blind man ascribe to Jesus? What is the significance of this title?

Day Three

1. Read Luke 18:39. How did the crowds respond to this? What did He say after that?

2. Read Luke 18:40-41. How did Jesus respond? What did Jesus ask the blind man? What did the blind man ask of Jesus?

Day Four

1. Read Luke 18:42. How did Jesus respond to the blind man's request?

2. Read Luke 18:43. What was the outcome of this encounter? Who all was affected by it?

Week 67 Discussion: Ask!

In Luke 18:35-43, Jesus is approached by a blind man who simply asks for Him to let him recover his sight, and Jesus grants this request. However, in the process, the faith of the blind man saves him as well. Talk as a group about the importance of simply asking God for basic desires, and the role that faith plays in it.

1. Icebreaker: What is one thing you consistently pray that God would heal or change in your life?
2. Does faith limit God's ability to heal? Why or why not? (Use Scripture to support your answer)
3. How many times should you pray for something specific?
4. How do you respond when God heals?
5. How do you respond when God chooses not to heal?
6. Share with the group one thing for which you'd like other people to pray, and then pray as a group for each other.

Takeaways:

1. Jesus tells His disciples, again, of His plan to go to Jerusalem to be crucified, buried, and raised.
2. Jesus heals a blind man who by faith asks Jesus to heal him.