

Luke 18:1 ¶ And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;

Luke 18:2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man:

Luke 18:3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary.

Luke 18:4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man;

Luke 18:5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.

This chapter opens with yet another teaching parable. The purpose of the parable was to illustrate the stark contrast between God's heart for righteous judgment and the hearts of wicked human judges. The story involves a city judge that is described as having no fear of God or regard for man; in other words, he made judgments according to his own wisdom without caring about what God or man might think. This would indicate that (as stated in verse 6 below) his judgments were often unjust. There was a widow that was very persistent in seeking justice on her behalf in light of wrongdoing against her by an enemy. For some reason the judge ignored her pleas; some commentators posit that she did not have the means to offer a sufficient bribe. Finally, however, he decided that it was in his best interest to render justice on her behalf so she would quit bothering him.

Luke 18:6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.

Luke 18:7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?

Luke 18:8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

The Lord Jesus then tells His disciples to pay attention to what the unjust judge said. He is saying that if the unjust judge was moved to act on behalf of the woman because of her earnest persistence, how much more ready was God to avenge His elect, His chosen people. I think this reference to His elect applies to both the Jewish people and the followers of Jesus that would become known as the church. Jesus is acknowledging that God is aware of the cries of His persecuted people even though from our perspective it may seem as though the wicked are prevailing. We must remember that God has a plan and that vengeance will be His at the appropriate time according to His will. I can't help but be reminded of the opening of the fifth seal in Revelation 6.

Revelation 6:9–11 “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”

In Revelation the cry is from those that have been martyred for their faith. They are pleading for God to avenge their blood, and He assures them that they will be avenged after the death of the last martyr of the church age. In other words, He will exact judgment at the time He has determined according to His plan. Once God's vengeance begins it will be consummated quickly relative to the intervening time period from man's perspective.

Then Jesus poses a thought-provoking question: Will I find faith on the earth when I return as King? I think this question is a commentary on the weakness of man. It's easy to have faith when things are going according to our expectations. When, however, those expectations are shaken because the Lord doesn't intervene in times of testing and persecution as we think He should, we learn how strong or weak our faith is. Jesus seems to be indicating that the intervening time before He returns in judgment will result in their being few relative to the potential that possess faith. He also seems to be inferring that His perceived lack of power and authority due to the spreading influence of evil will result in people deciding that He is not worthy of their faith.

Luke 18:9 ¶ And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

Luke 18:10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

Luke 18:11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

Luke 18:12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

Luke 18:13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

Luke 18:14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The introduction to this next parable is specific—it is to those who were self-righteous and looked down on others. (I assume this would be a reference to most of the scribes and Pharisees.) Jesus tells of two men who went to the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and one a publican, a hated tax collector. The Pharisee evidently knew who the publican was. He prayed thanking God that he was not an extortioner or unjust or an adulterer like “this” tax collector. He then goes on to praise himself as a righteous man; he fasted twice a week and tithed from all he possessed. Obviously, he felt no need to ask forgiveness for any sin or desire to praise God. On the other hand, the publican, who was standing at a distance from the Pharisee, was so full of shame he did not even lift his eyes to heaven. Instead, he beat his breast in repentance asking for God's mercy.

Jesus declared that it was the publican who received forgiveness in answer to his prayer. Though the wording is a bit awkward, it is clear that the Pharisee's prayer was empty and vain; it did not place him in right standing before God.

I liked this quote by David Guzik: “True humbleness is simply seeing things the way they *are*. The Pharisee saw himself as something great when he wasn’t, and the tax collector saw himself as a sinner needing God’s mercy, which he was.”

The application—If you exalt yourself, God will humble you; if, however, you humble yourself before God, you will be lifted up to a position of right standing before Him.

Psalms 34:18 “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”

James 4:6, 10 “But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.”

Luke 18:15 ¶ And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

Luke 18:16 But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:17 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein.

I think the connecting thought between this section and the last is the heart of God. Luke records a time in which parents were bringing their little children to Jesus just so He would touch them. According to Mark’s account, the parents wanted Him to bless their children.

Mark 10:16 “And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.”

The disciples evidently thought that this was an unnecessary infringement upon Jesus’ time. Jesus, however, saw it differently; He again saw a teaching moment and an opportunity to enjoy the pure response of the children. He told the disciples to let the little children come to Him; in fact, this is how everyone who wants to be part of the kingdom of God must come—as a little child. That was exactly how the publican in the preceding parable came to God in prayer.

Children are like open books. When they come to you by choice, it is because they trust you and expect to be loved just as they are. We must come to God with that same type of faith—totally confident in His love and protection.

Luke 18:18 ¶ And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

Luke 18:19 And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none *is* good, save one, *that is*, God.

Luke 18:20 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Luke 18:21 And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.

Luke 18:22 Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.

Luke 18:23 And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.

After just declaring that one who wants to be in the kingdom of God must come as trusting as a little child in God's love for you, Luke tells us of another man that came to Jesus asking what he must do to inherit eternal life; this man is described as being one of high rank and great wealth. It's interesting to note that though he seemed to lack nothing from the world's perspective, he knew he was lacking. He had no peace and contentment. It's only through dying to self and yielding to God as Lord that we find peace and fulfillment that the wealth of this world cannot buy.

As He often does, Jesus responds to the man with a question—Why do you call me good? He then goes on to state that only God is good. He also voices His assumption that the man knows the commandments, and follows that statement by naming five of them—Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, and Honor your father and mother.

I think these commandments were chosen specifically in light of the Spirit's revelation of the man's need according to his own perception. He was quickly able to respond that he had kept all these commandments since he was a youth.

Now Jesus zeros in on where he will have to admit he lacks. He tells the man that he lacks only one thing—to sell everything he has and give the proceeds to the poor to accrue treasure in heaven—AND come and follow Him.

In context, Jesus is making reference to another commandment. I believe the man's response identifies that commandment as the very first—Thou shalt have no other gods before me. His wealth had become his god.

I also think that it is important to note that Jesus included following Him as part of what the man lacked. In context, I think that Jesus is declaring Himself to be God; and God is to be loved with all your heart, soul and mind.

Luke 18:24 And when Jesus saw that he was very sorrowful, he said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!

Luke 18:25 For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Luke 18:26 And they that heard *it* said, Who then can be saved?

Luke 18:27 And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Jesus saw that the man was really grieved when he heard Jesus' answer. He went away with a heavy heart because he just could not bear the thought of giving up his earthly riches in lieu of heavenly riches. Like so many of us, he just could not grasp the significance of eternal riches vs. earthly riches. He couldn't

grasp that his earthly life is but a vapor that can vanish in a moment, while his eternal existence will be one of time without end.

Jesus then declared that it is really difficult for a rich person to enter into the kingdom of God! In fact, it would be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. This again goes back to the fact that wealth more often than not becomes a “god” to man, a thing that he just can’t fathom doing without—not even to attain heavenly riches and eternal life.

The response of those listening to Jesus is also quite telling. If respected men of great standing and wealth can’t get into God’s kingdom, then who can? We have a propensity for thinking that material wealth is an indication of God’s blessing and approval on one’s life—and that is so not true. It can be, but certainly is not usually the case. The prosperity preachers of today seem to ignore this teaching of Jesus.

Jesus then declares that though there are things that are impossible for man, nothing is impossible for God. In other words, there are those among the wealthy who will yield to the wooing of the Spirit and realize that to yield all to God now is worth it for the eternal reward.

Luke 18:28 Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee.

Luke 18:29 And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake,

Luke 18:30 Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.

I guess Peter was still thinking about the fact that Jesus had told the rich man to sell all and come follow Him in light of his statement that they had left all to follow Him. Did he realize that following Jesus was the same as following God? It would be interesting to know when they actually gained full understanding of that truth. It seems to me that it had to have been after the resurrection.

Jesus declares that no one who chooses to follow Him—in order to gain the kingdom of God—will have reason for regret. He/she will receive much more both in this life and in the world to come. I believe that the “manifold more” is a direct reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer—His continual presence in our lives to provide comfort, wisdom and strength. I believe that “life everlasting” is so much more than just existing forever. It is living as a part of God’s family as a joint-heir with Jesus to everything that belongs to Him.

Romans 8:16–17 “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”

As a part of the family of God, we become part of a spiritual family that is far larger and more caring than any earthly family.

Luke 18:31 ¶ Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.

Luke 18:32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on:

Luke 18:33 And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again.

It's at this point in Luke's narrative that he tells us that Jesus tells the twelve disciples that they are heading for Jerusalem and begins to prepare them for the events that would transpire there. He tells them that everything written by the prophets about His sacrificial death at the hands of the Gentiles would be fulfilled; He would be mocked, physically abused, spit on, flogged and finally put to death—but on the third day, He would rise again (from the dead is inferred). Isaiah records some of the most well-known prophecies to which Jesus referred.

Isaiah 50:6–7 "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

Isaiah 52:13–15 "Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:"

Isaiah 53:5–10 "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."

Isaiah 53:10–11 "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

Although Jesus would be killed at the hands of the Gentiles, it is important to note that He would be given over to them for that purpose by the Jewish leaders.

Mark 15:1 "And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate."

I think it is also important to note that Jesus went to Jerusalem willingly to fulfill the scripture, well knowing the cost of the sacrifice He was about to make. Jesus made it very clear to Pilate that it was only because it was according to God's will that he could exercise any authority over Him at all.

John 19:11 "Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin."

Luke 18:34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

This is a very perplexing verse. We are told that the disciples did not understand what Jesus was saying though it seems that He was pretty plain spoken from my point of view. The fact that they did not understand seems to be because it was hidden from them, and it seems that this hiding was a supernatural work of God. Maybe the purpose was to plant the seeds that would later blossom into recognition in light of His resurrection. Maybe this was a gracious act of God to shorten the time of grief and disappointment ahead of them.

Luke 18:35 ¶ And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging:

Luke 18:36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant.

Luke 18:37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by.

Luke 18:38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, *thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.

As they approached Jericho en route to Jerusalem, they encountered a blind man that was begging at the side of the road. He heard the crowd passing by him and asked what was going on. They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He immediately cried out—Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Obviously, this man had heard of Jesus and knew that He was a descendant of David and that He could perform miracles of healing. I wonder if he understood that Jesus was the Messiah; "Son of David" was a recognized reference to the Messiah.

I think it is important to note that the man asked for Jesus to show him mercy. He made no presumption of Jesus granting his request but displayed the faith that if He did respond, he knew he would be healed.

Luke 18:39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, *Thou* Son of David, have mercy on me.

Luke 18:40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him,

Luke 18:41 Saying, What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight.

Luke 18:42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.

Luke 18:43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw *it*, gave praise unto God.

Those who were in the lead of the traveling entourage rebuked the blind man and told him to be quiet. Instead, the man started crying out even louder. Jesus commanded that the man be brought to Him. He then asked the man what he wanted Him to do for him, and the man immediately asked to receive his sight. Jesus then told him his request was granted because of his faith. Immediately, the man was able to see and joined the crowd following Jesus crying out his praise to God. Taking note of the miracle, the crowd joined him in praising God.

I couldn't help but contrast the response of this blind man to that of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda (John 5). Jesus asked the cripple if he wanted to be made whole, but his response was one explaining why that could not happen. This blind man's response to what he wanted was one of faith in expectation of healing. Healing is always connected to one's faith in God, but healing does not always come according to our expectation. Sometimes it is immediate; sometimes we are made to wait according to God's good purpose; and sometimes we are taken home to heaven never to suffer again.