



Week Two

Reflections and Readings

Day 8—Luke 4:31-44

The Holy One of God. The Gospel writer, goes to great lengths in chapters 3 and 4 to reveal to us just who this Jesus really is. We learn things like Jesus' pedigree in His unique genealogy. We learn about his calling and credentials in His unique baptism. We learn about His role as the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies when He speaks in His hometown synagogue. And now in today's reading we see Jesus demonstrate publically that he has the power & authority of God here on earth as he casts out demons and heals the sick. It's almost like Luke was anticipating his readers asking the question of Jesus, "What's your name and who's your daddy?" And the simple one-phrase answer comes from a strange place; one of the demons confesses to Jesus, "You are the Holy One of God!"

All of us look to God for answers and help in our lives. And maybe we need to be reminded occasionally of just who Jesus really is. And we can take great hope in the presence and identity of Jesus. He is the fulfillment of a long-awaited promise. He is the only one set apart to be Lord, Master, Savior, and Redeemer. In a phrase, He is "the Holy One of God."

- *Who is Jesus to you?*
- *Is He "Holy" (set apart and special) in your life?*
- *What do you come seeking from Jesus today?*

Day 9—Luke 5:1-26

Calling, healing, and forgiving. When Jesus told Peter to put out into deep water and let down the nets for a catch, Peter did so. Peter took the first step of obedience, no matter how illogical it seemed to him at the time. Then when Peter was blessed with the extraordinary catch of fish, he told Jesus, "Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man." Peter did not feel that he deserved, or was worthy, to be blessed by Jesus. We can all find great hope here, because all of us are sinful people. But if we take those first steps of obedience and choose to follow Jesus we too will be greatly blessed and live an abundant life.

Right after the calling of Peter, Luke tells us that Jesus encountered a man with leprosy. And this man had strong faith and belief that Jesus could make him clean. And he also had a strong hope that Jesus would be willing to do so. Wherever there is faith, there is always hope.

Then Luke tells us that Jesus encountered a paralyzed man. When his friends lowered the paralyzed man on the mat through the roof tiles, Jesus saw their faith and said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven" and then Jesus said, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." When we have genuine faith our sins are forgiven and we can always have the hope that we will be



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healed physically as well, here on earth. God lovingly wants only the best for each of us. Where can we find hope? We find hope because Jesus calls, heals, and forgives. (Mary Lou Wood)

Day 10—Luke 5:27-39

In 2003, the band Switchfoot released “The Beautiful Letdown”. In the title track we hear the lyrics: “We are a beautiful letdown, painfully uncool; the church of the dropouts, the losers, the sinners, the failures, and the fools”. This is a rather unique look at what it means to be the church and to follow Jesus. Disagree? Just look at Levi. Levi was a very well-known Old Testament Jewish name; Levi was one of the 12 tribes of Israel. But it says here that Levi was a tax collector. That meant he was working for the Roman government. Do you see the problem here? Here was a guy with a sterling Jewish name and background; working for the enemy—Rome. This was a huge problem because Levi had switched sides. To his own covenant people he was a letdown; he was painfully uncool. To his own people he was a dropout, a loser, a sinner, a failure, and a fool.

But here’s the thing: Jesus called Levi anyway. Jesus loved Levi anyway. Jesus wanted to include Levi anyway. Jesus calls all kinds of people to follow Him; even people like Levi. Maybe we should be glad that Jesus called people like Levi because that means Jesus calls people like us too. Where there is love, there is always hope. Jesus loves us so much that he came for all of us—the sick, the sinners, the lost, the lonely. And just like Levi the tax collector, we too can follow Jesus. All we have to do is take the first step. (Wade Arp, Mary Lou Wood)

- *Were you at all like Levi when Jesus encountered you?*
- *What steps do you need to take today to follow where Jesus leads?*

Day 11—Luke 6:1-36

In these verses the disciples unlawfully picked heads of grain and ate the kernels on the Sabbath and Jesus unlawfully healed a man with a shriveled right hand. By Jesus’ example, we have hope that love and compassion, and what is good and right will always be above the letter of the law. Jesus went to the mountainside and prayed all night to God. In the morning Jesus chose 12 from all his disciples to be his designated apostles. This gives us hope that if we spend much time alone in prayer with God that He will guide us in making the right decisions.

For those who are in the Lord and remain strong in their faith, during their times of trouble whether physical, spiritual or emotional, there is much hope of promised rewards and blessing eternally with our Lord. God loves and is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Those who hear the



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word of God have hope that with God's help and empowerment we will be able to love our enemies and be kind and unmerciful to the ungrateful and wicked as well. (Mary Lou Wood)

- *Do you find that time in prayer helps you to make good decisions?*
- *Are there big decisions facing you now that you need to pray over?*

Day 12—Luke 6:37-49

In these verses of judging others, we have hope in God's mercy that when we fail because of our sinful nature and judge, condemn, and do not forgive others, we will be forgiven of these sins if we confess them and repent. Only with God's spirit within us can we forgive others. The hope I see in these verses is that the closer our personal relationship is with the Lord, the more good He can do in us and through us. When we surrender our lives to God, His will, and His Word, with our obedience and put Him first as the foundation of our lives, we have hope that when the trials and temptations come, our faith will not be shaken. (Mary Lou Wood)

- *Is there someone that you need to forgive; is there someone from whom you need to receive forgiveness?*
- *What part of your life that you need to surrender to God right now?*

Day 13—Luke 7:1-35

Is there hope for those on the fringe? Does God really care for those on the outside looking in? There are several short stories in Luke 7 where those on the fringes of society (gentiles, widows, prophets, sinners) encounter Jesus. And they encounter hope because Jesus intentionally takes time to deal with each and every one of their situations. The Good News is that there is hope because Jesus cares for us, and comes to us, no matter what situation or place in life that we are in.

The story is told about a little boy, named Lucas, who went to the park with his mom. While Lucas was playing in the sandbox, he noticed another little boy about his age sitting in a wheelchair. So Lucas went over to him and asked if he could play. But the other little boy shook his head "No" he couldn't play. Since Lucas was only five, he couldn't understand why he couldn't just get in the sandbox and play with him. They talked for a while longer, and then Lucas did something extraordinary. He went back to the sandbox, took a large bucket, scooped up as much sand as he could and dumped it into the other little boy's lap. Then Lucas grabbed some toys and put them in his lap, too. His mom rushed over and said, "Lucas, why did you do that?" Lucas looked at her and replied, "He couldn't be with me in the sandbox with me, so I brought the sand to him. Now we can both be together." Lucas had great compassion for the other little boy. And he went out of his way to be with him—right where he was. (Wade Arp)



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- *When has God gone out of His way to encounter you and show you compassion? Are you seeking that today?*
- *When have you gone out of your way to encounter and show compassion to someone else? Do you need to do that today?*

Day 14—Luke 7:36-50

Extravagant Love. This is one of those stories where everything is flip-flopped: being right was actually wrong; and being wrong was actually right. The Pharisee wasn't wrong—socially, legally, or by the religious customs of his day. He just wasn't right in God's eyes. He was acceptable and correct; he did all the right things, but only just enough to get by and still be right. Probably, we all know what that is like. Then there's the woman. By the ritual, customs, and expectations of her day, she did it all wrong. But then she got it right in God's eyes.

Maybe the major difference between the woman and the Pharisee was this: the woman knew that she needed God's love and forgiveness; but the Pharisee did not think that he was in need of those things. After all it was obvious, at least to the Pharisee, that she had the problem; not him. And that is a greater problem—when we think that we are beyond the need or the reach of God's love, grace, and forgiveness. The Woman, however, went above & beyond. Does deep gratitude and extravagant love make you do things that don't make sense and seem strange and even awkward? Sure. Would you do anything for those you love the most—even if what you did didn't make sense to anyone else—even if it wasn't cool or socially acceptable? Probably. (Wade Arp)

How can you show extravagant love to someone today?

- *Maybe you need to express reckless love to a family member: parent or child, brother or sister.*
- *Maybe you need to find a friend and give them the best handshake, or slap on the back, or hug around the neck.*
- *Will that make you feel a bit uncomfortable and awkward? Probably. Good, that means that you are stretching beyond protocol and propriety towards extravagant love. You might even make someone's day, and not even know it!*