

## LUKE 9:51 - 11:54

In the preceding chapters, Jesus has revealed himself as the manifestation of the saving power of God. He has cast out demons, unclean spirits, and healed the sick. These living demonstrations of his teaching have attracted the attention of the multitudes and have led Peter to confess Jesus as the Christ. In the Transfiguration, Jesus has been further revealed as the unique Son of God, God's chosen one.

In Chapter 9, a new note is introduced. With Peter's confession, Jesus begins to speak not of glory but of suffering (9:22) and following his transfiguration, he speaks not of exaltation but of humiliation (9:44,48). 9:51 marks a distinct shift in Luke's gospel. Jesus has set his face to go to Jerusalem. Now, the power and authority of God must be understood in light of the cross.

### 9: 51-62 – Following Jesus and Rejecting Jesus

Now that Jesus has 'set his face to go to Jerusalem', there is a lot more at stake in accepting him and following him or rejecting him and opposing him. A Samaritan village doesn't welcome him because he is intent on going to Jerusalem and worshipping as a good Jew. Jews and Samaritans despise each other.

Jesus also encounters all kinds of people along his way. Many recognize something profound and of God in Jesus, but cannot commit to following him. This emphasizes that there is a cost to following Jesus and many are not prepared to pay it.

### 10: 1-12 – The Mission of the Seventy

First Jesus sent out the 12 disciples and now he sends out a larger group to spread his message about the kingdom of God. The kingdom is about the rule of God. It's about relationships. People enter the kingdom as they repent and change their ways to follow God's call to love as the way for themselves and the way for Israel. But in a world where people use force and violence, a world of greed and self-interest, a commitment to love makes a person very vulnerable to abuse and mistreatment. Can people believe in the way of love and commit to that way even if they have to give up things or things are taken from them? Do they believe the way of love as Jesus teaches it will achieve God's will and the greatest fulfillment of salvation?

Jesus teaches his disciples that they must be prepared for rejection as he will be rejected.

### 10: 13-16 – Woes to Unrepentant Cities

Not only people, but whole towns and villages will reject Jesus. The judgement is that hate and force will lead to disaster for Israel and for the people. Israel will reap what it will sow. That's the judgement. This gospel account is written after the judgement has begun to take place. Jerusalem and the temple have been destroyed 40 years after Jesus was warning them. People are now worse off than they were in the days of

Jesus. Only the way of love would have offered a better path to wholeness and freedom.

#### 10: 17-20 – The Return of the Seventy

Surprisingly, they experience some success. There is some promise. All will not be lost. Regardless of rejection and even suffering to come, their names are 'written in heaven.' In other words, they are eternally safe no matter what trials and defeats they will face here on earth, especially an earth that will be more like a hell for followers of Jesus.

#### 10: 21-24 – Jesus Rejoices

Jesus rejoices that those at the bottom of society, the rejects and the misfits, are seeing God in him and embracing his gospel, while those in power and authority are building up a coalition of opposition against him.

#### 10: 25-37 – The Good Samaritan

Jesus is socking it to the religious authorities, be they scribes, lawyers or Pharisees. He gives an example of what it means to love the neighbour as oneself. But he uses examples of religious officials to show what not to do and a Samaritan (the opposite of a good religious person) to show what God approves. The moral of the story is that those listening should model their actions upon the example of the Samaritan. And this is what following Jesus demands.

#### 10: 38-42 – Jesus visits Mary and Martha

Jesus loves Martha as much as he loves Mary. But in critical times, basic tasks must be left aside in order to focus on more urgent matters. Mary models true discipleship as she sits at Jesus feet to listen, learn and absorb the difficult teaching of the kingdom. Martha is urged to follow her sister as are the males present.

#### 11: 1-4 – The Lord's Prayer

Jesus offers another version of his famous prayer, also found in Matthew. Interesting that this version ends with the petition not to be brought into the time of trial. This is exactly where things are heading.

#### 11: 5-13 – Perseverance in Prayer

Perseverance and only perseverance in prayer pays off. But what we pray for is equally important. We are not praying for more money, a better job, finding love... although these are important too. Most important, though, is the Holy Spirit which alone will give us the wisdom, discernment, inspiration and courage to choose well and follow what will often be a difficult path. Other good things will follow only after the Holy Spirit is an active agent within us.

### 11: 14-23 – Jesus and Beelzebul (or Satan)

No one is questioning Jesus' healing and exorcising abilities. The way they are trying to undermine him is by contending that his powers come from the dark side. Following him will lead into darkness. 'Don't be captivated by his spell or charisma.' Jesus' argument in contrast is: why would evil cast out evil? It is self-destructive. If Jesus is destroying evil as it possesses people's mental state of being, then he is on the side of God not Satan.

### 11: 24-28 – The Return of the Unclean Spirit and True Blessedness

Being cleansed or repenting is not enough. We need to then fill ourselves up with love and keep cultivating and developing love. Otherwise, we are vulnerable to falling back into selfish, greedy, corrupt, egotistical, violent and despairing ways, even worse than before. To hear God's word and even accepting it is not enough. One must do it so that it grows stronger within.

### 11: 29-32 – The Sign of Jonah

The people are asking for signs or clues to help them accept that Jesus is the messiah and what he says is God speaking. But Jesus is saying that they have all the signs they need. They're just refusing to see and there's little he can do about that. What are the signs they have? One will come: Jonah was in the belly of the whale for 3 days and then came out alive. Will they believe Jesus is resurrected even when they see the empty tomb? The other sign is the response of faith towards Jesus from outsiders. The people of Nineveh received Jonah's preaching. They repented. God forgave them. Disaster was averted. Outsiders are receiving Jesus in faith. But Israel is refusing to accept him. Refusing to accept Jesus is also opening the door to more demonic forces of evil. This will lead to destructive consequences for Israel. Hate of enemies will lead to violence, which will beget more violence.

### 11: 33-36 – The Light of the Body

The eye is to the body as the spirit is to your eternal destiny. You can open your eyes and see the light or close them and live in darkness. God cannot penetrate the darkness of a closed spirit. Many are closed to Jesus and there is a tragic finality to this reality. The opportunity will be gone very soon and then it will be too late.

### 11: 37-54 – Jesus Denounces Pharisees and Lawyers

Religious authorities are great at following the rules visibly and in exact detail. But they teach hate and violence as the way of fulfilling God's intentions for Israel. They are hard-hearted, hypocritical, self-serving and by rejecting Jesus they are rejecting the vision that God is love. They have a lot of blood on their hands and they are accountable for having brought the people to this point in their history. The authorities, on their part, are growing in their animosity toward Jesus and their plans to do him in.

