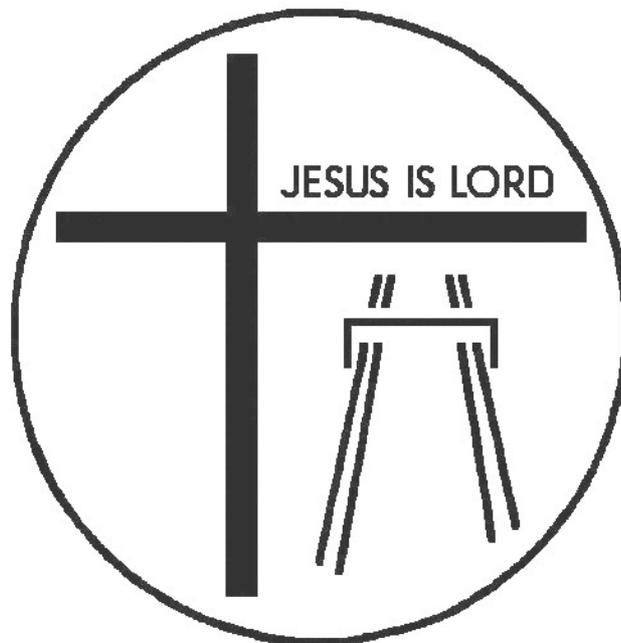


The book of LUKE

(Part 2)

*~ Knowing What You've
Been Taught To Be True ~*

*6 Home Group Studies on the Gospel
of Luke*



Midrand Presbyterian Church

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Week 7

PERSISTENT PRAYER

Setting the Scene:

Think about a time when you felt like giving up on a certain prayer request. What helped you keep on praying?

From the Word:

Read Luke 11:1-13

Going Deeper – Group discussion:

1. Why do you think Jesus' act of prayer sparked the disciples' interest in prayer?

2. List several elements of prayer.

3. In Jesus' story of the friend in need of bread, who do the two friends represent?

4. What spiritual principles did Jesus convey to his disciples through his daily example and teaching?

5. Why is persistent prayer important?

Reflection:

One of my favourite stories concerns a bishop who was travelling by ship to visit a church across the ocean. While en route, the ship stopped at an island for a day. He went for a walk on the beach. He came across three fishermen mending their nets.

Curious about their trade he asked them some questions. Curious about his ecclesiastical robes, they asked him some questions. When they found out he was a Christian leader, they got excited. "We Christians!" they said, proudly pointing to one another.

The bishop was impressed but cautious. Did they know the Lord's Prayer? They had never heard of it.

"What do you say, then, when you pray?"

"We pray, 'O We are three, you are three, have mercy on us.'"

The bishop was appalled at the primitive nature of the prayer. "That will not do." So he spent the day teaching them the Lord's Prayer. The fishermen

were poor but willing learners. And before the bishop sailed away the next day, they could recite the prayer with no mistakes. The bishop was proud.

On the return trip the bishop's ship drew near the island again. When the island came into view the bishop came to the deck and recalled with pleasure the men he had taught and resolved to go see them again. As he was thinking a light appeared on the horizon near the island. It seemed to be getting nearer. As the bishop gazed in wonder he realised the three fishermen were walking toward him on the water. Soon all the passengers and crew were on the deck to see the sight.

When they were within speaking distance, the fishermen cried out, "Bishop, we come hurry to meet you."

"What is it you want?" asked the stunned bishop.

"We are sorry. We forget lovely prayer. We say, 'O Our father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name ...' and then we forget. Please tell us prayer again."

The bishop was humbled. "Go back to your homes, my friends, and when you pray say. 'O We are three, you are three, have mercy on us.'"
(From *And the Angels were Silent* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

6. In what way does the Lord's Prayer serve as a model for us to follow?

7. What are the dangers of reciting the same prayers over and over?

8. What steps can we take to keep our prayers honest and meaningful?

9. In what circumstances is it tempting to give up praying?

10. What can persistent prayer accomplish?

11. In what way does this passage change your attitude toward a long-term prayer request or need in your life?

Prayer:

Father, forgive us for giving up on praying so easily. Forgive us for our insincerity and lack of interest. We thank you for remaining faithful to us, even when we are unfaithful. Teach us how to pray honestly, persistently and faithfully. Most importantly, Father, help us to follow in the footsteps of your perfect Son, Jesus, Christ.

Week 8

TRUSTING GOD

Setting the Scene:

Describe a time when God met one of your needs in an unexpected or unusual way.

From the Word:

Read Luke 12:22-34

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. Why should believers trust God, instead of worrying?

2. Jesus gave two examples from nature about trusting God: sparrows and lilies. Can you think of any others?

3. Explain how worry demonstrates a lack of faith.

4. What are the rewards of seeking God's kingdom, instead of personal gain?

5. How do earthly riches differ from heavenly treasure?

Reflection:

Be honest. Are we glad when he says no to what we want and yes to what we need? Not always. If we ask for a new marriage, and he says honour the one you've got, we aren't happy. If we ask for healing, and he says learn through the pain, we aren't happy. If we ask for more money, and he says treasure the unseen, we aren't always happy.

When God doesn't do what we want, it's not always easy. Never has been. Never will be. But faith is the conviction that God knows more than we do about this life and he will get us through it.

Remember, disappointment is caused by unmet expectations.

Disappointment is cured by revamped expectations.

I like the story about the fellow who went to the pet store in search of a singing parakeet.

Seems he was a bachelor and his house was too quiet. The store owner had just the bird for him, so the man bought it. The next day the bachelor came home from work to a house full of music. He went to the cage to feed the bird and noticed for the first time that the parakeet had only one leg.

He felt cheated that he'd been sold a one-legged bird, so he called and complained.

"What do you want," the store owner responded, "a bird who can sing or a bird who can dance?" ...

We need to hear that God is still in control. We need to hear that it's not over until he says so. We need to hear that life's mishaps and tragedies are not a reason to bail out. They are simply a reason to sit tight.

Corrie ten Boom used to say, "When the train goes through the tunnel and the world gets dark, do you jump out? Of course not. You sit still and trust the engineer to get you through." ...

Next time you're disappointed, don't panic. Don't jump out. Don't give up. Just be patient and let God remind you he's still in control. It ain't over till it's over.

(From *He Still Moves Stones* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

6. What is the secret of contentment?

7. List some of the consequences of anxiety.

8. What simple steps can believers take to avoid worry?

9. What is the difference between planning ahead and worrying?

10. How does this passage inspire you to trust God with your needs?

11. In what concrete ways can we demonstrate our trust in God's provision?

Prayer:

Father, your Word promises that you will protect and provide for your people. Forgive us for choosing to worry instead of depending on you. Help us see the futility of worry and the benefits of trusting you. Calm your fears and fill us with faith so we can focus our attention and energy on seeking your kingdom.

Week 9

GOD'S LOVE FOR PEOPLE

Setting the Scene:

In what tangible ways have you experienced God's love for you?

From the Word:

Read Luke 15:11-32

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. Name some of God's character traits highlighted in the parable of the prodigal son.

2. What happens when God gives people freedom to make their own choices?

3. In what ways do we sometimes show disregard for God's authority, like the younger son in the story?

4. Why do hard times often bring people to repentance?

5. In what way does God respond to people who confess their sins and return to him?

Reflection:

Theresa Briones is a tender, loving mother. She also has a stout left hook that she used to punch a lady in a coin laundry. Why'd she do it?

Some kids were making fun of Theresa's daughter, Alicia.

Alicia is bald. Her knees are arthritic. Her nose is pinched. Her hips are creaky. Her hearing is bad. She has the stamina of a seventy-year-old. And she is only ten.

"Mom," the kids taunted, "come and look at the monster!"

Alicia weighs only twenty-two pounds and is shorter than most preschoolers. She suffers from progeria – a genetic aging disease that strikes one child in eight million. The life expectancy of progeria victims is twenty years. There are only fifteen known cases of this disease in the world.

"She is not an alien. She is not a monster," Theresa defended. "She is just like you and me."

Mentally, Alicia is a bubbly, fun-loving third grader. She has a long list of friends. She watches television in a toddler-sized rocking chair. She plays with Barbie dolls and teases her younger brother.

Theresa has grown accustomed to the glances and questions. She is patient with the constant curiosity. Genuine inquiries she accepts. Insensitive slanders she does not.

The mother of the finger-pointing children came to investigate. "I see it," she told the kids.

"My child is not an 'it'," Theresa stated. Then she decked the woman.

Who could blame her? Such is the nature of parental love. Mothers and fathers have a God-given ability to love their children regardless of their imperfections. Not because the parents are blind. Just the opposite. They see vividly.

Theresa sees Alicia's inability as clearly as anyone. But she also sees Alicia's value.

So does God.

God sees us with the eyes of a Father. He sees our defects, errors and blemishes. But he also sees our value ... What did Jesus know that enabled him to do what he did?

Here's part of the answer. He knew the value of people. He knew that each human being is a treasure. And because he did, people were not a source of stress, but a source of joy.

(From *In the Eye of the Storm* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

6. Why does God accept and forgive sinful people?

7. Why is it important to realise that God values all people equally?

8. How does it feel to know that God sees all of your faults and still loves you?

9. Why do we tend to treat some people better than others?

10. In what ways can we combat our tendency to withhold love from certain people?

11. Think of one person who is difficult to love. In what ways can you show God's love to that person?

Prayer:

We stand in awe, Father, of your great love – love so deep that you sacrificed your only Son to save sinful people. Forgive us for our rebellion and disobedience. Give us the strength to turn away from our sin and accept your forgiveness. And we ask you, Father, to help us see others through your loving eyes.

Week 10

TRUE WORSHIP

Setting the Scene:

If Jesus were to visit your Church this Sunday, do you think he would feel comfortable there?

From the Word:

Read Luke 19:28-48

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. Why did people celebrate Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem?

2. Why did Jesus weep when he saw Jerusalem while all the people were praising him?

3. List some reasons Jesus would not tolerate the buying and selling in the Temple.

4. Jesus called the Temple “a house of prayer.” How well does that describe our Churches today?

5. What message did Jesus send to church leaders when he cleared the Temple?

Reflection:

It’s tough to be let down. It’s disappointing when you think someone is interested in you, only to find they are interested in your money. When salespeople do it, it’s irritating – but when people of faith do it, it can be devastating.

It’s a sad but true fact of the faith: religion is used for profit and prestige. When it is, there are two results: people are exploited and God is infuriated.

There’s not better example of this than what happened at the temple. After he had entered the city on the back of a donkey, Jesus “went into the temple. After he had looked at everything, since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve apostles.”

Did you catch that? The first place Jesus went when he arrived in Jerusalem was the temple. ... He walked into the temple area, looked around, and walked out.

Want to know what he saw? Then read what he did on Monday, the next morning when he returned. “Jesus went into the Temple and threw out all the people who were buying and selling there. He turned over the tables of those who were exchanging different kinds of money, and he upset the

benches of those who were selling doves. Jesus said to all the people there, it is written in the Scriptures, 'My Temple will be called a house for prayer.' But you are changing it into a 'hideout for robbers'." (Matt. 21:12, 13)

What did he see? Hucksters. Faith peddlers. What lit the fire under Jesus' broiler? What was his first thought on Monday? People in the temple making a franchise out of faith.

It was Passover week. The Passover was the highlight of the Jewish calendar. People came from all religions and many countries to be present for the celebration. Upon arriving they were obligated to meet two requirements.

First, an animal sacrifice, usually a dove. The dove had to be perfect, without blemish. The animal could be brought in from anywhere, but odds were that if you brought a sacrifice from another place, yours would be considered insufficient by the authorities in the temple. So, under the guise of keeping the sacrifice pure, the dove sellers sold doves – at their price.

Second, the people had to pay a tax, a temple tax. It was due every year. During Passover the tax had to be rendered in local currency. Knowing many foreigners would be in Jerusalem to pay the tax, money changers conveniently set up tables and offered to exchange the foreign money for local – for a modest fee, of course.

It's not difficult to see what angered Jesus. Pilgrims journeyed days to see God, to witness the holy, to worship His Majesty. But before they were taken into the presence of God, they were taken to the cleaners. What was promised and what was delivered were two different things. ...

"I've had enough," was written all over the Messiah's face. In he stormed. Doves flapped and tables flew. People scampered and traders scattered.

This was not an impulsive show. This was not a temper tantrum. It was a deliberate act with an intentional message. Jesus had seen the money-changers the day before. He went to sleep with pictures of this midway and its barkers in his memory. And when he woke up the next morning, knowing his days were drawing to a close, he chose to make a point: "You cash in on my people and you've got me to answer to." God will never hold guiltless those who exploit the privilege of worship.

(From *And the Angels Were Silent* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

6. How would you define true worship?

7. List some things that can interfere with our worship.

8. In what ways can we determine whether our motives are pure when we go to Church?

9. List some ways you have seen someone misuse religion for his or her own purposes.

10. What steps can believers take to protect the Church from exploitation?

Week 11

CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

Setting the Scene:

Think about a time when you sacrificed something for someone else – what difference did this make to you and them?

From the Word:

Read Luke 23:26-49.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. Why was Jesus' sacrifice necessary to restore the relationship between God and man?

2. What character traits did Jesus exhibit during the hours before his death?

3. In what ways should believers try to imitate Christ's attitude and actions?

4. What was the significance of the torn curtain in the Temple leading into the Holy of Holies at the time of Christ's death?

5. Why did Jesus submit to God's plan of salvation for the world?

Reflection:

The King swallowed...

He looked at the Prince of Light. "The darkness will be great." He passed his hand over the spotless face of his Son. "The pain will be awful." Then he paused and looked at his darkened dominion. When he looked up, his eyes were moist. "But there is no other way."

The Son looked into the stars as he heard the answer. "Then, let it be done."

Slowly the words that would kill the Son began to come from the lips of the Father.

"Hour of death, moment of sacrifice, it is your moment. Rehearsed a million times on false altars with false lambs; the moment of truth has come.

...

"Oh, my Son, my Child. Look up into the heavens and see my face before I turn it. Hear my voice before I silence it. Would that I could save you and them. But they don't see and they don't hear.

"The living must die so that the dying can live. The time has come to kill the lamb."...

God must have wept as he performed his task. Every lie, every lure, every act done in the shadows was in that cup. Slowly, hideously they were absorbed into the body of the Son. The final act of incarnation. ...

The throne room is dark and cavernous. The eyes of the King are closed. He is resting.

In his dream he is again in the Garden. The cool of the evening floats across the river as the three walk. They speak of the Garden – of how it is, of how it will be.

“Father...” the Son begins. The King replays the word again. Father. Father. The word was a flower, petal-delicate, yet so easily crushed. Oh, how he longed for his children to call him Father again.

A noise snaps him from his dream. He opens his eyes and sees a transcendent figure gleaming in the doorway. “It is finished, Father. I have come home.”

(From *Six Hours One Friday* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

6. Explain the significance of Jesus’ death on the cross.

7. Why is it important to accept Christ’s sacrifice on our behalf?

8. For what reasons do people refuse God’s gift of salvation?

9. List some practical ways you can emulate Jesus’ sacrifice for others – in response to your own salvation.

Week 12

SEEING JESUS

Setting the Scene:

Who helped you understand your need for a relationship with Jesus?

From the Word:

Read Luke 24:13-35.

Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. List some common misconceptions about Jesus and his ministry.

2. What prevents people from recognising and accepting Jesus as Saviour?

3. In what different ways does Jesus reveal himself to people?

4. Why did Jesus make himself known to some people and not to others?

5. What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping us to see Jesus?

Reflection:

Jesus. The man. The bronzed Galilean who spoke with such thunderous authority and loved with such child-like humility.

The God. The one who claimed to be older than time and greater than death.

Gone is the pomp of religion; dissipated is the fog of theology. Momentarily lifted is the opaque curtain of controversy and opinion. Erased are our own building errors and egotism. And there he stands.

Jesus. Have you ever seen him? Those who first did were never the same.

“My Lord and my God!” cried Thomas.

“I have seen the Lord,” exclaimed Mary Magdalene.

“We have seen his glory,” declared John.

“Were not our hearts burning within us as we talked?” rejoiced the two Emmaus-bound disciples.

But Peter said it best. “We were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

His Majesty. The emperor of Judah. The soaring eagle of eternity. The noble admiral of the Kingdom. All the splendour of heaven revealed in a human body. For a period ever so brief, the doors to the throne room were open and God came near. His majesty was seen. Heaven touched the earth and, as a result, earth can know heaven. In astounding tandem a human body housed divinity. Holiness and earthliness intertwined.

This is no run-of-the-mill messiah. His story was extraordinary. He called himself divine, yet allowed a minimum-wage Roman soldier to drive a nail into his wrist. He demanded purity, yet stood for the rights of a repentant whore. He called men to march, yet refused to allow them to call him King. He sent men into the world, yet equipped them with only bended knees and memories of a resurrected carpenter.

We can't regard him as simply a good teacher. His claims are too outrageous to limit him to the company of Socrates or Aristotle. Nor can we categorize him as one of many prophets sent to reveal eternal truths. His own claims eliminate that possibility.

The who is he?

Let's try to find out. Let's follow his sandalprints. Let's sit on the cold, hard floor of the cave in which he was born. Let's smell the sawdust of the carpentry shop. Let's hear his sandals slap the hard trails of Galilee. Let's sigh as we touch the healed sores of the healed sores of the leper. Let's smile as we see his compassion with the woman at the well. Let's cringe as we hear the hissing of hells' Satan. Let's let our voices soar with the praises of the multitudes. Let's try to see him.

Has it been a while since you have seen him?

If your prayers seem stale, it probably has. If your faith seems to be trembling, perhaps your vision of him is blurred. If you can't find power to face your problems, perhaps it is time to face him.

One warning. Something happens to the person who has witnessed his Majesty. He becomes addicted. One glimpse of the King and you are consumed by a desire to see more of him and say more about him. Pew-warming is no longer an option. Junk religion will no longer suffice. Sensation-seeking is needless. Once you have seen his face you will forever long to see it again.

(From *God Came Near* by Max Lucado)

Making It Relevant – Life Applications:

6. In what way can meeting Jesus change a person's life?

7. Describe your first encounter with Jesus.

8. In what way has your relationship with Jesus Christ grown and matured?

9. In what way can life's problems and disappointments interfere with our communion with God?

10. What can believers do when God seems far away?

11. What steps can you take to nurture/maintain relationship with Jesus?
