



Good News for all people.

The Gospel of Luke

Week 12 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 11/13/22

Text: Luke 13:1-30. *Each campus will be emphasizing different sections of the chapter this week, so we recommend choosing questions from below that were part of the sermon you heard in Thornton, Boulder, or Erie. Also, feel free to take on questions from parts of the chapter that weren't covered in the sermon but that you read together in your group.*

Icebreaker: What are your plans for Thanksgiving? What are you most looking forward to for Thanksgiving this year?

The purpose of this question...aside from starting this week's discussion...is to help identify anyone who doesn't have a place to go on Thanksgiving. If you have concerns about someone in your group not having any good options, feel free to reach out to your Community Life team at your campus.

1. In verses 1-5, we hear about two examples of people dying suddenly and unexpectedly. From what Jesus says, what action should these tragedies motivate people to take? What does it mean to take this kind of action?

They should lead people to repent. A popular definition of repentance is to "turn around" from the direction one was headed. It can include a couple different aspects. First, repentance can refer to the initial conversion to faith in Jesus. Second, though, it is an ongoing aspect of a Christian's life where remorse is felt over sin, leading one to confess it and move away from it. Sinning without repentance is dangerous to a Christian's relationship with the Lord. Tragedies that happen around us should serve as reminders of how short and uncertain life is, which should in-turn inspire us to make sure we are prepared to meet the Lord by actively repenting of sin in our lives.

Application: Think of a tragedy that has caught your attention. How could it serve as a motivation for repentance?

This is obvious, but tragedies happen at different "levels" around us. Some are personal in nature and some are more distant but shared (e.g., the national tragedies of 9-11, school shootings, etc.)

2. In light of verses 1-5, Jesus tells the parable of verses 6-9 about the fig tree. What attribute(s) of God do you see reflected in the parable?

Most clearly, we see God's patience and mercy. He is slow to bring final judgment.

Application: How can the underlying message of this parable instill both hopefulness and a sense of warning about God's judgment?

As an example, think of people around us who do not yet know the Lord. We should find hope in knowing that God is patient and merciful. At the same time, though, we also see that there will be a day when the tree will be uprooted if it does not begin to show signs of life or bear fruit. This should motivate us to action and purposefulness.

Building Christ-centered communities of people fully devoted to loving God and loving others.

3. Verses 10-17 describe another example of Jesus healing someone. What do you notice in this account that's similar and/or different from examples we've seen already in Luke?

In the similar category, we see that Jesus is again using the Sabbath as an opportunity to display the supernatural work of the kingdom. Jesus is also addressing a malady that has a direct spiritual cause, not unlike how Jesus has previously cast out demons. In terms of differences, Jesus takes all the initiative in this case. The woman gives no indication that she knows who Jesus is or believes his claims, yet Jesus performs the miracle.

Application: Do you think there's any relevance or lesson for us in the differences we can observe in Jesus's method and means of healing others?

Maybe the most obvious lesson is that we should not try to create some kind of formula for how Jesus heals. There is a wide range of ways Jesus heals others, and this is likely intentional to help display the magnitude of his power.

4. What attributes of Jesus do you see on display in verses 10-17?

To name a few, we see that Jesus is merciful towards this woman, that he knows her situation (omniscience), that he is all-powerful over the devil's control (omnipotent), and that Jesus is a lover and defender of the truth even when it causes offense against the traditions of people. Jesus doesn't fear people.

Application: How could these different attributes be relevant for you regarding what's going on in your life right now? If you feel comfortable sharing about it, please do!

5. Verses 18-21 include two images about the kingdom of God. (For the first, read Ezekiel 17:23 and 31:6, as well as Daniel 4:12, 21.) What message is Jesus communicating about the kingdom in these verses?

Both convey the idea that the kingdom is growing, expanding, or advancing. The mustard seed's growth is such that it becomes home for many birds. The OT references point to the use of similar language to express how many nations will be represented in God's kingdom. The kingdom is universal in scope. The small quantity of leaven is an outside agent that is added to the dough to cause it to transform. As commentator Leon Morris puts it, "Leaven works quietly and unseen, and the kingdom works through Christ's influence on people's hearts, not in anything merely external and visible."

Application: What kind of expectations should we set for our own experience of God's kingdom based on these two statements?

There could be a lot of ways to think about this, but both images include growth that happens slowly rather than in an instant. Both have a clear and ultimate purpose at the completion of their use or growth, even if the process to arrive at that conclusion might not be as swift as hoped. We should realize that the advancement of God's kingdom is happening according to God's timetable, so we should be patient. At the same time, though, we can be patient with full confidence that the moment we are presently in will lead to the full realization of God's kingdom. The plant will grow and the dough will rise!

6. In verses 22-30, Jesus is describing the surprising membership of God's kingdom. With the nature of the gospel in mind, what do you think Jesus means by "Strive to enter through the narrow door"? Does it mean we have to work our way into the kingdom?

This is one example where it can be dangerous to pluck a single verse out of context and use it to support misguided claims about God or the gospel. The overwhelming testimony of Scripture is that we cannot achieve our way into God's favor! See, for example, Ephesians 2 or Romans 5. As commentator Darrell Bock puts it, "The idea is not

to work one's way to God, but to labor hard at listening and responding to his message." Bock cites Proverbs 2:1-5 as a passage that expresses this. Living in God's grace does not mean we are passive! To the contrary, we often struggle and exert effort to walk in that very grace that we have been given—learning Scripture, praying fervently, giving generously, loving sacrificially, etc. As the late Dallas Willard put it, "Grace is opposed to earning, not effort."

Application: What do you think it looks like for us in our daily lives to "strive" in this way?

7. What is it about the argument of verse 26 that isn't sufficient for these excluded people to be included inside the "narrow door?"

These people express that they had been around Jesus—they'd seen him, heard him, maybe even talked to him—but they had never bowed to him.

Application: What kind of activities or involvement might people have at Calvary that would put them in the same position as these outsiders to God's kingdom?

People can be involved in all kinds of things at Calvary that will keep them busy, get them connected to other people, etc., etc. None of it ultimately matters, though, apart from a saving relationship with Jesus. It can be deceptive and dangerous for someone to be heavily involved in a lot of activities at Calvary because those activities might obscure the lack of a relationship with Jesus. Our hope is that our activities point or direct people to Jesus, but busyness in the church can become a substitute for genuine faith in God.

8. Imagine the scene Jesus describes in verses 29-30 "at table in the kingdom of God." What excites you about it? What questions does it raise? What emotions does it stir up?

This is meant to invite people to use their imaginations about this banquet or feast in God's kingdom.