

healing and conflict

Luke 13:1-35

thought for the week

We are very much aware of the scale of suffering taking place all around us, whether it is the result of acts of political suppression or apparently natural disasters, the impact of such suffering can make us cry out, “Why, O Lord?” In Jesus’ time many people thought that suffering was a punishment for sin, yet Jesus refuses to make this connection, choosing instead to call everyone to follow a path that leads to a fruitful or meaningful life.

He continues on his own personal journey to Jerusalem – a place traditionally associated with God’s presence and kingly reign, yet it is not the destination, but rather the journey that is important – entering through the narrow door or following the narrow path. This way of faith in Jesus is not easy and is fraught with suffering and sorrow - many will give up, rather than find the hope and new life that is promised.

verse for the week

‘Make every effort to enter through the narrow door.’

Luke 13 verse 24

image for the week



prayer for the week

May the strength of God pilot us
 May the power of God preserve us
 May the wisdom of God instruct us
 May the hand of God protect us
 May the way of God direct us
 May the shield of God defend us
 May the host of God guard us against
 the snares of the evil one
 and the temptations of the world.
 May Christ be with us
 Christ above us
 Christ in us
 Christ before us
 May thy salvation O Lord,
 Be always ours
 This day and for evermore. Amen.

St Patrick 373 AD

reflection for each day



day one

Unless your repent, you too will all perish

'Repent' or 'change your mind' can appear like a threat, but here it is used as an encouragement to not be led by the crowd, but rather to follow in the way of Jesus.



day two

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard and he went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any.

We are known by our fruit or actions – where do you see spiritual fruit growing in your own life?



day three

Woman you are set free from your infirmity

Jesus heals a woman who has been crippled for eighteen years. Often we carry burdens or labels or memories that paralyse us spiritually. What such infirmity has prevented you from flourishing?



day four

But the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing

Where do you see the hand of God at work in the world today or in your own life?



day five

It is like a mustard seed

Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to both a mustard seed and yeast. Both are tiny and apparently inconsequential, yet have enormous penetrative and growing potential. They both transform their environment bringing new life and hope.



day six

I do not know you or where you come from

The key to entering through the narrow door is not our innate goodness, but our relationship with Jesus – knowing Him.



day seven

Those who are last will be first, and those who are first will be last

God's Kingdom is thrown open to everyone – those from east to west; north to south. Jesus doesn't have favourites only followers who put their trust in Him.

for the group

as you gather...

- Acts of evil oppression or natural calamity often make us question the power of God to work for the good of His world. Here Jesus turns the questions around, inviting us to respond in faith or else we risk spiritual death.
- In the story of Jesus healing the crippled woman, where do you stand? Are you straightening up, praising God or standing back remote and indignant?
- The Kingdom of God is often found in small, often hidden acts of kindness, forgiveness or generosity. Where do you see such signs of the Kingdom around you today? How do such signs display the power to transform?
- Jesus is not so much concerned about the numbers of people who enter the Kingdom as with the determination to enter by the narrow door. Why is this? How does this relate to the idea of people being gathered into the Kingdom from a wide range of places and over a broad timespan?
- Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem despite realising that he will meet opposition there. What does this tell us about facing opposition?

prayer for the group

*Lord, You have always given
peace for the coming day;
and though of anxious heart,
today I believe.*

*Lord, You have always kept
me safe in trials;
and now, tried as I am,
today I believe.*

*Lord, You have always marked
the road for the coming day;
and though it may be hidden,
today I believe.*

*Lord, You have always lightened
this darkness of mine;
and though the night is here,
today I believe.*

Northumbria Community – Evening Prayer



continue the conversation
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Apprentice



a meal

Luke 14:1-35

thought for the week

Sharing a meal is a very inclusive thing to do. It implies openness, generosity and acceptance. The sharing of meals was a traditional Middle Eastern custom of hospitality and Jesus uses the occasion to talk about the inclusive love and character of God. Jesus often links the idea of God's radical new community of transformation – the Kingdom of God, with that of a banquet or meal. God's banquet or Kingdom is marked out by humility, equality and inclusivity – not only are the poor, weak and disadvantaged offered a place, but their importance is celebrated.

This Kingdom or banquet is not a fluffy or abstract idea, but rather a radical community, in which belonging means something demanding. Accepting God's inclusive call is therefore serious - it needs to be considered carefully and can transform society.

verse for the week

And anyone who does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple

Luke 14 verse 27.

image for the week



prayer for the week

Blessed are you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for you have blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

You chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world and destined us for adoption as your children.

*In Christ we have the forgiveness of sins,
an inheritance in your kingdom, the seal of your Spirit,
and in him we live for the praise of your glory for ever and ever.*

Amen.

reflection for each day



day one

'For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'

We are invited to follow the humble path – passing up the pursuit of power and honour. What does it mean to live each day a life of humility?



day two

'But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, and crippled, the lame, the blind and you will be blessed.'

How can we make the poor and disadvantaged the focus of our attention and our endeavour to build community?



day three

'Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.'

True generosity seeks no reward. What is the reward for acts of compassion, forgiveness and generosity?



day four

'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, the lame.'

Where are the poor and disadvantaged in the world around us today?



day five

'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in.'

We are invited to actively seek after the lost and marginalised. How is Jesus impelling you to go out and seek the poor and disadvantaged in our world today?



day six

'Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost?'

Following Jesus is costly. It involves placing our relationship with Him before all other relationships. We must consider our priorities and the implications of pursuing them. What does it cost you?



day seven

'Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?'

Our lives should display the priority of following Jesus whatever the cost. Like salt, we are called to affect transformation.

for the group

as you gather...

- What role does hospitality play in building your faith community or small group?
- What does the idea of hospitality say about the inclusive call of the Kingdom that Jesus' ministry is seeking to bring about?
- What are the qualities and attributes of the Kingdom Jesus is building?
- Jesus seeks to build a Kingdom around the weak and marginalised rather than the powerful and talented. How is such a Kingdom demonstrated in your local area?
- Jesus doesn't want us to hate our parents, but rather to seek Him before all other attachments. What is the cost of such an approach? What will following Jesus, unconditionally mean to your group?

prayer for the group

Grant us, Lord God,
 a vision of your world as your love would have it:
 a world where the weak are protected,
 and none go hungry or poor;
 a world where the riches of creation are shared,
 and everyone can enjoy them;
 a world where different races and cultures
 live in harmony and mutual respect;
 a world where peace is built with justice,
 and justice is guided by love.
 Give us the inspiration and courage to build it,
 through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



continue the conversation
[here](#)

three important parables

Luke 15:1-32

thought for the week

This isn't so much three parables as one parable told in three ways. The theme of lost and found runs all three. Jesus was distrusted by the religious leaders of his time because he associated with those regarded as 'sinners' – he is seen as tainted by association. He responds telling stories about losing and finding. God is not as concerned with how far we wander from His way for our lives as He is with how we are found by Him and whether we accept His embrace. 'It's not the long walk home that will change this heart; But the welcome I receive with the restart.' ('Roll Away the Stone' - Mumford and Sons).

We need to recognise that we are all sinners – we have wandered from God and need to be found by Him in order to experience true sonship or belonging.

verse for the week

This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found

Luke 15 verse 24

prayer for the week

Father of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off you met us in your Son and brought us home. Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory. Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so we and all your children shall be free, and the whole earth live to praise your name; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Common Worship

© The Archbishops' Council of the Church of England

image for the week



reflection for each day



day one

'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them'

Jesus challenges the religious ideas of His day in terms of who is a sinner and whether a sinner can belong to the community of God. His welcome and acceptance demonstrate God's heart.



day two

'In the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.'

God's love is outrageous and unreasonable – it sets aside what is just for what is loving – it rejoices in the small details of our faithfulness.



day three

'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin'

God rejoices over us – He celebrates our being found in Him – He delights in the connection He has with us. What surprises you about such an understanding?



day four

'The younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country'

What is the 'distant country' that you often wander into? What takes you away from God and how do you tend to respond?



day five

'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

The younger son feels unworthy of His Father's love and acceptance. We are received by God on the basis of what Jesus has done for us and His love for us.



day six

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and ... and ran to His son'

God takes the initiative in Jesus. He sees us and seeks us out. He finds us, we don't find Him.



day seven

'This brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found'

Our Father God rejoices in receiving us. What does it mean to you to be received and welcomed by a Father God?

for the group

as you gather...

- Jesus associates with sinners. This idea was repugnant to the religious leaders of Jesus' day. What sort of people would Jesus be hanging out with today?
- How does the idea of 'lostness' resonate with the spiritual climate of our current age?
- Jesus describes a God who is so concerned with the plight of the individual that all other concerns are set aside for the sake of seeking out the person who is lost. What does this tell us about the priorities of Jesus? What does this tell us about what our own priorities should be?
- Which character in the story of the lost son do you most associate with and why?
- What is the older brother correct about? What is he wrong about?

prayer for the group

*Lord, as you have entered into our life and death
And in all the world you call us into your death and risen life,
Forgive us our sins and draw us we pray,
By the power and encouragement of your Spirit,
Into an exchange of gifts and needs,
Joys and sorrows, strengths and weaknesses
With your people everywhere;
That with them we may have the grace
To break through every barrier,
To make disciples of all peoples
And to share your love with everyone
For your glory's sake.
Amen.*

Church Mission Society



continue the conversation
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Apprentice

power and money

Luke 16:1- 31

thought for the week

The call to follow Jesus is lived out in the context of a world driven by the pursuit of power and money. In this landscape Jesus offers a different focus and a different driving force, namely the pursuit of spiritual goals or eternal dwellings. Rather than commending the dishonest actions of the shrewd manager, Jesus is showing the lengths that worldly people are prepared to go to in order to gain material wealth in order to encourage an even greater desire to pursue spiritual capital. We can learn from such enterprise, but our focus has to be upon serving God, rather than money. This is a lesson that the rich man fails to learn in the story of Lazarus. As a result a great chasm exists between the two worlds represented. Jesus has come to expose the choices involved that have created such a divide.

verse for the week

You cannot serve both God and Money

Luke 16 verse 13

prayer for the week

*Compassionate God,
as your outstretched hands held a
crucified world,
so let our hands convey the touch of
love.*

*As you embraced our vulnerability
so cradle our hopes and fears.
Reach out to our frailty,
release our pain
and in your tenderness,
bring health to our brokenness
that, in our weakness,
we may find strength and,
in our poverty, the unfurled riches of
your resurrection.*

Annabel Shilson-Thomas CAFOD

image for the week



reflection for each day



day one

For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind

We can learn a great deal from the way wealth is created and managed in the world around us. However, this should not be the focus of our lives. We need to channel the energy and creativity of such endeavours into our pursuit of Godly riches.



day two

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much

We need to learn from the world around to be good stewards of the gifts and resources God gives us. We are stewards, not owners of such resources.



day three

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches

What can we learn from others about how to seek after spiritual resources and develop our relationship with Jesus?



day four

No servant can serve two masters

What distracts you from serving Jesus? What concerns draw you away from a clear focus upon pursuing the things of God?



day five

What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight

We are called to live counter culturally – not shaped by the self seeking values and priorities of the world. What is highly valued today, but detestable to God?



day six

And beside all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed

There is a huge chasm between the two characters, representing the Pharisees (who loved money) and the poor seeking after Jesus. How does worldly ambition separate us from Jesus?



day seven

They will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead

For some, even a miraculous event such as the resurrection will not convince them to leave their pursuit of worldly wealth in order to seek spiritual treasure.

for the group

as you gather...

- We are encouraged both to learn from the methods of those who seek after worldly wealth, yet to reject their motivation. How can we use such methods to assist our motivation to seek after the things of God?
- Is there always a simple choice between serving either God or money? What should our attitude be towards the pursuit of money?
- How does the idea of waiting for Jesus run counter to our culture of instant gratification?
- In a world where there is so much unfairness and inequality, what can we learn from the story of Lazarus in terms of worldly and heavenly reward? Does such an idea give us an excuse not to seek fairness and justice for ourselves or others? What does this tell us about how Jesus regarded the poor?
- How can we build Christian communities that prioritise simplicity of lifestyle and economic justice?

prayer for the group

*Dear Jesus,
help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go.
Flood our souls with your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess our whole being so utterly
that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.
Shine through us and be so in us
that every soul we come in contact with
may feel your presence in our soul.
Let them look up and see no longer us, but only Jesus.
Let us thus praise you in the way you love best
by shining on those around us.
Let us preach you without preaching, not by words,
but by our example; by the catching force -
the sympathetic influence of what we do,
the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you.
Amen.*

Mother Teresa of Calcutta



continue the conversation
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Apprentice