

9 studies on Luke chs 12 to 15

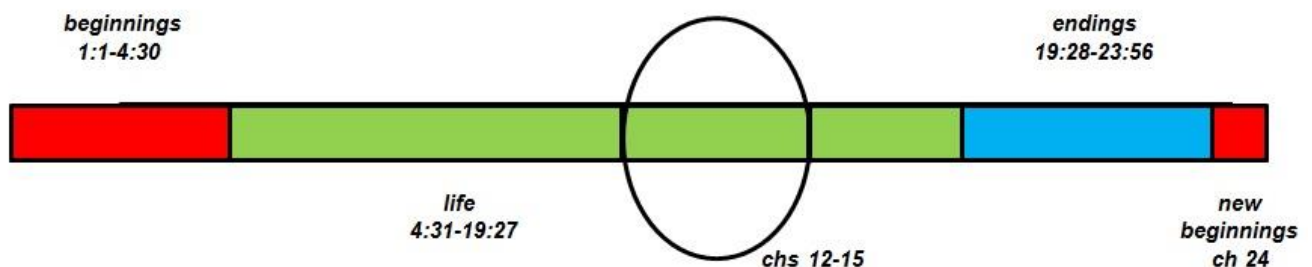
Luke tells us that he had had a chance to stand back from the extraordinary events that had been going on, to talk to the people involved, to read some earlier writings, and to make his own quite full version so that readers could know the truth about the things to do with Jesus. He was an educated and cultured man, the first real historian to write about Jesus. His book places Jesus not only at the heart of the Jewish world of the first century, but at the heart of the Roman world into which the Christian gospel exploded and which it was destined to change so radically.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p xii.

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Luke's Gospel



In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: Stephen Gibson's Bible study booklet on Luke chs 9 - 13 from term 3, 2002; Bible Briefs from The Briefing magazine # 310 and # 324; the Pathway Bible Guide, Following Jesus by Gordon Cheng; Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright, The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock, The Message of John by Bruce Milne, The New Bible Dictionary, the Life Application Study Bible, The Shack by Wm. Paul Young, Luke (Tyndale Commentary) by Leon Morris, The Wrong Messiah by Nick Page, The Quest Study Bible NIV 1994, Jesus on Fake News 8 studies on Luke 12-15 by Kerry Nagel and my 17 Studies on The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chs 5 – 7).

Study 1, Luke 12:1-12, hypocrisy & fear

Getting started

1. How would you answer the allegation that “the church is full of hypocrites”?

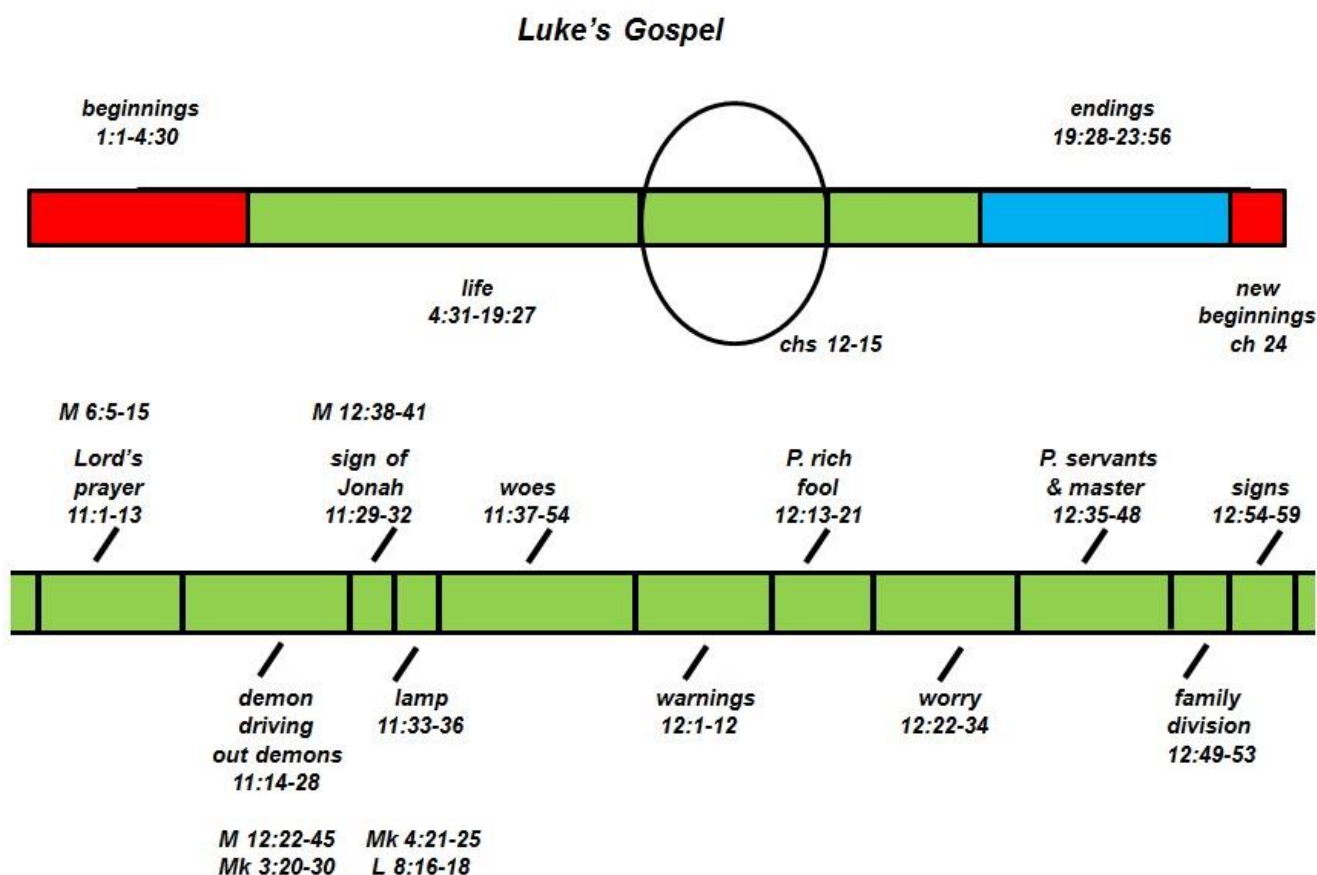


The story so far . . .

Earlier chapters of Luke give us a picture of who Jesus is. People asked the question (4:22, 5:21), supernatural voices from both heaven and hell answered it (3:22, 4:41). By these voices, and Jesus' deeds and words, we get the answer that Jesus is both man and God.

Luke moves on to give us a picture of who and what Jesus' people are. The new Israel begins to emerge from the old Israel of chapter 6. Jesus replaces the outworn Jewish system with a new religion and a new nation of his own. His people are to be known as his 'church' who are 'called out' from the kingdom of Satan, as their predecessors were called first out of heathendom and then out of slavery in Egypt. The miracles of chapter 8 are both concerned with the instruction of these 'new Israelites' as well as demonstrating who Jesus is. (From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock p 105 and 106.)

Chapters 9 to 11 give us a picture of Jesus training his disciples. He sent the twelve out in chapter 9 and the 72 in chapter 10 to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Jesus gave them a bigger picture of who he is by feeding the 5,000, conquering an evil spirit and appearing with Moses and Elijah on a mountain. Then he taught them about humility, the cost of discipleship, love, prayer, light and darkness and the dangers involved in following him which is where we begin chapter 12.



The "M", "Mk" and "J" references show where similar verses are repeated in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John.

Bible

2. Read Luke 12:1-3

The Pharisees have been frequently characterised as holier-than-thou people who spent their time loading rules and regulations onto other people. Call someone 'a Pharisee', and we cast them as a sanctimonious hypocrite: pompous, self-satisfied, smug. Of course, such a caricature owes its origins to Jesus' stinging criticism of the Pharisees as recorded in the Gospels. They were 'whitewashed tombs' (Matt. 23:27), looking pious but full of evil.

No doubt there were some Pharisees like that — as there are in any religious movement — but what is interesting about the Pharisees is that they were, at heart, a kind of grass-roots holiness movement. They were popular in the rural areas and the poorer parts of the cities, precisely because they were attempting to redefine Judaism in a way which the ordinary Jew could follow. They did create a mass of rules and regulations which, judging by Jesus' criticisms, caused difficulty and confusion, but they did so because they wanted to help people observe the Jewish faith. Their rules and regulations, complex though they are, were an attempt to deal, with the complexities of Torah law in everyday life. Their rulings reflect life in the villages and hamlets of Palestine, with all its myriad conflicts and difficulties.

If they were trying to help, though, to solve the problems of observing Torah law in everyday life, why did Jesus lay into them so much? The answer seems to lie in the nature of that solution. The Pharisees solved the problem of obeying the laws by weaving a web of even more intricate laws and decisions. Reading the Mishnah — the code which was developed from this tradition — one is struck by the sheer complexity of everything.

Jesus' solution was simpler: don't do it. Cut through the religious red tape. It is popular among scholars to argue that Jesus was not really opposed to the rules and regulation at all, and that the passages saying this in the Gospels are late Christian inventions, created by anti-Jewish factions within the young church. But there are simply too many instances where Jesus butts up against Jewish purity laws of one kind or another to see them all as inventions. The church may have emphasised these criticisms, but the constant refrain of the Gospels is that Jesus had no time for the minutiae of religious observance if it got in the way of real repentance and real relationship. He ate with the wrong people, he did not wash properly (Mark 7:15), he did not see the need for fasting (Luke 5:33-39, Mark 2:19), his Sabbath observance was questionable (Luke 6:1-5, Matt. 12:1-8). He did not even acknowledge the priority of Moses' instructions (Mark 10:2-9).

Both the Pharisees and Jesus wanted to democratise holiness, but they went about it in different ways. Jesus' approach was to shatter the taboos (see Mark 7:14-15, 2:27-28, Luke 6:1-11).

Jesus was not throwing out the Torah, nor was he abandoning Judaism. What he was doing, it seems, was redefining the relationship of a Jew to the Torah. For Jesus the Torah was no longer the ultimate standard.

This, then, is the root of Jesus' complaint against the Pharisees. It was not their aims but their solutions which were wrong. Where the Pharisees believed that they were helping people to worship, Jesus charged them with burdening people with more regulations. And, frequently, they weren't living up to their own rules. Jesus pointed out, time and again, the difference between their scrupulous observation of the law and their sometimes less than scrupulous observation of simple justice.

This also explains why, despite his apparent anti-Pharisee rhetoric, Jesus and the Pharisees are frequently found together. They were basically on the same side. So we have many instances where Pharisees come and listen to him, even if one detects a kind of horrified fascination on their behalf. Luke records three instances where Pharisees invite Jesus to dine with them (Luke 7:36; 11:37; 14:1). And some Pharisees warned Jesus when Antipas wanted to kill him (Luke 13:31). They came to visit him and ask him questions.

From The Wrong Messiah by Nick Page pp 93-95.

3. What is hypocrisy?

4. What is yeast?

Yeasts are eukaryotic, single-celled microorganisms classified as members of the fungus kingdom. Baker's yeast is the common name for the strains of yeast commonly used as a leavening agent in baking bread and bakery products, where it converts the fermentable sugars present in the dough into carbon dioxide and ethanol. Sugar in a bread dough provides food for the growth of yeasts.

5. Why does Jesus compare hypocrisy to yeast (v1)?

6. Why is hypocrisy ultimately foolish (vv 2 – 3)?

 7. (a) What rules should you follow to live a better Christian life?

(b) How are rules and regulations a great way to conceal hypocrisy?

(c) How do you live a better Christian life if you haven't got rules to follow?

 8. Read Luke 12:4-12.
What should we be afraid of and what shouldn't we be afraid of?
-
9. Besides sparrows and hair counting (a) what value does Jesus put on human life?

(b) what value do we put on human life and how do we show that in our actions?

 10. Wasn't Peter ashamed of Jesus when he denied him three times (Luke 22:54-62)? Didn't Peter disown Jesus?
(a) How do Peter's actions and attitude fit in with what Jesus has said about being ashamed and disowning (Luke 12:8-10)?

(b) How does forgiveness factor into the discussion (see John 21:15-17)?

 11. Verses 4 – 12 are a rebuke to half-hearted Christianity. We should be ready to meet what life throws at us but does v12 give us an excuse for poor preparation when we come to defend our faith? Why/why not?

Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. This had worried many sincere Christians, but it does not need to. The unforgivable sin means attributing to Satan the work that the Holy Spirit accomplishes. Thus it is deliberate and ongoing rejection of the Holy Spirit's work and even of God himself. A person who has committed this sin has shut himself or herself off from God so thoroughly that he or she is unaware of any sin at all. A person who fears having committed it shows, by his or her very concern, that he or she has not sinned in this way.

From the Life Application Study Bible p1829.

Jesus issues his sternest rebuke. Whoever sins against the Holy Spirit can never be forgiven. This is a verse which has engendered masses of comment and interpretation over the years, by people trying to define what the unforgivable sin is. (Often it turns out to be the sin that they themselves wish to condemn the most.) In context [Luke 11:14-20], however, it seems that Jesus is talking about the kind of thing that has just happened: the accusation that he is evil. Those who look at what he is doing and categorise it as demonic cannot be forgiven. For, having dismissed their Saviour, who are they going to ask?

From The Wrong Messiah by Nick Page pp143-144.

To finish

12. (a) Does fear cause hypocrisy? Why/why not?

(b) In what situations might we be tempted to “act a part”? Is this being hypocritical?

13. “You have nothing to fear except fear itself”.

(a) How true is this statement in the light of what we have been studying?

(b) How does Jesus ease or extinguish our fears?



Study 2, Luke 12:13-34, money

Getting started

1. Listen to Gordon Gekko's speech at a shareholders' meeting in the movie Wall Street (1987). Gordon Gekko is addressing the shareholders of a company called Teldar Paper. Michael Douglas won the Academy Award for Best Actor for his portrayal of Gordon Gekko. Play the file GreedIsGood.mp3.

"Teldar Paper, Mr. Cromwell, Teldar Paper has 33 different vice presidents, each earning over \$200,000 a year. Now, I have spent the last two months analysing what all these guys do, and I still can't figure it out. One thing I do know is that our paper company lost \$110 million last year, and I'll bet that half of that was spent in all the paperwork going back and forth between all these vice presidents.

The new law of evolution in corporate America seems to be survival of the un-fittest. Well, in my book you either do it right or you get eliminated.

In the last seven deals that I've been involved with, there were 2.5 million stockholders who have made a pre-tax profit of \$12 billion.

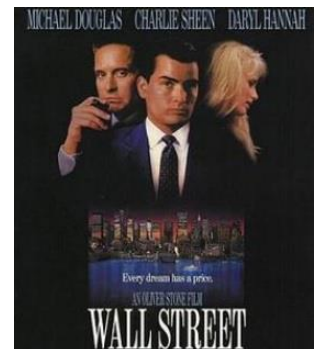
I am not a destroyer of companies. I am a liberator of them!

The point is, ladies and gentleman, that greed -- for lack of a better word -- is good.

Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms - greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge - has marked the upward surge of mankind. And greed - you mark my words - will not only save Teldar Paper, but that other malfunctioning corporation called the USA.

Thank you very much."

In our economic system is greed good or bad? Why/why not?

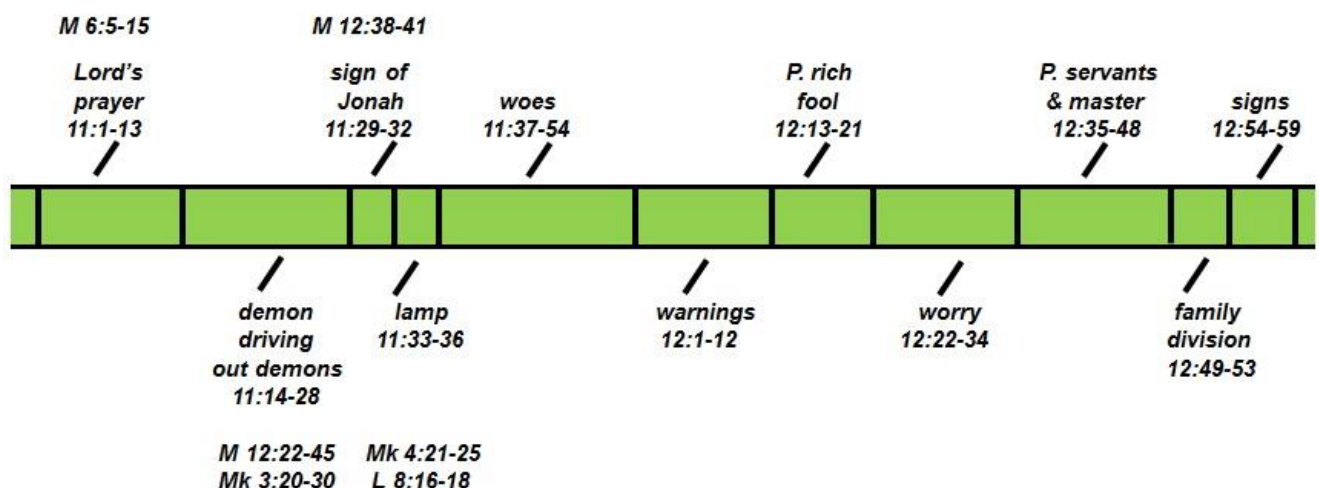


The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. In the first part of chapter 12 he warns them about the Pharisees, hypocrisy, the fear of death, the consequences of disowning him and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, and the prospect of being brought before rulers and authorities.

Bible

2. Read Luke 12:13-21.



A Parable is a metaphor or simile which compares a religious truth with a common experience or circumstance in life. Jesus often used parables to teach the meaning of his own life and ministry, and the nature of the kingdom of God.

Parables are a punchy form of communication designed to creep up on you without your knowing it. They are like time bombs. They look innocuous and are therefore received quite readily, only to go off suddenly and shatter your way of looking at life.

From Postcard from Palestine by Andrew Reid p 48.

Like the ancient prophets of Israel Jesus conveyed a lot of his message through what we call **prophetic signs** or **enacted parables**. He offered pieces of public theatre to drive home the message. This is such a massive part of the Jewish background that I think modern Christians, and certainly the general public, don't spot.

Just to give you some examples:

Hosea, the prophet 700 years before Jesus, was told to marry a known prostitute [Hosea chs 1-3]. Why? It was a prophetic symbol. He actually did it but it was meant to be a prophetic symbol of the fact that God was married to Israel who had prostituted itself. . . .

Ezekiel. I think he probably got the rawest deal. He had to do a whole bunch of things: lie on his left side for months, lie on his right side for months [Eze 4:4-8]. But he also had to build a little model of Jerusalem in the public court. Then, everyone's watching the prophet and he had to attack it – play war games against this little model of Jerusalem without saying anything and everyone was saying he's playing war games against this little model of Jerusalem [Eze 4:1-3]. The point was clear: Jerusalem would fall. . . .

Into the New Testament period, John the Baptist called everyone out to actually go to the Jordan River. They *had* to go into the Jordan River. There were plenty of other rivers, streams and baths around Israel but you had to go into the Jordan. Why? Because that's where Israel had begun on their journey to get into the Promised Land. They had to go through the Jordan. It was a prophetic sign that Israel has to begin again, or it will end. . . .

This is such a huge part of the prophetic mindset and of Jewish culture that unless you look at the life of Jesus through this lens you really miss a lot of what Jesus was trying to do. He selected 12 apostles, not 11, not 13. Why? A symbol of the 12 tribes of Israel. These were the 12 new patriarchs. Israel begins again. He dined and wined with sinners not just because he was a leftie liberal. No, it was a prophetic enacted parable of the invitation God was making to sinners to join his table. He was acting out his message of preaching.

From a sermon by John Dickson on Mark ch 11 at St Andrews, Roseville, 15/3/2015.

(a) Was it wrong for the person to seek a share of the inheritance (v13)? Why/why not?

(b) What was Jesus more concerned about?

(c) How would an Old Testament Jew become rich before God (v21) – see Luke 10:25-37?

(d) From what Jesus has so far taught his disciples in Luke, how would his disciples become rich before God (see Luke 9:18-27)?

(e) Explain how these two ideas, Luke 10:25-37 and Luke 9:18-27, match up to mean the same thing.

3. Read Luke 12:22-34.

(a) How would you define "worry"?

(b) What are you worried about?

(c) What view of God do worrying Christians apparently have?

(d) In what ways does Jesus' picture of God contrast with the worrying Christian's view?

(e) What does it mean to be given the kingdom (v32)?

Graeme Goldsworthy describes the kingdom of God as God's people in God's place under God's rule. From Gospel and Kingdom p 47 by Graeme Goldsworthy.

Video

This Nooma video, #18, called Name. It goes for about 14 minutes. It is relevant to what we have been studying in Luke because Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him and, more than that, this means they have a new identity. We too have a new identity, a new name, in Christ. We will talk about the video after it has finished and if you have any questions we will deal with them too.



4. What are your first impressions of this video?

5. What follows is a sample of the words on the back of the T-shirts.
 - (a) What does each word mean to you?
 - designer suits
 - pick-up trucks
 - immigrant
 - weak
 - ashamed
 - bankrupt

 - (b) What have these names got to do with "identity"?

(c) What does the bare skin signify?

6. Rob Bell tells the story of Jacob. After wrestling with the angel, the angel asks "What is your name?" Jacob answers "Jacob" (not Esau). (a) Why is this significant?

(b) How does Rob Bell relate this story about Jacob to us?

7. Rob Bell tells the story about how Jesus tells Peter that he is going to be a leader in his church (John ch 21) and Peter looks to John and says "What about him?" Jesus says don't worry about John, you follow me. How does Rob Bell relate this story to us?
8. What do you think is the take home message from the video?

May you do the hard work to discover your true self.
May you find your unique path, the one God has for you.
And in the process, may you find yourself comfortable in your own skin.

To finish

9. "Sell your possessions and give to the poor" (v33). How far should we go?
10. Play 2 verses of "Don't Worry Be Happy" by Bobby McFerrin.

Here's a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry, be happy
In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy

Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style
Ain't got no gal to make you smile
But don't worry, be happy
When you worry your face will frown
And that will bring everybody down
So don't worry, be happy
Don't worry, be happy now

Is this consistent with what Jesus is saying in Luke 12:22-31? Why/why not?

Study 3, Luke 12:35-59, anticipation

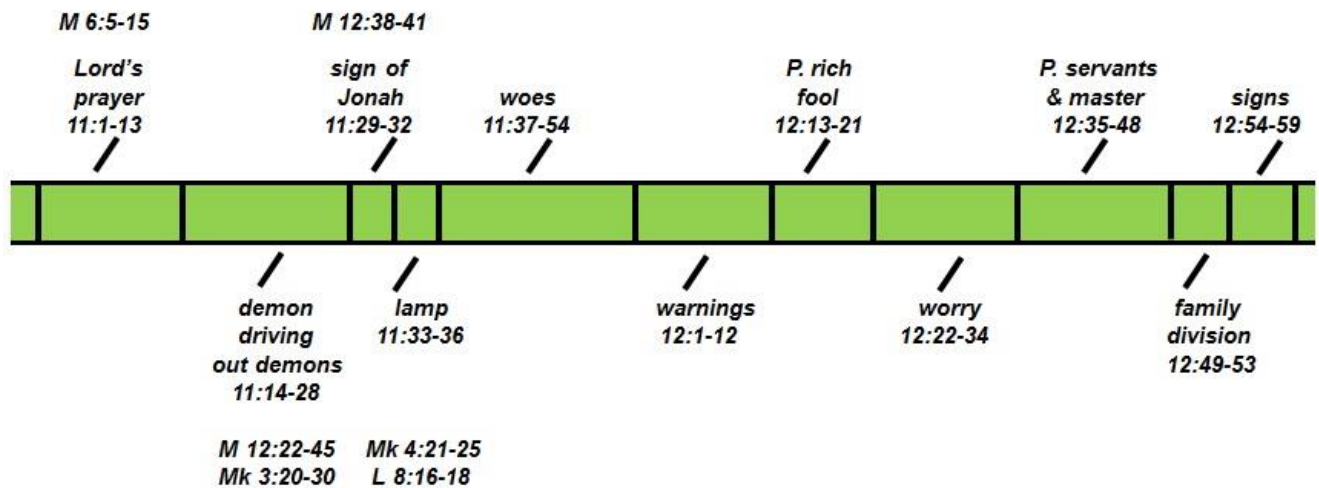
Getting started

- Can you remember when you have had to wait a long time for something? How did you feel? How did you cope with the waiting? How did you prepare for the event or person you were waiting for?



The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. In chapter 12 he warns them about the Pharisees, hypocrisy, the fear of death, the consequences of disowning him and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, and the prospect of being brought before rulers and authorities. Jesus tells a parable to teach them about greed and then reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry.



Bible

- Read Luke 12:35-48.
(Verse 38: The Jews divided the night into 3 watches and the Romans divided the night into 4 watches.)
(a) Briefly look back over the themes of the last study. How is expecting Jesus' return a further antidote to worry?

(b) In Jewish tradition, weddings were held at night. The servants would wait to serve their master and his bride when they arrived.
(i) What is different in Jesus' parable (vv 35 – 38)?

(ii) How is this encouraging for us?

(c) What is hard about watching and waiting?

(d) What must we do while we wait?

3. (a) What is the answer to Peter's question of v41?

(b) What is the faithful and wise manager supposed to do?

(c) How is the unfaithful servant (vv 45 – 46) similar to the rich fool of Luke 12:16-20?

(d) Does v46 teach that unfaithful believers can lose their salvation?

(e) How does the faithful and wise manager relate to us?

4. Read Luke 12:49-53.

(a) What is the fire Jesus is talking about (v49)?

(b) What is the baptism that is so distressing for Jesus (v50)?

(c) Has this baptism got anything to do with a Christian's baptism (see Rom 6:1-10)?

(d) "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division" (v51).
How do you make sense of this compared to Luke 2:14 and Phil 4:4-7?

5. Read Luke 12:54-59.

(a) What does the crowd fail to interpret (v56)?

(b) What has judgement got to do with not interpreting the Jesus era correctly (vv 57 – 59)?

To finish

6. Are there clear signs for Jesus' coming today? Discuss.

7. The song "Anticipation" (1971) was written by Carly Simon about her relationship with Cat Stevens. If we can re-think the lyrics in terms of our relationship with Jesus, what do they say about relationship with Jesus and our waiting for him to return?

We can never know about the days to come
 But we think about them anyway
 And I wonder if I'm really with you now
 Or just chasing after some finer day.

And I tell you how easy it feels to be with you
 And how right your arms feel around me.
 But I rehearsed those words just late last night
 When I was thinking about how right tonight might be.

And tomorrow we might not be together
 I'm no prophet, I don't know nature's way
 So I'll try to see into your eyes right now
 And stay right here, 'cause these are the good old days.

Chorus: Anticipation, Anticipation
 Is making me late
 Is keeping me waiting

Chorus



Study 4, Luke 13:1-17, repentance and freedom

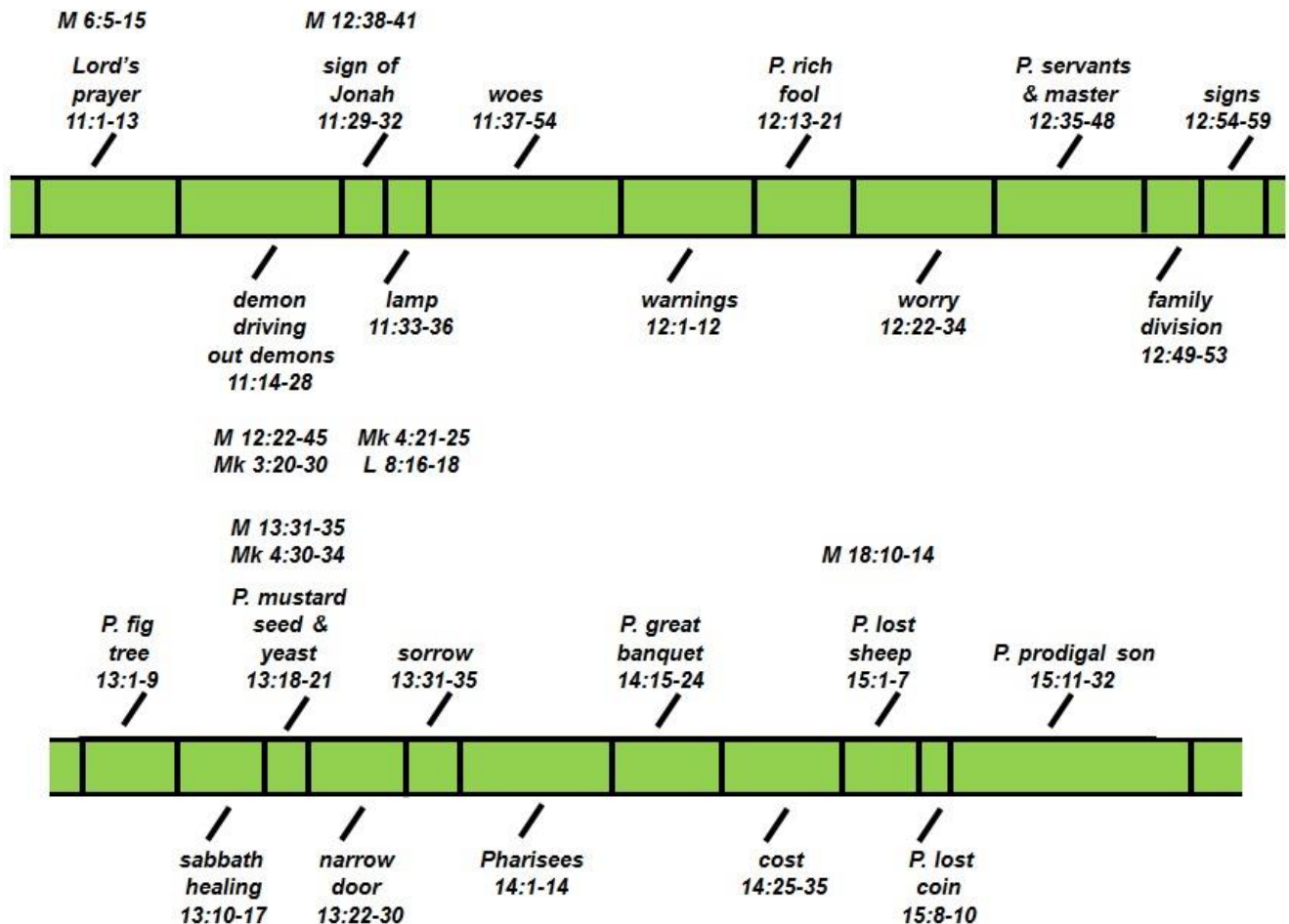
Getting started

1. If something bad happens to you, do you think . . .
 - (a) you are unlucky?
 - (b) the Devil did it?
 - (c) God is punishing you for some sin?
 - (d) God is disciplining you to make you more godly?
 - (e) this is a random event?
 - (f) it's under God's control?
 - (h) none of the above?
 - (i) more than one of the above (which ones?)

Give reason(s) for your selection(s).

The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. In chapter 12 he warns them about the Pharisees, hypocrisy, the fear of death, the consequences of disowning him and blaspheming against the Holy Spirit, the prospect of being brought before rulers and authorities and the likelihood of division within their families because of their faith in him. Jesus tells parables to teach them about greed and to be ready for God's return to earth and he reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry.



Bible

2. Read Luke 13:1-5.

If the New Testament had never been written, we would still know that **Pontius Pilate** was an unpleasant and unpopular Governor of Judaea. The Jewish historian Josephus lists several things he did which upset and irritated the local Jewish population. Sometimes he seemed to be deliberately trying to make them angry. He trampled on their religious sensibilities; once he tried to bring Roman standards (military emblems) into Jerusalem, with their pagan symbols. He flouted their laws and conventions; once he used money from the Temple treasury to build an aqueduct, and then brutally crushed the rebellion that resulted. These incidents, and others like them, are recorded outside the New Testament, and help us to understand what sort of person Pilate was.

So it shouldn't surprise us to learn that on another occasion, while some people on pilgrimage from Galilee had been offering sacrifice in the Temple, Pilate sent the troops in, perhaps fearing a riot, and slaughtered them. The present passage simply speaks of their own blood mingling in the Temple courtyard with the blood of their sacrifices - polluting the place, on top of the human horror and tragedy of such an event.

From Luke for Everyone pp161-162 by Tom Wright.

(a) A common belief in Jesus' time was that disaster was a punishment for sin (see John 9:1-3). How does Jesus correct this belief and also give hope?

(b) What is our society's usual response to disasters?

(c) What should a Christian response be to such tragedies?

(d) What does it mean to repent (vv 3, 5)?

3. Read Luke 13:6-9. The fig tree is probably a symbol referring to the nation Israel.

(a) What are the main points of the parable?

(b) Why is the tree given one more year?

(c) How might the fig tree/Israel have failed to "bear fruit" given their responses to Jesus (see also Luke 13:10-17)?

4. Read Luke 13:10-17

In what ways was the woman set free?

5. Why is the Sabbath the very best day for such a healing (see Luke 4:18-21)?

To finish

6. In Luke 13:5 Jesus gave a strong challenge to his hearers.
 (a) What do you think, given the context, he expected them to do (see Luke 3:8)?
- (b) How might this apply to us?
7. (If you have time.) Is there a direct link between individual sins and individual experiences of suffering/punishment (e.g. “no”: Job, Luke 13:1-5, John 9:1-3, “yes”: Jas 5:14-16, 1 Cor 11:27-32)?

This passage raises the issue of the **relationship between sin and suffering/punishment**, both at the beginning ([John ch 9] verse 2) and the end ([John ch 9] verses 39-41). Pastorally this is a very significant issue. Many people, including people who have been Christians for many years, almost intuitively, ask the question, when something goes wrong, ‘what have I done to deserve this?’ The disciples asked their question before Jesus had died and been raised. They were still working out what type of Christ/Messiah Jesus would be. They did not understand that Jesus would die for the sins of the world (despite what they heard at John 3:16). Therefore, they did not know that Jesus would take the punishment for all our sins (past, present and future). We now know that, given God’s acceptance of Jesus’ atoning death on the Cross, nothing that goes wrong for us now is the direct consequence of something we do wrong. We are forgiven. We are redeemed. We are justified. We are adopted. All these are present realities. But it’s often hard to remember these life changing truths as we deal with the challenges and disappointments of this life.

From Light the Dark the gospel of John study 17 by Mark Wormell.

Study 5, Luke 13:18-35, the kingdom of a passionate king

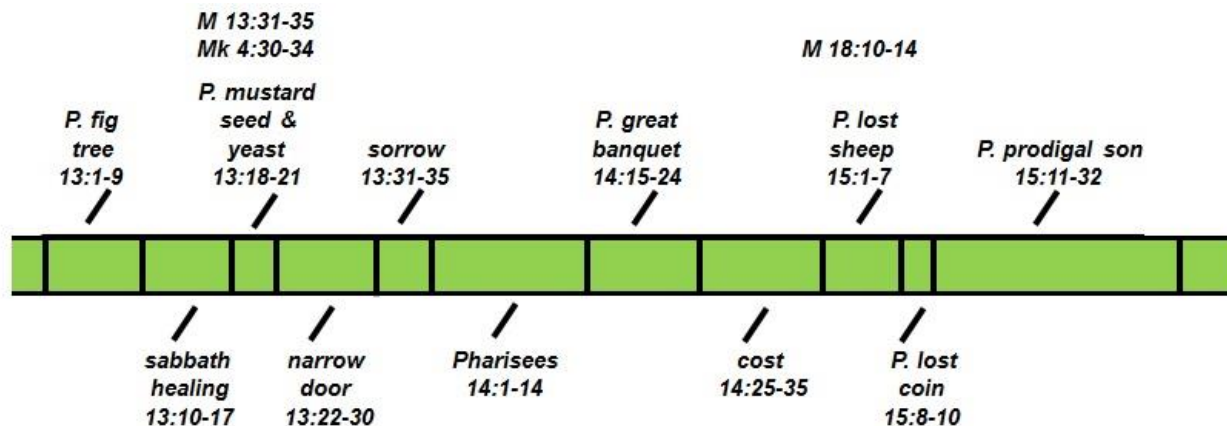
Getting started

1. What do you understand by the term “the Kingdom of God”?



The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. In chapter 12 he warns them about the dangers they are likely to encounter but reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry. Jesus uses parables to teach about the kingdom of God and the need for repentance. In chapter 13 he begins to teach the disciples about the true purpose of the Sabbath. We will learn more about this in chapter 14.



Bible

2. Read Luke 13:18-21.
(a) What promise does Jesus make?

(b) How is Jesus' Kingdom like yeast?
3. Read Luke 13:22-30.
(a) How does Jesus take the question in v23 and turn it back to those present (v24)?

(b) Jesus goes on to illustrate his point with a parable in vv 24-27. How is this parable an answer to the original question?

(c) How would you respond to a sceptic's criticism that God's conditions for salvation are too narrow?



4. Read Luke 13:31-35.

To call **Herod** "that fox" (in v32) is to say that Jesus saw him as neither a great man nor a straight man; he had neither majesty nor honour. Surprisingly it is the Pharisees who warn Jesus about Herod's threats.

"Herod king of Judea" (Luke 1:5) or Herod the Great was given the title 'king of the Jews' by the Roman Senate, advised by Antony and Octavian. He ruled Palestine for the Romans even though he was an Edomite by birth. He was king when Jesus was born and ordered the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem (Matt ch 2). After his death his kingdom was split up amongst his sons, one of whom, '**Herod the tetrarch**' or Herod Antipas, is the Herod mentioned in the rest of Luke. He inherited the Galilean and Peraean portions of his father's kingdom. In the Gospels he is conspicuous chiefly for his part in the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-28) and for his encounter with Jesus when he was sent to him by Pilate for judgement.

From The New Bible Dictionary p 522.

Herod represents all those, the majority, who hear of Jesus and discuss him but will not follow him. There is an attitude common at all levels of society, but especially among thinking, articulate people. It is not sufficient, however, that this subject should make the brain stir and the tongue wag. It is meant to move the will to action. Peter represents the minority who are moved to follow Jesus: to them his identity is revealed.

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock pp 109–110.

(a) How does Jesus respond (vv 32-33) to Herod's threats?



(b) How is this consistent with his later encounter with Herod (see Luke 23:8-12)?

(c) Is it ever right for us to hold national leaders in contempt?

How do we square this off with Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Tim 2:1-2?

5. Jesus' tone changes dramatically as his thoughts turn to Jerusalem and the final fate of its people (vv 34-35).

(a) Why do you think Jesus is so deeply passionate about Jerusalem?

(b) The image of the hen and her chicks would be a familiar one to an agricultural people, it is also drawn from the Old Testament (read Ps 91:1-4). The hen gathers her young when she sees danger coming. How is this image reassuring for us today?



To finish

6. What have these verses (Luke 13:18-35) taught you about the Kingdom of God?

Study 6, Luke 14:1-24, healing on the Sabbath and banquets

Getting started

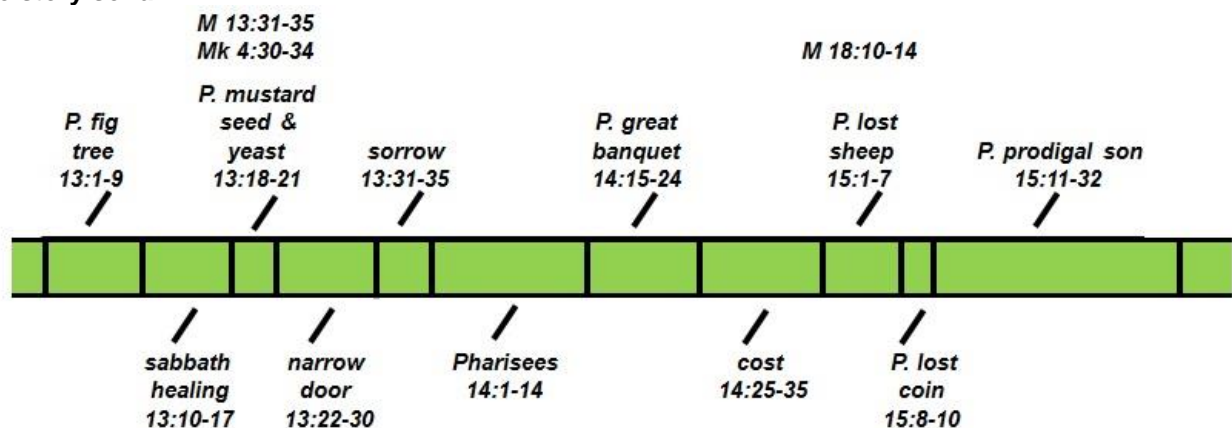
1. (a) What should you do on a Sunday? What shouldn't you do on a Sunday?
Does it matter what you do on a Sunday? Tick your answers corresponding to the list below:

[illegible]

- (b) Say we make rules for ourselves on what we should or shouldn't do on a Sunday. What is good and what is bad about this approach?

- (c) Say we decide that you can do anything you like on Sundays. What is good and what is bad about this approach?

The story so far . . .



Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. He warns them about the dangers they are likely to encounter but reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry. Jesus

uses parables to teach about the kingdom of God and begins to teach about the true purpose of the Sabbath. The Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod and Jesus hints about what will happen to him in Jerusalem, a city whose people are close to his heart.

Bible

2. Read Luke 14:1-24.

Luke indicates that the next four incidents all happened on the same occasion (compare Luke 14:1, 7, 12, 15). At a **dinner party** to which Jesus has been invited, he speaks first to lawyers and Pharisees who are present, then to the guests in general, then to his host, and finally to a fellow-guest who has interjected a pious comment. . . . Here are four responses of Jesus to the attitudes of people at the party, and they illustrate another aspect of the narrowness of the door of salvation.

From The Message of Luke p 144 by Michael Wilcock.

(a) What isn't Jesus supposed to do on the sabbath (see Luke 13:10-14)? Why not?

(b) Why do you think the Pharisees would *not* answer Jesus' question (Luke 14:3-4)?

(c) Is Jesus breaking the sabbath (see Ex 20:8-11 & Heb 4:1-11)? Why/why not?

So Jesus puts a second question, which shows up their religious beliefs for the poor things they are. Arguably, Jewish law may forbid the rescue of an animal fallen into a well on **the sabbath**; but if it's your animal, says Jesus, you won't think twice about it, will you? The law of mercy (or of self-interest) will take precedence over the law of Moses. So much for the inflexible religious principles to which they pay such ardent lip-service!

The sabbath day became a very important feature of Jewish religion, and when their vision was clearest the Jews understood that the weekly day of rest was a 'ritual anticipation of the advent of the messianic age' – a kind of picture, in the form of a religious observance, of what the whole of life would once again be like when God's Messiah comes into the world to set things right – and therefore a thing of delight. But it was easy for that truth to become obscured, and for the sabbath to be hedged around with so many 'Thou shalt nots' that instead of a delight it became a misery. It is into this situation that Jesus comes, in Luke 6:1-11 [Mark 2:23-3:6], to renew once more the vision of what the Sabbath really is.

This calls in question some of the traditional views about Sunday observance, the kind which lend colour to the ill-natured jibe that when the fourth commandment says "Thou shalt not work on Saturdays", it really means 'Thou shalt not play on Sundays'. We should indeed 'remember the sabbath day, but not as if we were still obeying the law-bound religion of Moses, which ruled that certain activities were wrong on the sabbath but right on any other day. If you apply such rules to the Christian Sunday, you are observing 'days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have laboured in vain', says Paul [Gal 4:10f, Col 2:16f].

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock pp 145, 80-81.

(d) What is the purpose of the sabbath/Sunday for us?

3. Read Luke 14:7-11.

(a) What is Jesus talking about – table etiquette or has he something more important in mind (v7)?

(b) When are we tempted to put ourselves forward?

Within Luke's lifetime thousands of non-Jews had become Christians – had entered, that is, into the dinner party prepared by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Many Jewish Christians, as we know from Acts, had found this difficult, if not impossible, to understand or approve. They were so eager to maintain their own **places at the top table** that they could not grasp God's great design to stand the world on its head. Pride, notoriously, is the great cloud which blots out the sun of God's generosity: if I reckon that I deserve to be favoured by God, not only do I declare that I don't need his grace, mercy and love, but I imply that those who don't deserve it shouldn't have it.

From Luke for Everyone pp175-176 by Tom Wright.

4. Read Luke 14:12-24.

In vv 16-24 (a) what is the invitation?

(b) Who are invited but give excuses?

(c) Who else are invited?

(d) What has this got to do with us?

(d) (i) Do you think being invited to the feast (or banquet) in the kingdom of God (Luke 14:15) is a literal feast or is it a metaphor to describe what it will be like in the kingdom of God?



(ii) If it is a metaphor what other words could you use to describe what it will be like in the kingdom of God?

To finish

5. (a) Do you think non-Xns would prefer to be invited to a "banquet" or to church? Why/why not?

(b) How can we make the invitation more like inviting someone to a "banquet"?

Study 7, Luke 14:25-35, cost of discipleship

Getting started

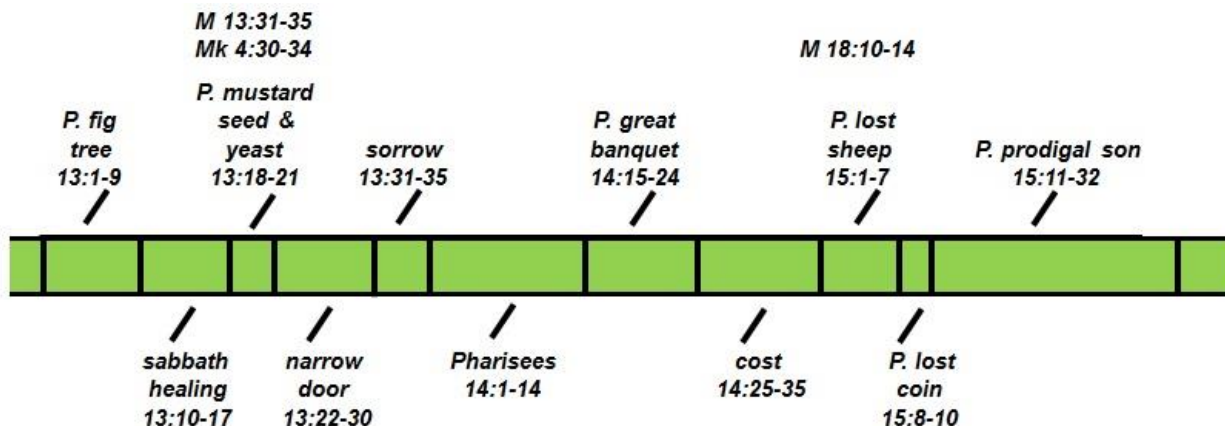
1. (a) Think of a time when you had to make a big decision. What was that decision?



- (b) How did you prepare yourself in order to make that decision?

The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. He warns them about the dangers they are likely to encounter but reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry. Jesus uses parables to teach about the kingdom of God and begins to teach about the true purpose of the Sabbath. The Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod and Jesus tries to teach them about the kingdom of God.



Bible

2. Read Luke 14:25-35.
(a) What does Jesus mean by “hating” your family?

Jesus outlines the narrow door of commitment. There is the necessity first to hate one's relatives! It sounds strange to us, perhaps, but 'to love this and to hate that' is a typical biblical way of expressing preference: 'to love this *rather than* that'. As I have suggested elsewhere, [From I Saw Heaven Opened The Message of Revelation by Michael Wilcock p 133.] 'Love for parents . . . is to be *so far surpassed* by love for him that it will seem in comparison like hatred.'

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock p 147.

- (b) What does Jesus say is the cost of following him?

- (c) What has “salt” got to do with discipleship (vv 34-35)?

Pure **salt** was not something to be taken for granted in New Testament times. It required considerable commitment to separate the sand and other impurities from the salt obtained from the Dead Sea. In the same way Christians must count the cost of purity so they will retain the full flavour of Christ and his teachings. Anything less may cause Christians to become 'unsalty' – no different than the world. If we count the cost, we won't let our 'salt' become mixed with the world's 'sand'.

From The Quest Study Bible p 1455.

3. Video

The Nooma video, #22, Tomato, by Rob Bell, is one of 24 made between 2002 and 2009. In each video Rob Bell takes an aspect of Christian life and expresses it in an interesting and challenging way. I selected this video in relation to Luke 14:33 (please read it again).

(a) What are your first impressions of this video?

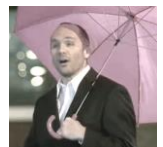


(b) What do you think is the main point of the video?

(c) What point does Rob Bell make about the image of ourselves that we try to project to people?

Most of Rob Bell's videos have a story going on in the background while Rob Bell is talking. This video has Rob Bell talking to us in his kitchen with occasional clips of other scenes of people doing various things. In each of these clips there is a bloke with a pink umbrella interacting with someone else. One clip has a lady with shopping bags going into a shop, another clip has a bloke playing a video game on the couch and rings his wife (?) to get him a can of fizzy, another clip is of one kid eating a sandwich and the other kid eating cake, another clip is of a bloke in a newsagent with the umbrella man trying to convince him to buy a magazine, another clip is of a bloke looking at an attractive young lady as he approaches his car and the last clip is of Rob Bell (?) taking his dog for a run with the umbrella man chasing after him.

(d) How does the umbrella man and these short clips relate to what Rob Bell is talking about?



(e) How does this video fit in with Luke 14:33?

Rob Bell finishes with:

So may you lose your life, and in the process, find it.

May the love of God free you from fear.

And may you trust that Jesus saves.

To finish

4. What things would someone need to consider before making the decision to follow Christ?

Study 8, Luke 15:11–32, The Parable of the Prodigal Son

Getting started

1. (a) Think back to when you were thinking about becoming a Christian.
What were your expectations of what being a Christian would be like?

- (b) Did Christianity meet your expectations?

- (c) (i) Do you feel there should be more to Christianity than what you have found?
(ii) If so what is it that you are still looking for?

- (d) Play Still haven't found.mp3 from U2's 1987 album The Joshua Tree.

I have climbed highest mountain
I have run through the fields
Only to be with you
Only to be with you

I have run
I have crawled
I have scaled these city walls
These city walls
Only to be with you

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for

I have kissed honey lips
Felt the healing in her fingertips
It burned like fire
This burning desire

I have spoke with the tongue of angels
I have held the hand of a devil
It was warm in the night
I was cold as a stone

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for

I believe in the kingdom come
Then all the colours will bleed into one
Bleed into one
Well yes I'm still running

You broke the bonds and you
Loosed the chains
Carried the cross
Of my shame
Of my shame
You know I believe it

But I still haven't found what I'm looking for
But I still haven't found what I'm looking for

(e) What do you think this song is about?

(f) Do you think the person who wrote these words is a Christian? Why/why not?

(g) What might the writer be looking for?

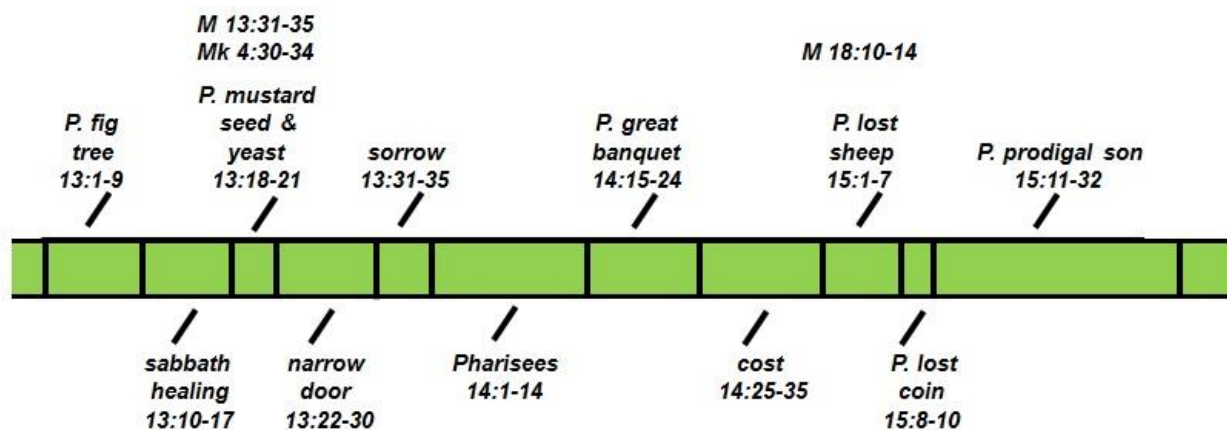


(h) Would you describe him as lost? Why/why not?

(i) Do you think other Christians might feel this way? Why/why not?

The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. He warns them about the dangers they are likely to encounter but reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry. Jesus uses parables to teach about the kingdom of God and begins to teach about the true purpose of the Sabbath. The Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod and Jesus tries to teach them about the kingdom of God. To the crowds Jesus teaches about the costs of discipleship.



Bible

2. Read Luke 15:11-32. We will come back to Luke 15:1-10 in the next study.

(a) (i) What was the younger brother looking for?

(ii) How did he come to make a 180 degree turn around?

(iii) What did he find?

(b) What does this parable say about the father?

(c) What does this parable say about the older brother?

(d) Read Luke 15:1-2.

(i) To whom is Jesus telling the parables of chapter 15?

(ii) Who do you think the older brother represents? Give reasons for your answer.

To finish

3. (a) (i) Do you know of people you thought of as Christians, who seem to go away from the faith?

(ii) Why did they go away?

(b) (i) Have you known people who have gone away then come back?

(ii) Why did they come back?

(c) (i) How do you treat people who have gone away then come back?

(ii) How do you treat people who have gone away but not come back?

(d) How does this parable help us answer these questions?

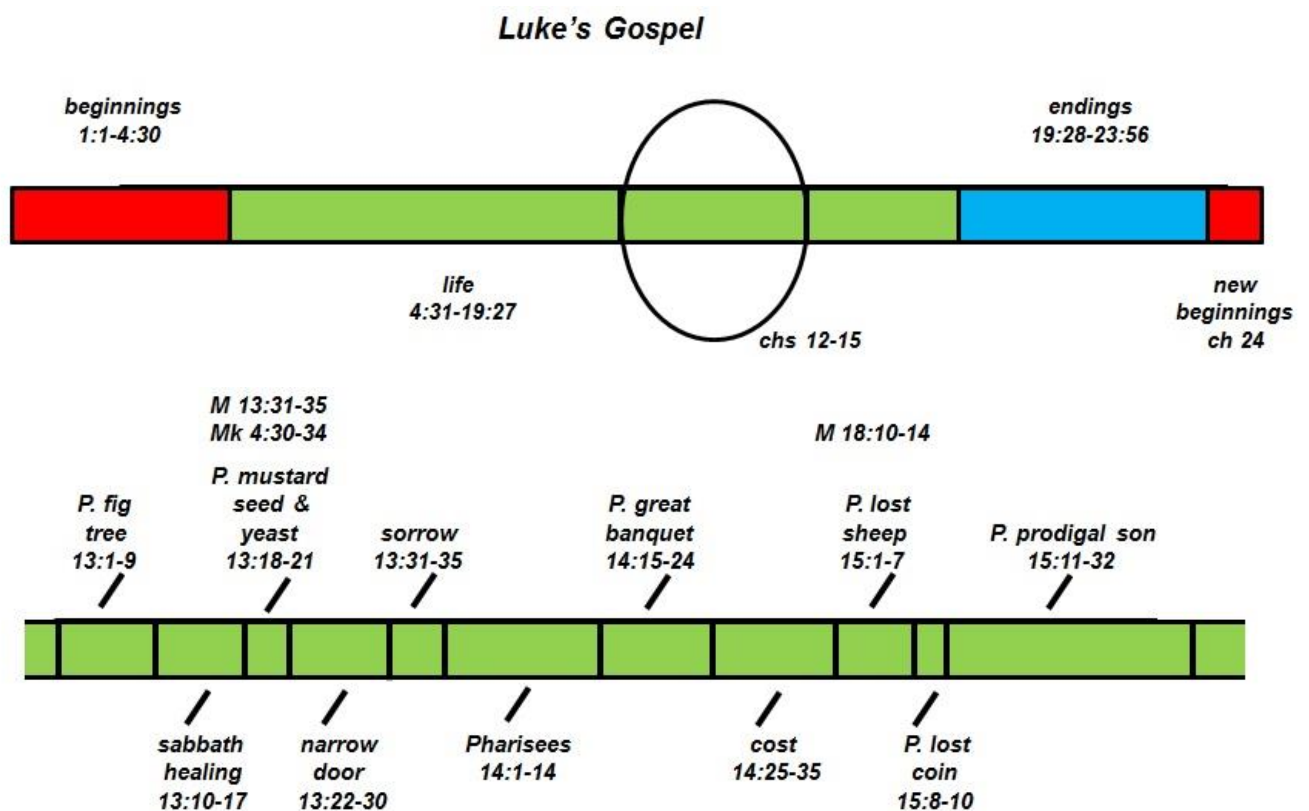
Study 9, Luke 15:1–10, Parables of The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin

Getting started

1. Have you ever found any money in the street or on the beach or at work etc.? How did you feel? What did you do with it?

The story so far . . .

Jesus has been teaching his disciples what it means to follow him. He warns them about the dangers they are likely to encounter but reassures them about their value to God and the needlessness of worry. Jesus uses parables to teach about the kingdom of God and begins to teach about the true purpose of the Sabbath. The Pharisees warn Jesus about Herod and Jesus tries to teach them about the kingdom of God. To the crowds Jesus teaches about the costs of discipleship.



Bible

2. Read Luke 15:1-7.
(a) Why are the Pharisees critical of Jesus' behaviour in v 2?

Cambridge biblical scholar Graham Stanton wrote: “**Sharing a meal** with a friend today is often no more than a convenient way of consuming food. In the Graeco-Roman and Jewish world of the first century, however, eating food with another person was far more significant socially: it indicated that the invited person was being accepted into a relationship in which the bonds were as close as in family relations. One normally invited to meals only people whom one considered social and religious equals.”

From a series of sermons and Bible studies in 2013 from St Andrews, Roseville called “Don’t throw the Baby out with the Bathwater”.

(b) What ideas would come to the 1st Century Jewish mind with the mention of a shepherd (see Isaiah 40:10-11, Eze 34:11-12, Psalm 23)?

(c) How is Jesus like these images of a shepherd?



As a class **shepherds** had a bad reputation. The nature of their calling kept them from observing the ceremonial law which meant so much to religious people. More regrettable was their unfortunate habit of confusing “mine” with “thine” as they moved about the country. They were considered unreliable and were not allowed to give testimony in the law-courts.

From Luke (Tyndale Commentary) p 84 by Leon Morris.

(d) How is this parable (vv 3-7) related to the Pharisees’ derogatory comments that Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them (v 2)?

(e) What does this parable tell us about the kingdom of God?

3. Read Luke 15:8-10.

(a) What does it mean to repent?

(b) How is the lost coin like a repentant sinner?

(c) The first parable, Luke 15:1-7, was about the shepherd/Jesus seeking out the lost sheep and the third parable, verses 11-32, was about the Father welcoming back the prodigal son. Who do you think the second parable, verses 8-10, might be about?

(d) How is the Holy Spirit’s work represented in this parable?

“C. H. Spurgeon expounds the chapter in one of his sermons. ‘The third parable [the Parable of the Prodigal Son] would be likely to be misunderstood without the first and the second. We have sometimes heard it

