

NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE – PART ELEVEN

The first practical training for the fishermen had given them a great deal of experience. Now Jesus determined to build on that outreach with more detailed instructions and a larger team. They were to operate in pairs for fellowship and support. They were to prepare the way for His coming later to the same towns and villages. There was a huge task and a small work force so they needed to have very specific instructions from God about what they were to do, and where they were to do it, so they needed to pray constantly. They should be under no illusion about the strength and nature of the opposition. He reminded them again to depend on Him, not themselves, for their physical needs, accepting whatever hospitality was offered and recognizing that their very presence in a home should be a means of blessing to the family with whom they stayed. Again He urged them to be involved both in the practical needs of people, on this occasion for healing, and in proclaiming the simple message that God wants to be the King in our lives. If on the other hand they were not received they were to move on, without bitterness, to those who would appreciate their message. The cities which rejected Him now would be even more guilty before God than the infamous sinners of the Old Testament like the people of Sodom and Gomorrah or hardened rebels like the men of Tyre.(Isa.23:1-18) Those who turn down our message of life in Christ are not rejecting us but Jesus and God Himself, so do not take it personally!(10:1-16)

The disciples were amazed to discover their authority over Satan which gives us the power to tell him to shut up and get out. Jesus affirmed their right to command the Devil to leave but urged them to keep their focus on their own relationship with God.(James 4:7; I Pet.5:8,9) There is a danger in seeing our priority as dealing with demons instead of proclaiming the Kingdom of Christ. Jesus Himself took a moment to thank His Father for the thrill of seeing even the simple and uneducated catch on to eternal truth as God revealed it to them. He wanted them and us to have that same unspeakable satisfaction.(10:17-24)

After rejoicing that His Father reveals truth to children while the wise and intelligent miss it, a lawyer came along to prove the point. He asked a seemingly simple question intending to show off to those around his knowledge of the Law. Jesus turned the question back to him to allow him demonstrate his superior knowledge. The lawyer gave the right answers which Jesus Himself had given on another occasion.(Matt.22:34-40) Deut.6:5 sums up the first 4 commandments, and Lev.19:18 the last 6. Jesus encouraged him that if he really meant what he said he was heading for eternal life. The lawyer, realizing that this conversation had not worked out quite as he had intended, went one step further and asked the famous question, ‘And who is my neighbour?’ Jesus’ answer must have left him more than a little red-faced.(10:25-29)

The story of the Good Samaritan has caught the imagination of millions who may know little else of the Bible. It presumably was fact not fiction because as God, Jesus had all of human history to draw on and did not need to invent stories to illustrate His point. It may well be that this had been a recent event which was public knowledge, and therefore undeniable. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho passed through some wild, barren country and was a favorite place for armed robbery. A lone traveler had been ambushed, robbed, beaten and left for dead. The first two to pass him were religious men, apparently in too much of a hurry, or too scared they also might meet robbers, to hang around and help. They deliberately crossed to the other side of the road to maintain the pretence they had not even seen the wounded man. The lawyer could not escape recognizing himself as one of these two. Then the unthinkable happened. A hated, despised Samaritan,(Jn.4:9) was the next to come to the scene of the robbery. Moved by compassion, just as Jesus so often was when He saw the needy,(Lk.7:13) he stopped to help. He dressed the man’s

wounds, gave up his own position on his donkey to walk beside it, and took him to the nearest inn where he arranged the victim's care, paying for it himself and promising to continue to foot the bill until the man was healed. No-one could have done more. The message was clear. This Samaritan was the real neighbour. We like to be surrounded by our own kind whom we call neighbours and to whom we give support when necessary, knowing that they will do the same for us when need arises. It is a comfortable, safe place to be in which we assume we are loving our neighbours. Suddenly the lawyer's self-satisfaction was shattered and his prejudices exposed.(10:30-37)

The final story in this chapter turns the message of the previous one upside down. It introduces us to two ladies, Mary and Martha, who will become well known on a later occasion as the sisters of Lazarus.(Jn.11, 12) Martha surely was the Good Samaritan caring for the practical needs of Jesus while Mary was the religious one, too busy with Bible teaching to notice that there was domestic work to be done? There was a big difference however. Martha's busyness was motivated by duty not compassion. To be a Good Samaritan we have to begin where Mary was, hungry to know Jesus better. When once we have truly met Him, we will want to serve Him and all those He sends along, not out of grudging duty and criticism of those we think are lazy, but out of boundless compassion from the heart. The story of Mary therefore provides us with the secret of being a Good Samaritan.(10:38-42)

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What are the main ideas in the Lord's prayer which will always be appropriate for us? Do you suppose Jesus intended this to be a set prayer to be repeated word for word? How have you personally found it to be helpful in your own life?(11:1-4)
2. How does the story of the friend who sought help from his friend at midnight illustrate prayer as God intends it to be? What does this account tell us about what God is like when we pray and what we can expect from Him? What must we ask God for which He delights to give according to verse 13?(11:5-13)
3. What had gone wrong in the hearts of religious people for them to accuse Jesus of being an agent of the Devil? How can the same contradiction happen in people today? What did Jesus teach on this occasion about demon possession and the limits of Satan's power? Who is the stronger man? Can Christians be demon-possessed? What is the warning on this occasion against casting out demons?(11:14-26)
4. Was Jesus putting His mother down as unimportant? What does this passage teach us about the place of Mary in God's plan?(11:27-28)
5. In what way was Jesus like Jonah? How was Solomon a picture of Jesus? Why would the Ninevites and the Queen of the South be witnesses against the people of Jesus' time on judgement day?(11:29-32)
6. What decides whether our eyes are the means of our bodies being light or dark inside? How was the attitude of the Pharisee who invited Jesus for lunch an example of the way our eyes determine what is within us? What three examples of such attitudes did Jesus warn against? How do we make the same mistakes today?(11:33-44)
7. What further three warnings did Jesus give to those who make laws for others to live by? How does He say doing this actually undermines the scriptures? Why have religious people often persecuted men of God? How too did He see these attitudes would lead to His own crucifixion?(11:45-54)