

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 10

Sermon on the Mount

Luke 7:1 When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.

The Sermon on the Mount probably occurs on the western edge of the Sea of Galilee with Capernaum a mere three to five miles away; therefore, the event transpires close to the home base of His ministry, Peter's house in Capernaum.

Centurion's Slave Cured

Luke 7:2 And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die. ³ When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave. ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵ for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." ⁶ Now Jesus *started* on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷ for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but *just* say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ "For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ⁹ Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith." ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

The Roman centurion has sent word to Jesus on behalf of his respected servant. The Gospels record no greater miracle than the healing of this servant because Jesus does not even see the servant! Jesus simply speaks and the servant's illness departs.

The Gentile centurion does not feel worthy to ask for anything for himself from the LORD, he asks only for his beloved servant. The centurion has sent Jewish leaders to ask Jesus for the healing. Why? The Jewish leaders love this centurion and his servant because they have provided the means to build their synagogue. Notice that Gentiles have built the synagogue in Capernaum, not Jews. Whether these Jews believe in Jesus or not does not matter because the centurion believes; therefore, they are willing to ask anything of Jesus if He can help their beloved friend.

How can we account for the kindness of the centurion? The answer can be found only in his knowledge of the grace of God because the Spirit of God has put a new heart within him. He has heard the news of the miracle-working Great Physician and he wants healing for his loyal servant and friend. This story and its counterpart in Matthew represent no small thing in the Scripture as it records one of two passages that show the admiration of the LORD

Jesus, with the other located in Mark 6:6. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus marvels at the great faith of the Roman centurion, a faith beyond that found among any of the Jews. As a military man, the centurion knows how to receive orders and how to execute them; hence, he expects obedience to his commands. Therefore, he recognizes Jesus as Master over disease with the power to compel obedience.

City of Nain

Luke 7:11 Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd.

Jesus approaches the city of Nain which sits about 25 miles southwest from Capernaum. The name Nain means green pastures, or lovely. Jesus, accompanied by His disciples, those who believed Him to be the Messiah, which include the twelve Apostles and a large multitude of people, curious on-lookers and religious leaders who have gathered at every major event or sideshow that has come through the land. Do not be misled, Jesus, the Messiah, Creator and God is more than a sideshow; He controls life and death.

This first miracle of the Lord's raising of the dead arouses great awe and astonishment among the people. The people of Nain, which is located a short distance from Shunem just a few miles around the western end of the Hill of Moreh, had seen Elisha raise a child of a woman who had offered him a place to stay and food to eat (II Kings 4:8-37). Perhaps the mourners at the city of Nain soon realize the connection between these two miracles.

Funeral

Luke 7:12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city was with her.

The funeral procession, consisting of his mother, a widow, and a crowd of friends, travel to the city to take this young man to the graveyard He had died that day! How do we know that? In their culture, people buried their dead as soon as possible, and before the next sunset. Who will care for his mother now that her son has died?

Lord's Compassion

Luke 7:13 When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, "Do not weep." ¹⁴ And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise!" ¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to speak. And *Jesus* gave him back to his mother. ¹⁶ Fear gripped them all, and they *began* glorifying God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and, "God has visited His people!" ¹⁷ This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

As in the first record of Jesus' raising someone from the dead, the most important point in this passage focuses on the people's realization of the people that Jesus is God. God has visited His people, an event that cannot be kept quiet. Everyone in the district has heard the report as well as those in the countryside to the south deep into the heart of Judea territory.

Expected One

Luke 7:18 The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. ¹⁹ Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" ²⁰ When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" ²¹ At that very time He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were* blind. ²² And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.* ²³ "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me."

Jesus has performed many miracles of a physical nature, but here He directs the attention of John's disciples to the realm of grace. His purpose broadcasts the importance of preaching the Gospel. John the Baptist has acted as the messenger who prepares the way for Jesus and John does so by preaching repentance and reformation of the heart and life. Jesus concludes by saying, "Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me." What causes a person to take offence? In Jesus' day, offence meant stumbling and Jesus does not want anyone to stumble into sin because of Him. In that day, the word stumble actually meant using a bait stick to lure an animal in to his trap.

Peter helps us to understand the meaning of this passage when he adds the word stumbling to his account.

1 Peter 2:8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this *doom* they were also appointed.

Peter hears the Lord's instruction to John's disciples about stumbling for the first time in Nain. He does not understand it at that time, but by the time he writes his first letter, he understands it completely. To stumble over Jesus or take an offence means to reject Him, an act which will result in eternal doom.

John's Disciples

Luke 7:24 When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? ²⁵ "But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are *found* in royal palaces! ²⁶ "But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet. ²⁷ "This is the one about whom it is written, 'BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.' ²⁸ "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." ²⁹ When all the people and the tax collectors heard *this*, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

John still has a few disciples as he continues to preach a message of repentance and reformation. John's ministry does not end at the Jordan River with Jesus' baptism. He

continues to send people to Jesus. John's huge following before the baptism of Jesus become followers of Jesus after the baptism. Yet, in reality John's special position as the messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah ceases with the baptism of Jesus, Whose kingdom will increase. John continues to direct people to Jesus for a while, but his public ministry suddenly ends when Herod casts him into prison in the castle of Machaerus, a fortress on the southern extremity of Perea, nine miles east of the Dead Sea, where he is beheaded.

Easton's 1897 Dictionary states: Machaerus was the Black Fortress built by Herod the Great in the gorge of Callirhoe, one of the wadies nine miles east of the Dead Sea, as a frontier rampart against Arab marauders. John the Baptist was probably cast into the prison connected with this castle by Herod Antipas, whom he had reprov'd for his adulterous marriage with Herodias. Here Herod "made a supper" on his birthday. He was at this time marching against Aretas, king of Perea, to whose daughter he had been married. During the revelry of the banquet held in the border fortress, to please Salome, who danced before him, he sent an executioner, who beheaded John, and "brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel" (Mark 6:14-29). This castle stood "starkly bold and clear" 3,860 feet above the Dead Sea, and 2,546 feet above the Mediterranean. Its ruins, now called M'khaur, are still visible on the northern end of Jebel Attarus.

Importance of Baptism

Luke 7:29 When all the people and the tax collectors heard *this*, they acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.

This sentence reveals a great truth about the influence of John's work in announcing the coming of Jesus. Notice that all the people, including the tax collectors, have already experienced baptism for the repentance of their sins. We might ask, why does Jesus not baptize? He does not baptize because they have already been baptized by John in believer's baptism for the repentance of sin looking forward to the arrival of Messiah; therefore, the converts of John do not need to be baptized again.

Rejection of God's Purpose

Luke 7:30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

At the close of the last lesson, the people and tax-gatherers had heard and acknowledged God's justice, having been baptized by John. But here, the Pharisees and lawyers have rejected God's purpose and refused to be baptized by John. Even today, lawyers often operate in legal matters tainted by the darkness of the world, seeing the bad in everything, which makes it difficult to see the good in honest godly people. Why did John baptize people? His baptism bound the subjects to repentance and to faith in the Messiah coming after John. Even though baptism was not administered in the name of the Trinity, those who had met the Messiah did not need to be baptized again, but those who had never met the Messiah needed baptism.

Acts 18:24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. ²⁵ This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; ²⁶ and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. ²⁷ And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace, ²⁸ for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Acts 19:1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. ² He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they *said* to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." ³ And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." ⁴ Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." ⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they *began* speaking with tongues and prophesying.

Generation of Men

Luke 7:31 "To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like? ³² "They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.' ³³ "For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon!' ³⁴ "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' ³⁵ "Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children."

The unconverted heart desperately seeks the perverse and wicked. In this comparison, the Lord describes the people on earth during His day. He compares the Jewish leaders to whining children at play, who cannot be satisfied, and are always finding fault and taking exception to the truth. The Jews are not pleased with anyone sent by God to deliver the truth. John the Baptist was sent first by the Lord. He lived a life of self-denial but the Jews accused him of having a demon. Then comes Jesus, eating and drinking like ordinary people and the Jews accuse him of being a glutton and a drunkard. The Jews are determined not to accept a message from God at all, using their objections as a cover to hide their hatred of God's truth, actually hating God more than His earthly ministers!

The natural heart of man hates God. The earthly mind wars with God. It dislikes His law, His Gospel, and His people. It finds some excuse not to believe or obey. For the ungodly, the doctrine of repentance looms with strictness. In contrast, the doctrine of faith and grace seems too easy for the ungodly. The message of John the Baptist expands to the outer reaches of this world. The message of Jesus Christ shrinks to the inner recesses of this world. Therefore, man excuses himself for remaining in his sins. None of this should

be a surprise! We must make up our minds not to be like the Jews of the Lord's time, those unconverted people, perverse, unreasonable and hard to please.

Sermon on the Mount

Luke 7:36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined *at the table*. ³⁷ And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining *at the table* in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, ³⁸ and standing behind *Him* at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner." ⁴⁰ And Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he replied, "Say it, Teacher." ⁴¹ "A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² "When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?" ⁴³ Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have judged correctly."

Only the Gospel of Luke includes this interesting story. But to recognize the full beauty of the story, it should be read in connection with Matthew 11:20-30. When compared, the woman in the Luke passage probably owes the intent of her heart and mind to the well-known words of the Lord saying, "Come to me, all you that labor and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." In the chronology of Jesus' ministry, the events in Matthew 11 have just transpired. That wonderful invitation, in all probability, have saved her soul, and given her that sense of peace for which she is so grateful. She has probably just experienced the full offer of a free pardon, God's chosen instrument for bringing the chief of sinners to repentance.

Matthew 11:20 Then He began to denounce the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. ²¹ "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. ²² "Nevertheless I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in *the* day of judgment than for you. ²³ "And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You will descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. ²⁴ "Nevertheless I say to you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in *the* day of judgment, than for you." ²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. ²⁶ "Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. ²⁷ "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. ²⁸ "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle

and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. ³⁰ "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

People may show an outward respect for Christ but remain unconverted. The Pharisee invites Jesus to eat with him, yet at the same time, he shows his ignorance about the LORD's nature. He shows his rebellious heart toward the poor sinner washing the feet of the LORD.

Jesus' Word to the Pharisee

Luke 7:44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ "You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. ⁴⁶ "You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little." ⁴⁸ Then He said to her, "Your sins have been forgiven." ⁴⁹ Those who were reclining *at the table* with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this *man* who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ And He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The Pharisee shows an outward civility but no true love in his heart for the LORD. Remember this Pharisee! We, too, can have a form of religion as he did and yet know nothing about the LORD. We can treat Christianity with a form of respect and yet be blind to its teaching. We can love the correctness and propriety of the church all the while hating justification by faith and salvation by grace. Are we in the same place as Simon the Pharisee? Does Jesus need to say to you, " _____, I have something to say to you!" Have you done something that Jesus needs to talk about with you? What a sobering thought!