

## Summary for Session 19: Messianic Fulfillment Part 2

Prep work: Luke

DVD: Jeff starts by summing up the life of Jesus thus far. After the Transfiguration, Jesus “sets his face” toward Jerusalem and his suffering and death there. Last session, we discussed the parable of the new wine and how it will burst the old wineskins (Luke 5:37-38). This parable will crop up several times in today’s session, relating to how various people accepted (or didn’t accept) Jesus’ teaching. Another theme will be the coming of the king—will we notice the Messiah has come, or will he pass by, unnoticed? Finally, Jeff asks us to look throughout the session for the theme of spreading the kingdom, and what that looks like.

Jeff heads into the story by noting that the disciples of Jesus will quickly have to “count the cost” of being a disciple and must realize what that entails. As an aside, Jeff notes that we don’t often ask people whether they are disciples or Christ, but rather “if they are Christian”. The latter implies a passive stance—that one has accepted Christ as Lord and Savior but has not necessarily done anything about it. To be a disciple implies the action of following in Jesus’ footsteps to spread the Good News of God’s Love. Jeff describes Jesus’ followers of the New Testament in terms of concentric circles around Jesus. Closest to him are Peter, James, and John, then in the next circle are the rest of the 12 Apostles. Outside of them are the 70 disciples and then, from the book Acts of the Apostles, we get the number of believers at 500. While all have a share in Jesus’ mission, Jeff points to Luke’s passages on the commissioning of the 70 to provide example of what discipleship looks like. These were sent out by Jesus to proclaim the Good News, in fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham that other nations would be blessed by his descendants (Gen 12:3). The disciples are given power and authority to heal and perform miracles. This should remind us of Confirmation, when we, too, are sealed with the power and authority of the Holy Spirit, so that Jesus lives in us, as Paul writes to the Galatians (2:20). On returning from their mission, the seventy are most amazed at their power over demons, saying “even the demons are subject to us because of your name” (note that it is in Jesus’ name that power comes; Luke 10:17). Jesus has shared with them (and us) the promise of Genesis 3:15, allowing us to strike at Satan’s head, warning that they (and we) should not get caught up in the victory, but rather that our place will be in heaven (Luke 10:20).

Jeff turns now to the parable of the Good Samaritan, as the epitome of Jesus’ teaching on the new Law and redefining holiness. Jeff first notes that Jesus, as a rabbi, often taught by answering a question with another question. This is also the case here: Scholar- “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus- “What is written in the Law?” (Luke 10:25-26). Jesus also moves from the abstract to the concrete in order to give his listeners an example of what he is talking about. The conversation starts by talking about the Law, but Jesus moves to describing the actions of the Good Samaritan with the man robbed and beaten. The Law says that one must love God and love neighbor; the vertical relationship between person and God is related to the horizontal relationship between person and person. This relatedness is what defines holiness. For the Pharisees, separation from the other person was holiness. The Mosaic Law was set

up because the Israelites were too weak to have contact with “the other” (pagan nations) and remain faithful to God. What started out as a protective measure, however, became a point of pride by Jesus' time. In fact, the word Pharisee comes from the Hebrew word for “the separated ones” or “to separate.” They built their holiness around this idea and it became a wall they couldn't cross. Jeff remarks that the Pharisees were the ones who knew the Torah, were the “doctors” of Judaism, but they had built their walls of holiness so high they could no longer reach the “patients” who needed them. Their politics of holiness actually prevented them from being compassionate. These are the old wineskins which must burst. The built up walls of “holiness” must come crumbling down if they are to understand and follow Jesus' Law of Love. Then they will see what is called for: mercy. Then they will see who their neighbor is: the outsiders, the hurting, the poor. This relation between the vertical and horizontal relationships? We love God, whom we can't see, by loving our neighbor, who is present in front of us. This, then, is holiness. John reinforces this idea in his epistle: “for whoever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1John 4:20). Jeff pauses to ask whether our children are learning about holiness like the Pharisees, from what they *cannot* do, versus as Jesus, from what they *can* do. We must make sure we are careful in defining holiness in our words and by our example.

Jeff picks up this idea of Jesus' active holiness and its attractiveness. He inserts a story about a Dominican priest who arrives in India and finds his window opens onto a dying pauper in the street, sending out a horrible rotting stench. The Dominican recoils from such a scene, but tells himself that Jesus would want him out there. While he is trying to convince himself to action, he hears a woman say “I'll do it” and looks out the window. The wizened tiny figure of Mother Teresa is bent over the man as she rolls him into her arms without hesitation, saying “My Jesus, my Jesus, welcome to my home.” In a few moments, the Dominican hears a tap at the door and opens it to find Mother Teresa, carrying the man and asking the priest to deliver Last Rites. The Dominican, following Mother Teresa's example, takes the man into his arms and lays him down on the priest's own bed, blessing him. Mother Teresa was attracted to Jesus' holiness, and in turn practiced in such a way as to draw other people, like the Dominican, to follow. Jeff also notes that Jesus' prayer life was the source of that holiness (and must be for us, too). The Catechism explains that Jesus' “words and works are the visible manifestation of his prayer in secret (CCC2602). The disciples must have realized Jesus' prayer life was key to his holiness, as they come to him and ask him how to pray (Luke 11:1-4). Jesus gives them what will become the Our Father, and Jeff takes a moment to discuss what this prayer tells us. The order of the words in the prayer is important: first, God is praised, then we commit ourselves to following God's Will and bringing about the Kingdom of God. “Our daily bread” can be seen both as God providing all physical sustenance that we need and also the great gift of Jesus himself in the Eucharist, providing for our spiritual sustenance. The prayer then turns to the recurrent idea in Jesus' message: forgiveness as “release.” The one who will “proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners” in Isaiah (61:1) is not a savior who comes to break the Israelites out from under Rome and re-establish the kingdom of Jerusalem, but a

Messiah who frees people from the bondage of sin. Like the prophets of old, Jesus receives a demand to produce “a sign.” Jesus tells his listeners that the only sign they will have is the “sign of Jonah” (Luke 11:29): a warning of forty days to change before destruction comes. The number 40 can be seen as a generation, and for the Jews of Jesus' time, that is how long they have before Rome will destroy the Temple and Jerusalem in 70AD. Jonah also serves as another example of a “good neighbor,” because he, like the Samaritan, goes out of his way to help another people (in Jonah's case, it's the Assyrians).

In reviewing more parables, Jeff points out the entry by the narrow door (gate), noting that many will seek Jesus, but won't be able to find him. This is another example of the theme of noticing the King—are we looking for him, or will he pass us by? Also, the parables of the invited guests and the great feast teach us that Jesus wants us to be humble, realizing that to God, rich and poor are equal. In the great feast, the invited guests (Israelites) have rejected the invitation (by God), so all are invited, the lowly and the outcasts, especially those who cannot repay. Jeff remarks that when we take the opportunity to love in our own lives, it changes us into the people God wants us to be. Jeff reverts once more to the demands of discipleship, noting that we must pick up our own cross daily. He explains that when Jesus says we must hate our family to follow him (Luke 14:26), Jesus is using hyperbole to emphasize how much we must desire to follow Jesus in comparison to anything else. Jeff points to Paul's words that our suffering is a participation in Christ's ministry (Colossians 1:24). When Paul goes on to say that there is something lacking in Christ's suffering, St. John Paul II explains that “It only means that the Redemption *remains always open to all love expressed in human suffering*” (*Salvifici Doloris*, “On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering,” para 24, emphasis his). We are called to participate in Redemption by willingly suffering for Christ.

Jeff wraps up this session by recalling that Jesus has come to seek the lost, as found in his “lost” parables, particularly the Prodigal Son. Here we clearly see the love God has for us, coming out to welcome us sinners home with great love and joy. The redemption of Zacchaeus can also be seen as a “lost” story, since it illustrates how Jesus as Messiah actively seeks out the outcasts and welcomes them to his fold.

Jeff closes by asking us to consider what we are *doing* as Jesus' disciples. Like the old wineskins, do we need to “burst” in order to become a new vessel that can hold the new wine of Jesus' Law of Love?