

The Luke Daily Study Guide

Week 3

Monday, March 12th

Luke 8:22-39

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. 23 As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. 25 "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

26 They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. 27 When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. 28 When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" 29 For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

30 Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. 31 And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

32 A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. 33 When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, 35 and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 36 Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. 37 Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

38 The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 39 "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Points of Interest:

- 'went and woke him'—the storm is so bad that the ship is being swamped and the disciples—several of whom made their living by fishing on this very lake—are certain they are going to die; but Jesus is still asleep. Either he's a very sound sleeper, or he's too ignorant of the danger to be as scared—or he knows something they don't.
- 'He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters'—this is reminiscent of God forming the sea and the sky out of the formless void (Genesis 1). It's also similar to Moses parting the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape from the Egyptian army. Jesus brings order out of chaos by his words, and he's able to rescue his followers even in the direst of situations.
- 'Where is your faith?'—Luke himself tells us, 'they were in great danger'; their perilous situation is an objective fact, not merely some frantic overreaction. So, Jesus waking

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up from his nap to say essentially, 'Look, there's no need to get all stressed out here,' seems a bit out of touch. What's going on here?

I think it's not incidental that this story immediately follows the teaching about the seeds and the soils. The point of that story is that Jesus' words are worth paying very close attention to. I think that this incident with the storm is a training exercise, to test just how good the ears of the disciples are. Jesus has sown some words here: 'Let us go over to the other side of the lake.' They hear those words, and act on them, setting out for the other side—so far, so good. But when the storm comes, they forget them; or, if they remember the words, they no longer believe them. The disciples are like the rocky soil: their excitement at Jesus' words shrivels in the midst of trouble.

It could be argued that it's unreasonable to expect the disciples to treat Jesus' words as a promise that they will indeed make it across the lake. Jesus word sounds more like, 'I'd like us to go across,' than, 'We will most certainly make it to the other side.' Also, though they've seen some pretty amazing things from Jesus, there's no reason for them to think that he actually has the power to stop a storm. I think Jesus purposely puts them in this exaggerated situation, to stress just how important and powerful his words are: even the most seemingly insignificant of them could make a very big difference. It's a lesson that will be important for the disciples to understand. Jesus knows that there are more hard times up ahead for him and his followers, and they will need to trust his words if they are to get through them.

- 'In fear and amazement'—Jesus calms the storm, but not the disciples. They start out afraid of the storm, and they end up even more afraid of Jesus. Through this incident they gain a new level of respect for Jesus: the storm was powerful enough to kill them, and Jesus is powerful enough to kill the storm. That's impressive, and a bit scary.
- 'the region of the Gerasenes'—this is a non-Jewish area, which explains why we find a herd of pigs.
- 'had lived in the tombs'—an evocative, if creepy, image. It simultaneously communicates loneliness—cemetaries were placed outside of the city limits—and a sort of living death.
- 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?'—Luke tells us this scene out of chronological order, perhaps to communicate some of the confusion of the moment. This exclamation actually comes after Jesus has already commanded the demon to leave the man alone.

It's interesting that Jesus doesn't silence the demon here, as he has in the past. Perhaps it's because there's no crowd watching; or perhaps it's because he's less concerned about being unmasked among non-Jews, who were not necessarily on the lookout for a Messiah.

- 'Legion'—a Roman military division.
- they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss'—these demons are surprisingly frantic at Jesus' arrival. Maybe they've heard stories of Jesus' confrontations with evil spirits on the other side of the lake, but they didn't expect him to come into this non-Jewish area. The Abyss is apparently some kind of prison for demons.
- 'he gave them permission'—I find it very surprising that Jesus would listen to the begging of a gang of demons. One idea I have is that he is following his own advice to give to everyone who asks (Luke 6:30). When he says give to everyone who asks, he means everyone! If this is Jesus being merciful just like his Father, his Father is beyond unbelievably merciful.

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- 'A large herd of pigs'—the formerly demon-possessed man had been living the life of an animal, chained up or running wild. But he is not an animal. His freedom is worth the life of an entire herd of animals.
- 'the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned'—I often wonder whether or not this is what the demons had planned. Did they just want to go out with a bang? Or were they unable for some reason to control the pigs? When the pigs died, did the demons have to go to the Abyss anyway? This fascinating little vignette makes me think that life in the spiritual realm is much more complicated than I would otherwise assume
- 'dressed and in his right mind'—Jesus has calmed this man, just like he did the storm.
- 'and they were afraid'—they respond just like the disciples did when the storm was calmed. They start out afraid of the demon-possessed man, and end up even more afraid of Jesus—so afraid of him that they ask him to leave. I'd completely understand if they were afraid of Jesus because all of the destruction he just caused, but actually it's seeing the man in his right mind that they can't handle. They'd grown used to the idea that the man's situation was hopeless, and it's unsettling to them to see that reality change. They seem to prefer that things stay as they are, even though it would mean consigning this man to continuing in his death-like life forever.
- 'sent him away'—this man wants to leave everything and follow Jesus (just like Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Levi did), but Jesus refuses. I can think of a couple of reasons why Jesus doesn't take the man with him:
 1. Perhaps he thinks the man is more motivated to escape than to follow Jesus. He wants to get in the boat and leave his entire past behind on the shore. Given what the man has been through, it's understandable that he'd want a clean slate, but Jesus has something better in mind: he wants the man to get his life back, and to be able to celebrate his amazing restoration with his friends and family at home.
 2. Practically speaking, it would be very difficult as a gentile to travel with Jesus around Judea and Galilee: he would become a focus of negative attention; he wouldn't understand the societal norms at all; he wouldn't be received into homes; he'd become the center of tremendous controversy. Maybe neither the Jews nor this man himself were ready for such a radical step.

It seems unfair and, in fact, unjust for Jesus to deny this man's request, especially if the refusal is ethnically motivated—and even more especially since he's just honored the demons' request. Why should the demons get what they ask for, and not the man whom they were oppressing? Perhaps the way to look at it, though, is that Jesus is not so much denying the request as giving the man even more than he asked for. Jesus sends him out with good news. Rather than being rejected, he's being commissioned; this man is being made an apostle (remember it means, 'sent one'). He's the first non-Jewish apostle, and the first of the apostles to be actually sent, while the original twelve are still being trained. This man is put on the fast track.

- 'tell how much God has done for you'—all the man knows about God is that he rescued him when he seemed beyond help, but that's enough. In fact, in this regard the man has an advantage over many of Jesus' Jewish listeners, whose centuries' worth of history with God and prophecies about the Messiah give them a lot more knowledge about God. We've seen some of the positive aspects of the Jewish expectation of the Messiah: Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon, and Anna gushed in praise at the satisfaction of their long-delayed desire; and the tax collectors, soldiers, and the rest of the crowds eagerly listened to John's message and repented, in expectation of the

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rewards they'd receive at the Lord's return. But there's a downside to the Messianic expectation as well. Over time, people have developed very specific ideas of who the Messiah is and what he would do. We've seen the Pharisees and teachers—and perhaps even John—wrestling with the ways Jesus doesn't fit into their categories; even more, they've actually tried to shove him into their categories or rejected him because he doesn't. We'll soon see that their own ideas about the Messiah will even become a barrier for the twelve apostles. This man has no such preconceptions. All he knows is that Jesus saved him from terrible captivity, which is precisely the message Jesus wants told about him; in fact, it's what Jesus has been trying to say about himself all along.

Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* Even a small word from God can make a big difference for our lives. Ask God to help you notice when he is speaking to you. Ask him for the faith to hold on to those words. If listening to God is a new thing for you, consider giving it a try. Say something to God or ask him a question; then listen for an answer. You probably won't hear an audible voice, but you might get an impression that feels sort of like when you mentally form a sentence before saying it. If that happens and the words seem good and like they're not just your own thoughts, that might be God speaking to you. A good rule of thumb is if you're not sure whether you're hearing God but the words aren't destructive to you or anyone else, proceed as if it is God speaking to you; if something further happens, you're experiencing the story of the seeds and soils in your own life.
- *For your six:* Have any of your six had a good experience with God recently? If so, consider suggesting that they share their story. It's a great way to move forward in their relationship with God, and it could be very helpful to the people they tell as well. It doesn't matter if they don't know much about God. If all they know is the good thing God has done for them, it's enough—in fact, it might be better that way.
- *For our city:* Ask God to give us as a city hope for change in problem areas that seem like they will never change, like youth violence or racial tension, for example. Pray that we will not be so used to these problems that we're more comfortable with them than without them.

Tuesday, March 13th

Luke 8:40-56

40 Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. 41 Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house 42 because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. 43 And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her. 44 She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. 45 "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." 46 But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." 47 Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. 48 Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

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49 While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore."

50 Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

51 When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. 52 Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

53 They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. 54 But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" 55 Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. 56 Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

Points of Interest:

- 'they were all expecting him'—a crowd is even gathered to greet him as he steps off the boat. Jesus has reached rock star status. The people can't get enough of him.
- a synagogue leader—he's what we'd call 'a pillar of the community.' He's probably wealthy and well-respected. I imagine he travels in the same circles as the Pharisees and teachers. Given his place in society, it might take quite a bit of humility to ask for Jesus' help; it might even cause something of a society scandal. But Jairus doesn't seem to hesitate; his desperation for his daughter and his faith in Jesus' power compel him to ask for Jesus' help.
- 'subject to bleeding for twelve years'—this woman has been sick for exactly as long as Jairus' daughter has been alive. By stopping to talk with the woman, Jesus isn't doing proper triage of his healings. You're supposed to take care of emergencies first; then turn to the patients who have a chronic but stable condition. Jesus takes the chronic case first. In fact, by the time he talks with her, she isn't even sick anymore.
- 'Daughter'—I'm sure that Jairus would be wondering at this point why Jesus wasn't in more of a hurry. By calling this woman 'Daughter,' Jesus is saying, 'I feel for this woman exactly the way you feel for your daughter. I'm as desperate to see her healed as you are to see your daughter healed. I had to stop.'
- 'your faith has healed you'—of course, if physical health were all Jesus cared about, stopping wouldn't be strictly necessary. I think Jesus stops because it's important to him that the woman know that his blessing goes with her. If Jesus were to move on, this woman would melt into the crowd, never to be seen again. She would be healed, but she might guiltily think of herself as having stolen the healing. Jesus stops to let her know that he wants her to be healed, because he cares about her and because she has shown faith in his goodness and power.
- 'Don't be afraid; just believe'—Jesus does not care for his 'daughter' at the expense of Jairus' daughter. Jesus has enough power to help them both, even when it looks like Jairus' daughter is beyond help.
- 'They laughed at him'—the mourners don't have the faith to receive Jesus' words; they are like the path from the story of the soils: 'as for those who do not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them' (Luke 8: 18). So, they're sent out of the room and don't get the chance to share in this wonderful miracle. In fact, since Jesus asks that no one in the room talk about what happened, these mourners could come to take Jesus' words literally: 'I guess somehow Jesus was right; she was just sleeping.'

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Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* Jesus is able to save Jairus' daughter even when it looks like she's beyond help. Are you in a situation that seems hopeless? It's still worth bringing it to Jesus. While we're not guaranteed of the results, he may very well surprise you by what he can do.
- *For your six:* Just when it looks like the woman's sickness is something that would never go away, Jesus heals her. Pray that God would save your six from problems and troubles they've begun to think of as permanent.
- *For our city:* It sometimes seems to me like our city has a particularly hard time accepting the idea that God would intervene in supernatural ways—perhaps because the universities are so prominent in our city. Pray that our city would change in this regard; pray that there would be a growing willingness to hope for and believe in God working supernaturally.

Wednesday, March 14th

Luke 9:1-17

When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. 3 He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." 6 So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, 8 others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. 9 But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

13 He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 14 (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. 16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. 17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Points of Interest:

- 'he gave them power and authority'—Jesus makes the Twelve into his deputies. He passes along to them his own mission, and the power and authority he uses to accomplish it.

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- 'Take nothing for the journey'—they have Jesus' power, authority, and message; and that's absolutely all they have. This reminds me of the verse Jesus quotes to the devil during the temptation: 'people do not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD' (Deuteronomy 8: 3). In the Deuteronomy passage, Moses is describing God's miraculous provision of food and clothing to the Israelites when they were in the desert. Jesus is asking his disciples to trust that they too will be supernaturally sustained.
- 'shake the dust off your feet'—as they say in the TV crime scene dramas, they're removing all trace evidence that they were ever even in the town: 'Magdala? No, I've never been there; I've never even heard of it. Go ahead, check my shoes.' By shaking the dust off their feet, they're making clear that they and this town have nothing to do with one another.
The Twelve are basically filling the role of John. They're going ahead of Jesus to announce his coming, giving people the chance to prepare to welcome him. If a town doesn't welcome the disciples, they also won't be ready to receive Jesus.
- 'I beheaded John'—John has been executed since we last saw him. For some reason, Luke decides not to tell us the story of his death, as his source Mark does (Mark 6:14-29). To my knowledge, it's pretty rare that Luke gives us fewer details than Mark. My current favorite theory is that Luke decides to leave out the details of John's death so that our last picture of him is when he is hearing the evidence that the Lord has come; like Simeon, he can then die in peace.
- 'he tried to see him'—is Herod intrigued, or does he just want to make sure that John is indeed dead? It's hard to know.
- 'they withdrew by themselves'—I think this is the first time Jesus has been alone with the Twelve since he chose them. I get the impression that they're going away for some R&R after their preaching tours. I'm sure Jesus wants to hear how the trips went, and they could probably all use some rest.
- 'He welcomed them'—the getaway doesn't last long. Somehow, the crowds find out where they are and follow them. These people are very good soil. They hear the apostles' message about Jesus' kingdom, and they immediately set out to find this kingdom. Just as he promised in the story about the soils, Jesus gives them more words: 'Those who have will be given more' (Luke 8:18).
- 'Send the crowd away'—meanwhile, the Twelve treat the crowd like unwelcome guests. They take a very conspicuous glance at their watches and say, 'Well, it's getting to be about dinner time. I guess this means you'll have to be moving along.' As we've already seen in the stories of Levi and of the woman who anoints Jesus' feet, hospitality is a very important feature of the culture of Jesus' day. In fact, hospitality remains a hallmark of Middle Eastern culture to this day. Last time I went to Lebanon, when they discovered we were in a hotel, complete strangers felt compelled to offer us their homes; and they could only be mollified by throwing us a lavish feast and plying us with gifts. By these standards, in trying to send the crowds away with empty stomachs, the Twelve are woefully inadequate hosts.
- 'You give them something to eat'—even though there are at least 5000 people, Jesus insists that the Twelve show proper hospitality. While the disciples are getting the crowd's coats and showing them to the door, Jesus says, 'Why don't you just have dinner with us? I'm sure there will be plenty.'
- 'he gave them to the disciples to set before the people'—Jesus asks them to do the impossible, but he also supernaturally provides them with the ability to do it.

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- 'all ate and were satisfied'—earlier, Jesus said, 'Blessed are you who hunger now, /for you will be satisfied' (Luke 6:21). These crowds are hungry, both spiritually and physically. Jesus sees that they are satisfied on both counts.
- 'the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls'—they give away everything they have, but they end up with more than they started with. There's a full basket for each one of them. This isn't just about the crowds being cared for. It's also the best way for the disciples themselves to find what they need:
Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you (Luke 6:38).
If it's true that the more you give the more you get, feeding 5000 people is an excellent way to a life full of good things.

Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* The disciples are tired, and the needs of the crowd are overwhelming. They just want to send the crowd away so that they can rest, but God asks them to care for the crowd instead. Caring for others can be disruptive, inconvenient, and overwhelming; but Jesus promises that we can never out-give God. When we give to others, God gives even more to us. Pray that God would give you what you need to go beyond your limits in caring for others—whether what you need is more compassion, more faith, or just the actual things you need to care for them well. Remind God that as you step out to care for others, you're hoping that he will care for you, and look for him to provide for you in surprising ways.
- *For your six:* Ask God to fill a practical need for your six in an unexpected way some time in the next week.
- *For our city:* Jesus comes where he is welcome. On behalf of our city, tell Jesus that he is welcome here, and invite him to come with more of his kingdom, more of his good news, and more of his healing.

Thursday, March 15th

Luke 9:18-36

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

23 Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self? 26 If any of you are ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

27 "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

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28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two men, Moses and Elijah, 31 appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. 32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." 36 When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Points of Interest:

- 'Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him'—Jesus used to go off alone to pray. Now, though he still takes some time away from the crowds, he brings his followers with him.
- 'Who do the crowds say I am?'—the disciples list off the same possibilities Herod had heard about in yesterday's passage. This seems to be the question that's on everyone's mind: who exactly is Jesus?
- one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life'—this is like saying that George Washington or Abraham Lincoln (or whoever you think of as the greatest long-dead president) has returned again and is running in the 2008 election; or—for Rick Pitino—it's like Larry Bird does walk through the door, and he's not old and gray, and he's in great shape, and he's good as ever, and he turns the Celtics 2007 season around. People recognize that Jesus is someone very special, such as they haven't seen since the time of legends.
- 'But what about you?'—the 'But' hints that Jesus thinks their answer might be different.
- 'God's Messiah'—Peter recognizes that Jesus is even better than one of the great prophets of the past: Jesus is the one the prophets were hoping for.
- 'warned them not to tell this to anyone'—it turns out that Jesus' prohibition on telling people he is the Messiah doesn't apply only to demons. He extends it to his followers as well. Wouldn't Jesus want people to know that he is the one whom God promised to send? In explaining the story of the soils, Jesus said, 'there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed' (Luke 8:17). So, though he hides his identity, it's not meant to be a secret forever; he actually wants it to be known, but he doesn't want people to be told. Maybe Jesus wants people to discover he is the Savior because they've followed him, rather than following him because they've heard he is the Savior.
- 'The Son of Man must suffer many things'—here's another reason Jesus might want the disciples to remain quiet for the time being on the topic of the Messiah. He wants them to understand the Messiah better first. When Peter says, 'You are the Messiah,' he probably has in mind a glorious conqueror that will restore Israel to the golden age of David's reign. There are plenty of prophecies in the Jewish scriptures that speak of the Messiah in these terms; we looked at some of them in our first few days of this study. But there are other prophecies, like Isaiah 53, that say things like, 'He was despised and rejected by others,' or, 'he was led like a lamb to the slaughter.' Jesus

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wants them to understand how these predictions of suffering and rejection fit into his mission before they start telling others that he is indeed the Messiah.

- 'and on the third day be raised to life'—though his mission involves suffering and rejection, it ends in life: 'After he has suffered/He will see the light of life and be satisfied' (Isaiah 53:11). Mysteriously, the Messiah's apparent defeat and death is his path to even greater glory, and the means by which he accomplishes his rescue of others.
'On the third day,' may be a reference to a prophecy of Hosea (Hosea 6:2). It could also be a prophecy Jesus himself is delivering for the sake of the disciples.
- 'take up their cross daily'—this teaching is hard enough to understand now, after Jesus' crucifixion, but Jesus is saying it before he is killed. In fact, it's the first mention of a cross in the story. At this point, the cross is not at all a religious symbol, but just a means of execution. Jesus is saying here, 'If you want to follow me, I think you ought to know that we're going to end up on death row.'
- 'What good is it for you to gain the whole world?'—in calling his disciples to head toward the electric chair, Jesus isn't talking about grim defeat, nor even grand altruism or the noble death of a hero. Just like when he recommended loving our enemies, Jesus is giving them his advice on maximizing profit. He is advocating death on a cross because he thinks it's the way to make the most out of life.
Our life is the most valuable thing we have; without it, everything else we have is absolutely worthless. Unfortunately, we all have life in a limited quantity; eventually, each of us will see our life expire. Jesus, however, is offering us an unbelievable deal: he will trade us our limited lives for his glorious, death-defying life.
- 'he took Peter, John and James with him'—again, Jesus takes some of his followers along with him when he goes off alone to pray. This time, it's an even smaller number. These are the same three men who see Jairus' daughter revived.
- 'Moses and Elijah appeared in glorious splendor'—Moses and Elijah are two of the greatest figures of ancient Jewish history. Each of them also saw a glorious vision of God when they went up on a mountain to pray alone. Oh, and did I mention that they had both died hundreds of years ago? Interestingly, both of them ended their lives in mysterious circumstances: Elijah didn't actually die, but instead was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11); and Moses died alone in the desert without any witnesses, and was buried by God himself (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). I think that Peter, James, and John are introduced to Moses and Elijah as a demonstration that God does indeed have power over death. They have also already seen two people—the widow's son and Jairus' daughter—resuscitated, but that's more of a delay of death; with Moses and Elijah, we see life beyond death.
- 'Let us put up three shelters'—it appears that Peter is hoping or expecting that they will stay here for a while with Moses and Elijah, but it's only a quick visit.
- 'This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him'—the Father last spoke from heaven at Jesus' baptism, when he said to Jesus, 'You are my son' (Luke 3:22). Now, he directs similar words to the disciples, saying, 'This is my son.' At this crucial moment, when Jesus is revealed as the Messiah, he starts to make his way toward the cross, and he invites his disciples to follow him to death, God the Father speaks from heaven to confirm Jesus' identity and corroborate his words.
- 'they found that Jesus was alone'—lest there be any confusion as to whom God is talking about, Moses and Elijah disappear. Jesus' words are even more trustworthy than the words of Moses and Elijah, who represent the two major sections of the Jewish scriptures: the Law, written by Moses; and the Prophets, of which Elijah is one.

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Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* This passage makes it look like Jesus' prayer times were pretty exciting: flashes of lightning, transformed appearance, conversations with long-dead heroes of faith, a voice out of the clouds. Could your prayer time use a little livening up? Ask God to give you visions, words from him, amazing experiences, or whatever else he'd like to give you so that the rest of life seems a little dull in comparison to your times of prayer, rather than the other way around.
- *For your six:* Pray that your six would grow in their curiosity about Jesus, and that he would reveal himself to them.
- *For our city:* Today, pray particularly for the successful people in our city. In this passage, Jesus reminds us that it's possible to conquer the whole world, but still fail in the things that are most important. Pray that the people of our city would not lose themselves in the pursuit of worldly success.

Friday, March 16th

Luke 9:37-62

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

41 "You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44 "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered over to human hands." 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. 47 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. 48 Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For whoever is least among you all is the greatest."

49 "Master," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us."

50 "Do not stop him," Jesus said, "for whoever is not against you is for you."

51 As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; 53 but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. 54 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" 55 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 56 Then he and his disciples went to another village.

57 As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go."

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58 Jesus replied, "Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."

59 He said to another man, "Follow me."

But he replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."

60 Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God."

61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family."

62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Points of Interest:

- 'but they could not'—from Wednesday's passage, we know that they have the power and authority to do this. Nonetheless, they can't do it this time.
- 'unbelieving and perverse generation'—this scene reminds me of when Moses came down the mountain from meeting with God only to discover that, in his absence, the Israelites had decided to abandon God and worship a golden calf instead. God allowed that entire generation of people to die in the desert before bringing his people into the Promised Land. While the situation isn't quite so dire for Jesus, there is something of the sense that, in a very short time, things have gone awry. Even with all of the miracles Jesus has performed, everything quickly reverts as soon as he leaves to the way it was before. This is of especial concern for Jesus because he knows that he doesn't have much time left.
Perverse in this situation means 'crooked.' Jesus is finding it hard to get through to people, because the path to their hearts is winding and complicated.
- 'they did not understand what this meant'—the last time they didn't understand what Jesus was saying, they asked him, and he explained it to them (Luke 8:9). But this time, they are too afraid. So, though hearing, they don't understand.
- 'An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest'—they're probably thinking about the Messianic kingdom. When they ride into glory in Messiah Jesus' wake, who will get the top jobs? Who will be prime minister? Who will be general? Who will get to rule his own small kingdom? Their recent experiences would provide some fuel for this argument: Peter, James, and John were getting special time with Jesus—"We could tell you what we saw, but then we'd have to kill you"—while the other nine were failing to cast out a demon. The three are probably certain that they're situated pretty well right now to get the plum positions.
- 'whoever is least among you all is the greatest'—Jesus already told them in his sermon on the plain (Luke 6:20-49) that things work differently in his kingdom. If they want to be great, they're going about it all wrong. They need some recalibration. The path toward greatness is not through arguing over the top spots, but through serving someone who has nothing to offer you—and trusting God to than serve you.
- we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us—I wonder if John suspects, after what Jesus has just said, that maybe they didn't do exactly what Jesus would want. This man is casting out demons in Jesus' name. It's one of the primary signs that Jesus has brought God's kingdom to earth—and it's something that the disciples were recently unable to do—but they stop him, because he's not part of the club. The Twelve may disagree about which one of them is greatest, but they're in complete

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agreement that it's going to be one of them—not some outsider. If they can't cast the demon out, it shouldn't be cast out at all.

For Jesus, who is doing it isn't important; what's important is that people are being freed from demonic oppression.

- 'Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem'—Jesus is now entering a new phase of his mission. Up until now, he's really just been introducing himself. The miracles he has been performing have been small demonstrations of what he has come to bring: healing, freedom, abundance, and forgiveness. Now that he has shown what his kingdom is about, he is moving on to inaugurate that kingdom. It's no surprise that he would head for Jerusalem; as David's capital it would be the appropriate place to re-establish David's kingdom. If anyone really understood his plan, though, they would be very surprised that he expects to be killed, not crowned, when he arrives.
- 'a Samaritan village'—after the reign of Solomon (about 1000 years ago), David's kingdom divided in two: Judah, with Jerusalem as the capital; and Israel, with Samaria as the capital. The two kingdoms spent much of the next 300 years fighting one another, like two siblings squabbling over their father's inheritance. Israel was eventually conquered by the Assyrians, who scattered the Israelites and re-settled the area with other conquered people. The Samaritans (so named after their capital) retained some of the culture and religion as the Jews, but mixed with lots of outside influences. The bitter sibling rivalry continued to the time of Jesus, and was mixed with fights about the purity of their religion: the Jews criticized the Samaritans for their syncretism, and the Samaritans responded defensively. The Jews lived in Judea and Galilee, and Samaria lay in between the two; so Jesus is cutting through Samaria to get from Galilee to Judea.
- 'because he was heading for Jerusalem'—whether or not proper worship of God could happen only in Jerusalem was one of the biggest disagreements between Jews and Samaritans. The Samaritans aren't so keen to support Jewish pilgrimages to Jerusalem.
- 'do you want us to call fire down from heaven?'—shaking the dust off their feet is too subtle for them. They want fire. But Jesus didn't come to bring fire; he came to bring freedom and healing. His followers are called to bless those who curse them (Luke 6: 28), not burn them. Ever since the crowd interrupted their vacation, the disciples have had difficulty imitating their Father by showing mercy and generosity.
- 'first let me bury my father'—this person may be asking more than just, 'Can I go to my father's funeral?' It could be that his father is still alive and well, but he wants to wait until his father's death to follow. Similarly, the next man might be saying, 'Let me get my affairs in order,' rather than just, 'Is it alright if I say goodbye?' The point of these three interactions is that following Jesus can't be fit in around other commitments; it's the top priority, the choice which affects all your other choices. Up until now, Jesus has been drawing huge crowds and welcoming everyone who comes; now, he's doing some winnowing. As he makes his way to confrontation with the leaders in Jerusalem, he wants to make sure people know the stakes when they decide to follow him.

Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* Jesus commands us to heal the sick and to free people from spiritual oppression, but often our ability does not match our assignment. Pray that Jesus would increase your ability to bring freedom from sickness and evil spirits to the people around you.

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- *For your six:* Many people have a great deal of respect for Jesus' teaching, but they have a hard time understanding his death or believing in his resurrection. That's no big surprise: Jesus' followers were the exact same way, until they'd actually seen Jesus die and rise again. Is Jesus' death or resurrection something getting in the way of any of your six believing in him? The big mistake the disciples make is not asking the questions they have. Pray that your six would have the faith, the interest, and the boldness to ask their questions about the meaning of Jesus' death.
- *For our city:* Ask God to do something amazing in our city in our generation. On behalf of our city, turn around from unbelief and ask God for more faith. Pray that the paths of our hearts would be straightened so that Jesus can bring to us the good things he wants for our city.

Saturday, March 17th

Luke 10:1-24

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

5 "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' 6 If the head of the house loves peace, your peace will rest on that house; if not, it will return to you. 7 Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for workers deserve their wages. Do not move around from house to house.

8 "When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. 9 Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' 10 But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 11 'Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.' 12 I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

13 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. 15 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

16 "Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me."

17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."

18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

21 At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

22 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

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23 Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. 24 For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it."

Points of Interest:

- 'appointed seventy-two others'—some of the earliest manuscripts say 'seventy others.' If so, this story might be about Jesus' mission expanding beyond the Jews to the entire world: the twelve apostles represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the seventy disciples the seventy nations of the world (from Genesis 10, which describes the seventy descendants of Noah who spread out and fill the earth). This broadening of the mission may be merely symbolic at this point, since the disciples are being sent to the towns where Jesus himself is about to go, which would mean the towns of Judea. Then again, maybe 'every town and place where he was about to go,' is meant in a spiritual sense, not a literal one.
- 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few'—there are plenty of people who want to hear Jesus' good news. What's lacking is enough people to share it.
- 'I am sending you out like lambs among wolves'—this isn't an unfortunate necessity, but a purposeful strategy on Jesus' part. He actually strips them of provisions so that they will seem even weaker and more defenseless.
- 'do not greet anyone on the road'—in other words, don't dawdle. Jesus wants them to be focused on their mission.
- 'if not, it will return to you'—you don't lose any peace by trying to give it away; it either multiplies, or simply returns to you. There's no harm done if you try to bless someone who doesn't want to be blessed.
- 'eating and drinking whatever they give you'—Jesus twice commands them to eat what they are given. At the feeding of the 5000, Jesus made clear that he expected his followers to be good hosts. Here, he adds that it's also important for them to be good guests. Eating whatever is set before them could be difficult for the disciples for a couple of reasons: they don't want to be a burden to their guests; or they won't like what their guests offer. But Jesus tells them to accept whatever hospitality is offered. I can think of a few reasons this might be important.
 1. To honor their hosts—by graciously accepting whatever is offered;
 2. To meet their own needs—without bread or money, it's the only way they're going to eat. Besides, they are offering something very valuable to these people; it's reasonable to expect that they might receive something in exchange;
 3. To build a friendship—eating with someone is a great way to get to know them.

Jesus' repeated command to eat whatever they are given becomes particularly meaningful if they are actually being sent to non-Jews, who wouldn't necessarily be serving kosher food. If it's not relevant now, it will be in Luke's sequel, the book of Acts.

- 'Do not move around'—they might be tempted to move from house to house to get to know everyone a little, to spread out the burden of hospitality, or simply to move to a house they like better. But Jesus wants them to prefer depth of relationship to breadth of relationship on this particular mission. If they spend all of their time with one family, that family can learn more about Jesus, which they can share with the rest of the town once the disciples move on.

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- 'Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near'—the message is true whether it's been received or not.
- 'Woe to you, Bethsaida!'—Bethsaida, Chorazin, and Capernaum are all Jewish towns in Galilee, places where Jesus has spent much of his time. Tyre and Sidon are famous nearby Gentile cities. In the end, it may be a little surprising which towns welcome Jesus' coming and which do not.
- 'Whoever listens to you listens to me'—they are not just messengers; they are Jesus' agents, with his own authority.
- 'even the demons submit to us'—there have been some problems with casting out demons recently; so it's good to see that the seventy-two have success.
- 'Satan'—*Satan* is a name for the devil. It means, 'enemy.'
- 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven'—though they look like lambs amongst wolves, they are actually powerful enough to do real damage to the devil.
- 'but rejoice that your names are written in heaven'—it's exciting to have played a part in such great supernatural events, and it's a good thing to see Satan defeated. But Jesus reminds them here that they haven't been chosen because of the wonderful things that they can do. They are with him because they are sick with sin, and he is a sin doctor. As Jesus said in Thursday's passage, 'What good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self?' They need to beware of getting so wrapped up in the powerful deeds they can do that they neglect being healed by Jesus themselves.

Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* Jesus tells us that there are huge spiritual rewards in being a good host and in being a good guest. Which role comes more naturally to you? For the next few days, try to pay attention to issues of hospitality. Consciously make an effort to stretch either your hosting muscles or your guest muscles. As you do so, are you experiencing any rewards? What are they?
- *For your six:* Ask Jesus to give your six more peace. Pray that they would be able to accept the peace that he gives them.
- *For our city:* Pray that the devil's power in our city would be overthrown. Ask God to de-fang the evil spirits who would do our city harm.

Sunday, March 18th

Luke 10:25-42

25 On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?"

27 He answered, " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' "

28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

29 But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

30 In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

31 A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. 32 So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds,

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pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

36 "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

37 The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. 40 But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, 42 but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Points of Interest:

- 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'—this question follows nicely on Jesus' comment to the seventy-two about paying attention to your own soul. This man, unlike the other teachers of the law we've seen, is not arguing with Jesus over the minutia of interpretation. He's asking an open-ended, fundamental question.
- 'What is written in the Law?'—even though Jesus outranks Moses (as we learned from the vision on the mountain), he doesn't repudiate him. Moses' laws are God's guidelines to direct his people toward life. The very Law in which this man is an expert holds the answer to his question. So, Jesus wants to know what the man has found. The man picks out two commandments that seem to summarize what the Law is all about: love God (Deuteronomy 6:5), and love people (Leviticus 19:18). That these two commandments would be the most significant ones is not entirely obvious; the one from Leviticus particularly is sort of tucked away amongst many seemingly random, detailed instructions. So, the man shows some insight. He wouldn't be the only law expert of the day to give this answer, though.
- 'Do this and you will live'—this is probably a bit unexpected. I think the law expert was inviting Jesus into a debate. The teachers of the law had debates on topics like this one all the time. On this particular topic, different experts might argue back and forth about the relative importance of the ethical law and the sacrificial law: is it more important to love your neighbor, or to offer the proper sacrifices? When the expert chooses the ethical angle, he might expect Jesus to then give the best argument for sacrifices, rather like the rules in a high school debate tournament. The law expert thinks of Jesus as a debate partner, but Jesus thinks of himself as a doctor; he's giving the lawyer a prescription for eternal life.
- 'But he wanted to justify himself'—the simplicity of, 'do this and you will live,' embarrasses the man. He needs to show Jesus that the question is a lot more complicated than Jesus indicates.
- 'who is my neighbor?'—now the man starts to sound like the other teachers of the law. What exactly is a neighbor? How many doors down does the definition of neighbor extend?
- 'he passed by on the other side'—this is not as callous as it sounds. To touch a dead man would make them ritually unclean, which would make them temporarily unable to

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do their jobs. Of course, the chance of saving someone's life is worth such a temporary disruption. As Jesus said regarding the Sabbath, 'Is it better to do good or to do harm?' (Luke 6:9).

- 'But a Samaritan'—Jesus compares the most spiritual Jews—the priests and Levites—to a heretical Samaritan. The priest and Levite might know the Law better than the Samaritan. But that's not the point. Doing it is what leads to life.
- 'he took pity on him'—the Samaritan sympathizes with the man, rather than thinking about the hassle helping him will cause.
- 'and took care of him'—this Samaritan is an illustration of doing good to those who hate you. He's a Samaritan who goes out of his way to help a Jew.
- 'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor?'—the lawyer's question is, basically, 'Who am I required to love?' Jesus turns it around: If loving your neighbor is the way to life, then go out and find some neighbors to love, even if it means making a stranger or an enemy into a neighbor.
- 'Martha was distracted'—it's possible to take hospitality too far. Martha gets so embroiled in her duties as a hostess that she spends no time with Jesus and she gets angry at her sister—that's pretty far away from loving God with your whole heart and loving your neighbor as yourself. Jesus accepts people's hospitality because it's a great way to spend time together. It doesn't work if Martha is so intent on throwing the perfect party that she's busy and worried.

Taking it home:

- *For you and your family:* Make sure that you go out of your way to love someone else today (or tomorrow if you don't read this until late in the day). At the end of the day, share your stories with your family, your roommates, or a friend. Jesus says that loving the people around us is a way to experience eternal life. Do you feel like your life is more abundant, more real, or just plain better in some way because you loved a neighbor? Whether or not that's true, talk to Jesus about your experience.
- *For your six:* Pray for your six too, that God would give them better, more rewarding lives as they go out of their way to love other people. Jesus says that if we do these things, we will, in fact, live.
- *For our city:* Ask God to save our city from busyness and worry. Pray that the people of our city would have richer, fuller relationships with one another and with God. Pray that God would give us the power to remove distractions that get in the way of good relationships.