

LUKE 18

table of contents

Luke 18. ⁹⁻¹⁴	2
Luke 18. ²²⁻²⁷ (part 1)	3
Luke 18. ²²⁻²⁷ (part 2)	5
Luke 18. ³¹⁻³⁴	6

Luke 18. ⁹⁻¹⁴

⁹And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. ¹¹Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. ¹²I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.’

¹³And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner.’

¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Today’s is our 4th reading for Lent 2025.

1. Jesus offers a parable to those who “trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.”
 - ? Self-righteousness seems to go hand in hand with despising others. What is it about feelings of righteousness that make individuals so inclined to look down on others?
 - ? How often do you observe religious people who are truly secure in themselves being dismissive of others?
 - ? How is looking down on other people actually a sign of insecurity and, thus, a sign that the religious individual is uncertain of their standing with God and so becomes “righteous” in an exaggerated manner?
2. Jesus shares the prayer of the Pharisee and the publican.
 - ? What about the Pharisee’s prayer is true? What is false?
 - ? How do you feel about the Pharisee’s prayer if we assume he really had avoided extortion, injustice, and adultery and did fast and tithe regularly and faithfully?
 - ? What about the publican’s prayer is true? What is false?
 - ? How do you feel about his prayer if we assume that he really was “a sinner” as he, himself confesses, perhaps even guilty of some of the same sins that the Pharisees claims he is free of?
3. After relating both men’s prayer, Jesus announced that the publican “went down to his house justified rather than the [Pharisee].”
 - ? How do you feel about the individual who accurately proclaims himself a “sinner” being thought “right” with God while the observer of outward, often exaggerated “righteousness” is not thought right with God?
 - ? What do you learn from this reading that you can apply to your Lent experience as it relates to the confession of sin in hopes of personal forgiveness and reconciliation with God?
 - ? What do you learn from this reading that you can apply to your Lent experience as it relates to your relationship with others?
 - ? What do you learn about Jesus when you consider this parable and the audience with which he shared it?

(edition: March 7, 2025)

Luke 18. ²²⁻²⁷ (part 1)

²²Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, “Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.’

²³And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

²⁴And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.”

²⁶And they that heard it said, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷And he said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

1. Here is the context for this saying concerning the kingdom of God

“And, behold, one came and said unto him, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

And he said unto him, “Why callest thou me good? There is none a good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

He saith unto him, “Which?”

Jesus said, “Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother: and, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

The young man saith unto him, “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?”

Jesus said unto him, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Mt. 19.¹⁶⁻²²).

? How does this context impact your understanding of Jesus’ saying?

? How does this context impact your understanding of the kingdom and entrance into it?

2. After declaring that the wealthy only enter the kingdom of God with difficulty, Jesus utilizes imagery to describe just how difficult it is: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Interpreters have often understood the “eye of a needle” to refer to the small, security conscious gate of a city’s fortified wall. There is, however, no evidence for the existence of such a gate during Jesus’ time. If it existed at all, it was of later invention. Therefore, many have considered the translation, “camel,” to be faulty. The Hebrew and Aramaic root, *gml*, can mean either “camel” or “rope,” depending on the vocalization of the root.

? How do you feel about Jesus’ statement that it is easier to thread a needle with a rope “than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God”?

? How likely is it that a rope can be threaded through a needle’s eye?

? Even if one accepts the traditional reading with the imagery of unloading the camel to enter the city, how many wealthy people shed, not bits and pieces of it, but all their wealth (as Jesus asked the young man to do)?

? How does the young man’s refusal to “sell that thou hast, and give to the poor” relate to Jesus’ saying about the near impossibility of the wealthy entering the kingdom?

? What does the young man and Jesus’ statement about the eye of a needle tell you about what is required of the wealthy to enter the kingdom?

? How do you feel about the kingdom requiring the wealthy to “sell that thou has, and give to the poor”?

- ? Camel or rope, both are impossible. How do you feel about the Savior's assertion?
- ? Like the disciples, you may be somewhat surprised, even disturbed by Jesus's assertion. Why be surprised to learn that riches change one's behavior, inhibit one's willingness and ability to follow God's values, and make it unlikely that one will enter the kingdom of heaven?
- ? What false doctrines will conflict and oppose Jesus' assertion?
- ? Why are such conflicting doctrines so attractive and so damning?

Luke 18. ²²⁻²⁷ (part 2)

²²Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, "Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me."

²³And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

²⁴And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! ²⁵For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

²⁶And they that heard it said, "Who then can be saved?"

²⁷And he said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

1. Matthew reports that Jesus' disciples "were exceedingly amazed" when they heard his statement about the eye of a needle. Mark says that the disciples were first "astonished," and then "astonished out of measure." Having reported the disciple's reaction, all three synoptic gospels report their asking, "Who then can be saved?" as if they felt that if the wealthy couldn't enter the kingdom, no one could.
 - ? Why, do you think, were the disciples so astonished at Jesus' assertions?
 - ? What does their astonishment tell you about the disciples' feelings about wealth, the wealthy, and about the "spirituality" or "righteousness" of the wealthy?
 - ? How do you feel about the disciples' apparent assumption that wealthy people were a shoe in to enter the kingdom of God?
 - ? To what degree do you find Jesus' assertions surprising, and find yourself sharing the disciples' positive attitude toward wealth, the wealthy, and spirituality/ righteousness?
 - ? How does this passage give the lie to "prosperity gospels" in which it is claimed that wealth is a blessing granted to "the righteous" and that the righteous can be identified by their blessings and wealth?

2. In Jesus' initial proclamation of the kingdom of God as found in Mark, Jesus had required that those hearing his proclamation "transform your views," or change the way they look at the world, their worldview.
 - ? How does the disciple's reaction show that they had yet to change their worldview?
 - ? In light of this passage, how must the disciple's world view change?

(edition: March 7, 2025)

Luke 18.³¹⁻³⁴

³¹Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. ³²For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: ³³and they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.”

³⁴And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

1. Sunday will mark the commemoration of the final week of our Lord’s earthly ministry and his ‘Triumphal Entry’ into Jerusalem. This reading represents a warning that Jesus issued to his disciples not long before his Triumphal Entry and the momentous events of his final week.
 - ? What, do you think, was it about Jesus’ warning that they found impossible to understand?
 - ? Why, do you think, the disciples found Jesus’ warning so impossible to understand?
 - ? What is it about Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection that makes it almost incomprehensible to all of us?
 - ? What can you do during this Easter Season to grow in your appreciation and understanding of what Jesus has done for you and what he means to you?

(edition: March 7, 2025)