

“Good News”: A Series in the Gospels (Part 3)

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The companion to the Gospel account Luke wrote was Acts, which retells the work of Jesus' spirit after his ascension, and the story of the movement of people he inspired.

Luke Chapters 9-19:

Part three explores the central part of Luke's Gospel. Jesus continues his controversial announcement of GOOD NEWS for the poor during his long road-trip to Jerusalem, which increases conflict with Israel's religious leaders. This tension provides the setting for the famous parable of the Prodigal Son.

Jesus takes a long road trip from Galilee in Judea through Samaria all the way south to Jerusalem. This is to remind us of the journey that Moses brought the Israelites on to the Promised Land. Luke writes of Jesus as a new Moses (renewing Israel's covenant with God) and a new David (gathering the people together to live under His rule).

Luke highlights how choosing to follow Jesus will cause you to rethink everything and specifically, change your perspective on how you spend your money, how you resolve conflict and how you treat the poor. We read of stories where greed is transformed into generosity and anger into forgiveness.

We learn that in true Jesus-communities, which I hope and believe we are here today, ALL are welcome, including outsiders, as we preach and live this “GOOD NEWS” to the poor that Luke highlighted often. Whether it was the marginalized people who He healed, the shamed sex workers He reached out to or the tax collectors He included- this was Jesus' Kingdom crew. A crew the religious leaders of the day did NOT approve of, to say the least.

There's a “Battle of the Banquets” going on throughout these chapters, where we read of Jesus welcoming sinners, eating with them and even going as far as to throw dinner parties Himself for the marginalized and the sick and the poor- mostly people who could never repay Him. He also attends some dinner parties hosted by the religious elite where He calls them out for becoming an arrogant EXCLUSIVE social club.

Luke 15:11-32 (TPT)

The Loving Father

11 Then Jesus said, “Once there was a father with two sons. 12 The younger son came to his father and said, ‘Father, don’t you think it’s time to give me the share of your estate that belongs to me?’^[e] So the father went ahead and distributed among the two sons their inheritance.^[f] 13 Shortly afterward, the younger son packed up all his belongings and traveled off to see the world. He journeyed to a far-off land where he soon wasted all he was given in a binge of extravagant and reckless living.

14 “With everything spent and nothing left, he grew hungry, for there was a severe famine in that land. 15 So he begged a farmer in that country to hire him. The farmer hired him and sent him out to feed the pigs. 16 The son was so famished, he was willing to even eat the slop given to the pigs,^[g] because no one would feed him a thing.

17 “Humiliated, the son finally realized what he was doing and he thought, ‘There are many workers at my father’s house who have all the food they want with plenty to spare. They lack nothing. Why am I here dying of hunger, feeding these pigs and eating their slop? 18 I want to go back home to my father’s house, and I’ll say to him, “Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. 19 I’ll never be worthy to be called your son. Please, Father, just treat me like one of your employees.”’

20 “So the young son set off for home. From a long distance away, his father saw him coming, *dressed as a beggar*,^[h] and great compassion swelled up in his heart for his son who was returning home. So the father raced out to meet him. He swept him up in his arms, hugged him dearly, and kissed him over and over with tender love.

21 “Then the son said, ‘Father, I was wrong. I have sinned against you. I could never deserve to be called your son. Just let me be—’

“The father interrupted and said,^[i] ‘Son, you’re home now!’

22 “Turning to his servants, the father said, ‘Quick, bring me the best robe, my very own robe, and I will place it on his shoulders. Bring the ring, the seal of sonship,^[j] and I will put it on his finger. And bring out the best shoes^[k] you can find for my son. 23 Let’s *prepare a great feast*^[l] and celebrate. 24 For this beloved son of mine was once dead, but now he’s alive again. Once he was lost, but now he is found!’ And everyone celebrated with overflowing joy.

25 “Now, the older son was out working in the field when his brother returned, and as he approached the house he heard the music of celebration and dancing. 26 So he called over one of the servants and asked, ‘What’s going on?’

27 “The servant replied, ‘It’s your younger brother. He’s returned home and your father is throwing a party to celebrate his homecoming.’

28 “The older son became angry and refused to go in and celebrate. So his father came out and pleaded with him, ‘Come and enjoy the feast with us!’[m]

29 “The son said, ‘Father, listen! How many years have I been working like a slave for you, performing every duty you’ve asked as a faithful son?[n] And I’ve never once disobeyed you. But you’ve never thrown a party for me because of my faithfulness. Never once have you even given me a goat that I could feast on and celebrate with my friends like he’s doing now. 30 But look at this son of yours! He comes back after wasting your wealth on prostitutes and reckless living, and here you are throwing a great feast to celebrate—for him!’

31 “The father said, ‘My son, you are always with me by my side. Everything I have is yours to enjoy. 32 It’s only right to celebrate like this and be overjoyed, because this brother of yours was once dead and gone, but now he is alive and back with us again. He was lost but now he is found!’”[o]

If all we ever do is COMPETE and COMPARE we will always be left wanting, all too familiar with the disparity between “US and THEM.” But when we simply TRUST and OBEY we can remain hopeful, like the Father in this story (ex. God in Christ) who is all about creating an INCLUSIVE environment for ALL to learn, love and grow in.

Jesus wants the religious leaders to see the “outsiders” the way God sees them, as sons and daughters who have been reclaimed from death! Jesus’ Kingdom community is wide open to anyone, the only requirement is to humble yourself and recognize your need for God’s mercy.

The religious leaders rejection of Jesus and His message of GOOD NEWS to the poor is actually a rejection of the God of Israel, Yahweh Himself. It’s at this point in the story that the anger of these religious leaders has reached a boiling point. So as Jesus is preparing to enter into Jerusalem with His disciples for the Passover celebration, the religious leaders are plotting to kill him.