

The Church of the Servant King
Survey of the Bible Series
The Gospel of Luke

SB_18_Humility Manifested By Trust in the Father

Review – Where We’ve Been in Luke

Before we move forward in our study of Luke 18, it is important that we pause, step back and take a look at the larger flow of Luke’s account. Since we have been enmeshed in the details of the account for several weeks, this is especially important now. Here is a brief outline that captures most of the highlights of what we’ve covered so far in Luke.

- Chapters 1-2 – Luke emphasizes the Old Testament and its promises of a Messiah
 - John’s birth is announced to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, through the angel Gabriel
 - John is seen as a fulfillment of Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 which prophesies that an “Elijah” would precede the coming of the Messiah (see Luke 7:27)
 - Jesus’ birth is announced by the angel Gabriel to Mary, the mother of the humanity of the Messiah, and seen as a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant (Lu 1:32-33)
 - Mary’s Magnificat (Lu 1:46-56) contains many references to phrases and promises found in the Psalms and other Old Testament passages regarding the Messiah
 - Zecharias’ Benedictus (Lu 1:67-79) evidences much of the same
 - Simeon, the old man, would not see death until he saw the “Consolation of Israel” (Lu 2:25-35)
 - Anna, a prophetess and widow for 84 years, witnesses that Jesus is the Messiah (Lu 2:36-38)
 - Jesus grows in knowledge and wisdom and amazes the scholars
- Chapters 3-4:13 – Demonstrate Jesus as the Messiah Who can resist Satan
 - John baptizes Jesus to begin Jesus’ public ministry (Lu 3:21-22)
 - Satan tempts Jesus (Lu 4:1-13)
- Chapters 4:14-9:50 – The Galilean Ministry – Jesus’ Claims as the Messiah and Miracles to Support the Claims
 - Rejected at Nazareth (Lu 4:16-30)
 - Casts out demon (Lu 4:31-37)
 - Heals Peter’s mother-in-law and others (Lu 4:38-41)
 - Preaches in Galilee (4:42-44)
 - Calls Peter, James and John to be disciples (Lu 5:1-11)
 - Heals and cleanses a leper (Lu 5:12-15)
 - Forgives and heals a paralytic (Lu 5:17-26)
 - Calls Matthew, the tax collector (Lu 5:27-32)
 - Questioned about fasting and Jesus illustrates the difference between the spirituality of the Messianic Kingdom verses the religious system currently being practiced which was a derivative of the Mosaic Law (Lu 5:33-39)
 - Disciples eat grain on the Sabbath and Jesus confronted by Pharisees – Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Lu 6:1-5)
 - Jesus heals man with withered right hand on the Sabbath (Lu 6:6-11)
 - Jesus names the twelve apostles (Lu 6:12-16)
 - Jesus heals a multitude (Lu 6:17-19)
 - The Beatitudes and Sermon on the Mount (Lu 6:20-49)
 - Jesus heals a centurion’s servant (Lu 7:1-10)
 - Jesus raises the dead son of the widow of Nain (Lu 7:11-17)
 - John sends messengers to Jesus (Lu 7:18-35)
 - Jesus anointed with oil by sinful woman while at Pharisee’s house for dinner and forgives her (Lu 7:36-50)

- Women who had been healed minister to Jesus (Lu 8:1-3)
- Parable of the Sower (Lu 8:4-8)
- Parable of the lamp (Lu 8:16-18)
- Wind and Wave obey Jesus (Lu 8:22-25)
- Jesus heals a demon possessed man and the demons flee to the swine (Lu 8:26-39)
- Jesus heals the daughter of Jairus, ruler of a synagogue in Galilee and a woman with a hemorrhage. (Lu 8:40-56)
- Sends out the Twelve (Lu 9:1-6)
- Jesus feeds five thousand (Lu 9:10-17)
- Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah (Lu 9:18-20)
- Jesus predicts His death and resurrection (Lu 9:21-22)
- Jesus is transfigured (Lu 9:28-36)
- Jesus casts out a demon and heals a boy (Lu 9:37-42)
- Jesus predicts His death (Lu 9:43-45)
- Point of transition – Jesus Determines to go to Jerusalem (Lu 9:52). Miracles are less prominent and teaching and instruction become more prominent.
- Jesus' Journey to Jerusalem, Increased Opposition and His Teaching the Disciples (Lu 9:52-19:44). The widening rift between Jesus and the Jewish religious leaders becomes more prominent in Luke 9-13 and in Luke 14-19, Luke emphasizes Jesus' teaching of His disciples.
 - Rejection in Samaritan village (Lu 9:51-56)
 - Teaching on the cost of discipleship (Lu 9:57-62)
 - Seventy disciples sent and return and Jesus instructs them on spiritual priorities (Lu 10:1-20)
 - The parable of the Good Samaritan (Lu 10:25-37)
 - Jesus teaches Martha a spiritual principle regarding priorities (Lu 10:38-42)
 - Jesus teaches the disciples a prayer (Lu 11:1-4)
 - Jesus teaches the disciples the principle of persistence (Lu 11:5-13)
 - Jesus accused of casting out demons by the power of Satan (Lu 11:14-23)
 - Jesus teaches the disciples the principle that self-righteousness gives opportunity for greater evil (Lu 11:24-26)
 - Jesus compares the rejection of His generation to the positive volition of the Queen of Sheba and the Ninevites to whom Jonah evangelized (Lu 11:29-32)
 - Woe to the Pharisees and religious leaders (Lu 11:37-54)
 - Jesus teaches regarding hypocrisy (Lu 12:1-3)
 - Jesus teaches regarding the omniscience of God – sparrows and numbered hair (Lu 12:4-7)
 - Jesus teaches the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and the necessity to confess Him before men (Lu 12:8-12)
 - Jesus teaches the parable of the rich fool (Lu 12:13-21)
 - Jesus teaches the principle of not worrying about material provision, but to focus upon all that awaits them in the kingdom (Lu 12:22-34)
 - Jesus teaches the principle of the need for faithfulness prior to the Second Coming using the faithful and evil servant as examples (Lu 12:35-48)
 - Jesus teaches that He will bring division (Lu 12:49-53)
 - Jesus teaches the multitudes to discern the times and make peace with one's personal adversaries (Lu 12:54-59)
 - Jesus teaches the need to repent and the parable of the barren fig tree (Lu 13:1-9)
 - Jesus heals a woman on the Sabbath (Lu 13:10-17)
 - Jesus teaches principles of the kingdom, i.e. growth like a mustard seed and spreading like leaven (Lu 13:18-21)
 - Jesus teaches the principle that the way into the kingdom is a narrow way (Lu 13:22-33)
 - Jesus laments over Jerusalem (13:34-35)

- Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath (14:1-6)
- Jesus teaches the principle of humility (14:7-14)
- Jesus teaches about the “Great Supper” (14:15-24)
- Jesus teaches the principle of leaving all to follow Christ (14:25-33)
- Jesus teaches principles relating to God’s response to positive volition – the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost (prodigal) son (Lu 15:1-31)
- Jesus teaches the principle of making provision for eternity future through the parable of the unjust steward (16:1-13)
- Jesus responds to the Pharisees derision regarding Jesus’ teaching about money (16:14-18)
- Jesus teaches a principle relating to eternal destiny – the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31)
- Jesus teaches His disciples regarding the inevitability of negative volition (17:1-4)
- Jesus teaches His disciples principles regarding faith (17:5-10)
- Jesus heals ten lepers (17:11-19)
- Jesus answers the Pharisees and teaches His disciples regarding the coming of the kingdom (17:20-37)

The above summary brings us up to chapter 18 where Luke is emphasizing Jesus’ instruction to His disciples as He makes his way to Jerusalem during His public ministry. We are on the verge of entering the last section of Luke’s gospel where the controversies with the religious leadership of Israel reaches its climax in the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

The Parable of the Persistent Widow (18:1-8)

Jesus continues the instruction of His disciples in chapter 18. The principle message for Jesus’ disciples from this passage is to not lose faith. Persecution, such as Jesus taught that His follower’s would suffer (e.g. 9:23-27; 12:10-12), could cause some to lose their faith.

The judge in this parable represents power which is corrupt and uninterested in its subjects’ welfare – quite a contrast to God. The widow is dependent upon others for her support and care. Evidently, she had suffered a financial injustice. Luke often takes note of the plight of widows (e.g. 2:37; 4:25, 26; 7:12; 20:47; 21:2, 3; Acts 6:1-7; 9:39, 41). Even a corrupt judge will eventually yield to the pleas of a subject. How much more will a loving heavenly Father yield to the pleas of His Own child? If an unjust judge will eventually give justice, then how much more will the heavenly Father and His God/man Son mete out justice on behalf of His Own?

Jesus’ statement in verse 8 was designed to exhort the disciples to continue in prayer and faithfulness. Jesus was not indicating that there would not be any believers when He returned.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (18:9-14)

In this passage, Jesus turns to a select group who “trusted in themselves.” In other words, they were self-righteous. I believe there is a high degree of likelihood that this group consisted of the religious leaders or their cronies since it is that group that so trusted in themselves and their own keeping of their interpretation of the Mosaic Law.

The self-righteous person uses a relative standard to measure his worthiness before God. The self-righteous person compares himself to other people. The tax collector represented the humble person who compares himself to God’s standard. This parable reminds us of the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 in regard to the attitude of the son when he repented. It also reminds us of the principles of humility that Jesus has taught on previous occasions (e.g. Lu 13:30; 14:11).

Jesus Blesses Little Children (18:15-17)

Luke includes this short section as a follow up on the principle of humility Jesus taught in the previous section. Jesus had just taught the need for humility through a parable that contrasted the self-righteous person with the person who really understood their spiritual plight. A child realizes that they are dependent upon someone else and incapable of providing for themselves. In the same manner, such an attitude of humility needs to be present in the adult who desires to enter the kingdom. They need to realize their true spiritual condition and approach God dependent upon His provision, not their own.

Jesus teaches that it is impossible to enter the Kingdom when one believes that good works produced from a position of power and influence are sufficient to satisfy God's righteous requirements. Such is not the humble attitude like a child that can only trust in something greater than him/herself rather than personal ability.

Jesus Counsels the Rich Young Ruler (18:18-23)

In this passage, Jesus responds to the rich young ruler in a manner that affirms His deity. Jesus implied that if He were truly good, then it would be because He was God since only God is truly good. Jesus responds to the man's questions with instructions that the man needed to keep the seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth and fifth commandments (Lu 18:19-20 cf. Ex 20:12-16). These commandments pertain to man's relationship to man; whereas the first four pertain to man's relationship to God.

Jesus perceived that the man was more attached to his wealth than what it would have required to inherit eternal life. The ruler was not ready to take that step in contrast to Zacchaeus in Luke 19:8.

With God All Things Are Possible (18:24-30)

Jesus' analogy of the camel through the eye of the needle teaches the impossibility of entering the Kingdom if one is relying upon his/her own resources. The "needle" was not a small gate in the city wall through which a camel could just squeeze through on its' knees. (This is sometimes taught by those who want to acknowledge the fact that Jesus was not excluding rich people from the Kingdom.) Rather, the context is that of a rich man who is depending upon his own good works to enter the Kingdom. Any rich person who so tries to buy his way into the Kingdom through the production of good works will find entry as impossible as a camel trying to go through the eye of a sewing needle. This is Jesus' point in verse 27 – "The things which are impossible with men [production of good works sufficient to satisfy God's righteousness] are possible with God."

Jesus' response to Peter is designed to encourage Peter and the other disciples to focus upon the blessings that would be theirs in the present time or age [i.e. the spiritual blessings related to having been a disciple of Christ Himself while He was on earth] and the age to come, eternal life [i.e. the blessing of eternal life which would be a part of their inheritance in the Messianic kingdom].

Jesus Predicts His Death Yet a Third Time (18:31-34)

Jesus has taught His disciples about His death on previous occasions; however this is the first mention of the mode of His death and the Gentiles part in it. Can you imagine being Jesus at this point in His ministry? How would you handle it if you knew that God's plan for you included enduring such an injustice? Would you rebel against the Father's plan because it wasn't fair to you? Would you have a perspective of your life and human history that was greater than your own interests? To one degree or another, we face these same questions every day when much less significant injustices come our way.

A Blind Man Receives His Sight (18:35-43)

Here the blind man illustrates how the nation should have responded in faith. He manifest his faith by using the title "Son of David." The crowd, like the religious leaders, tried to keep him quiet.