



## Week Four Reflections and Readings

### Day 22—Luke 12:1-34

Think about the sparrows, grass, lilies in the field, the mustard seeds, the hair on our heads whether we have it or color it! How much more value are we than these to Him? Our Father knows what we need. Seeking God's kingdom should be our goal each day. We are so precious in His sight so why be anxious? He gives us the possibility of seeking Him and finding Him! I wake up daily with anticipation that God will come to me again today in ways I may recognize and maybe in ways I don't see Him, but He will allow me to see and feel the joy that I will become aware it is Him, walking with me.....that's hope in my world. (Cindy Myers)

- *Do you ever stop to reflect on just how much God loves you?*
- *Do you need to hear God's heart today speaking to your heart, saying, "I love you, my child."?*

### Day 23—Luke 12:35-59

Prepare, Be Ready, and Decide! My goodness, decisions need to be made and seems like action must be taken in these scriptures. My heart feels we can't keep secrets from God and its so important we learn to feel God's love and grace, delighting in the freedom through the Spirit, he gives us so that we can serve Him.

I picture it as my grand-daughter and I in the kitchen. She tries desperately to measure and pour this and that, but continually misses the bowl dropping egg, flour, oil, cocoa all over the counter and floor....all the while, only wanting to please me. Even with the horror of the mess I will need to clean up, I am delighted she is trying to learn more. God is our Father, encouraging us, wanting us to succeed. Gently and patiently instructing us, guiding us and forgiving us as we mess up even though we don't realize we have messed it all up! God knows and accepts our hearts. The more we try and often struggle to get it right, the closer we grow in our relationship with Him. (Cindy Myers; Billie Barton)

### Day 24—Luke 13

This amazing passage has both God's Judgment and God's Grace. Normally what we focus on most is the judgment, "*I don't know you...away from me...weeping and gnashing of teeth*"; and the Bible is clear that there are serious consequences for those who have not responded to God's invitation to come in to Him through the Narrow Gate/Door. But there is also a lot of Grace here in this passage too. And so often we miss it!

First, the Door /Gate is Open. That means that it is not closed. That means that people can still come inside. That means that there is still time and anyone can come. Second, Jesus says that God is like the owner of the house. And God has given an invitation for people to come in to Him; and God has set an "open-door policy" for people to make an intentional decision to come in to Him.

The issue here is not that God is keeping people out; God is inviting people in. The bigger issue here is that some don't want to come in; some people don't want to respond to the invitation. Why? Or



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to ask it another way, “If the narrow door is wide open and the owner (God) is still inviting people to come in, why will “they not be able to”? What is the issue, what is the problem?

The simple answer is that going through the narrow gate is difficult because it is going to cost us something. Because to follow God, and do the things of God, means that we have to make sacrifices on our part. It means we’ve got to commit. It means that we have to be disciplined. It means become a transformed person. And that is not always an easy thing.

The image of the Narrow door means that we can come in, but a lot of the things that we cling to, that we hold on to, that we think are important, they can’t come in with us. Often we have to leave some things behind in order for us to enter because there is not room for both us and the things that we sometimes cling to. It won’t all fit through the narrow door. So for you to enter, some things about your life have to stay behind. (Wade Arp)

- *What things are you holding on to that make it difficult to follow Jesus?*
- *Are they standing between you and God?*
- *Can you let go of these things in order to draw closer to God?*

### **Day 25—Luke 14**

Empty Chairs. What if you are the one hosting a special meal and you are inviting special guests. And you know just exactly what the favorite food is for each and every one of your guests. So, you pick an evening to host this special meal for all of your special guests. And you send out the invitations. And you go and buy all of the food. And you set the tables & prepare the food perfectly—just the way they like it. And when the time comes to serve the meal you yourself go out to serve and greet the guests. And everything is perfect...except for one thing. Some of your special guests are missing. They are not in their seats. They are not anywhere in the dining room. They are simply not there. They are no-shows. They are missing.

Think how shocked, mad, and insulted you would be if you went to all of that trouble and some of your special friend just didn’t show up! Think how disappointed, hurt, and frustrated you would be if you went to all of that trouble and no one came! You go to all that trouble and effort and planning and sacrifice. And all you see is an EMPTY CHAIR.

What if God feels that way when He looks at the world today and sees a lot of empty chairs at the table? Maybe God feels this way (shocked, mad, and insulted) because He has prepared a spiritual feast for us—hope, peace, love, forgiveness, second chances, purpose, and eternal life—and He offers these things to us freely and invites us to come to the table to receive this amazing offer. But instead, He sees empty seats. Maybe that is how God feels this way (disappointed, hurt, frustrated) because He crossed time and eternity, and planned for your salvation, and even went to the great expense & sacrifice of sending His only son Jesus into the world as a sacrifice for your sins and as an invitation to come back to HIM once and for all...., but after all of that He sees empty seats? (Wade Arp)

- *The empty seat represents someone who is not connected to God—their relationship with God is weak or broken. Who can you invite to the table?*



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- *The empty seat represents someone who is not receiving all that God has for them in their life. Who can you invite to the table?*
- *The empty seat represents a real person that Jesus loves and died for; but someone who has never sat down at the table with God; or maybe someone who has got up and walked away. Who can you invite to the table?*

### **Day 26—Luke 15**

One of the most beautiful and hopeful passages in the New Testament is Luke 15:2 - "Jesus welcomed sinners and ate with them". A another great passage is Luke 15:7 - "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who changes his heart and life, than over ninety-nine good people who don't need to change". These words give show us great hope. These two verses and the verses in between offer hope by telling us God loves all people, and wants everyone, especially sinners to come to Him. God doesn't play favorites and offers salvation to everyone. God looks for the least, and the last, and the lost.

God seeks us out to enter into a relationship with Him. Also this signifies His desire to forgive us and make right our relationship. Even though we do not deserve God's mercy and grace, He bestows it on us out of his love. We can't be bad enough for God not to welcome us if we choose to return to Him. This isn't a license to sin but should actually serve as motivation to please a God who is good to us beyond belief. (Danny & Anna Orr; Kevin Bradford)

### **Day 27—Luke 16**

Right after I learned to drive and got my license, my dad bought a brand new Jeep Wrangler. And I was so excited. I loved Jeeps and this particular one was such a neat one: limited edition, lots of special features, only one like it in the tri-state area. And he said to me that, while it was still going to be one the family's vehicles, it would be primarily mine to drive—to school, to work, for fun. And so he gave me the keys. And I drove that thing and had a ball with it—but I took great care of it too. Now I knew it is just a simple rough and rugged 4- wheel drive...but I took care of it just like it was a Rolls Royce. Washed & waxed. Cleaned and treated the tires. Checked and changed all the fluids regularly. Didn't let other people drive it or make any messes in it. I babied that Jeep.

Now why am I telling you about my Jeep story? Here's the key. That vehicle was my dad's. He paid for it. The title, registration, taxes all had his name on them. When I treated the Jeep like it was mine (even though it really wasn't) I took great care of it. I considered it to be mine, even though deep down inside I knew at the end of the day, it was really my dad's. I used it for my needs, but I was protective of it. I used it as if it were my own, treat it like my own. But I took care of it for him.

While I didn't know it at the time, that was good stewardship. I was faithful in taking care of something valuable and important that belonged to somebody else. And that is the kind of thing that God wants me and all of us to do on a bigger scale. Take all the resources, possessions we have and realize that they are entrusted to us by God. Manage it for God, treat it and care for it as if it were your



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own, but realize that at the end of the day it is still His. In the end it is all about God and it is all about how we handle His possessions which are temporarily entrusted to each one of us. (Wade Arp)

### Day 28—Luke 17

Attitude of Gratitude. There were 10 men on the road that day. Very alike in a way because they were united by circumstance—they were all lepers. And yet one was different. Certainly this one man was different because he was a Samaritan. But the real difference came from his attitude. Specifically, his heart was full of giving thanks! And that made all of the difference. That set him apart as ONE in a world of MANY.

When you have a heart that is full of thankfulness, it gives you an attitude adjustment. When you have a heart full of thanksgiving, it changes your attitude from negative to positive. And this is huge because a positive attitude makes you like a magnet—people are attracted to you! You know what I am talking about, right? Your attitude causes other people to either like you or dislike you. (Been around people with + attitudes and you like to be around them they pick you up and energize you...on the other hand people with – attitudes get on our nerves and drain us, we don't want to be around them.) Our attitudes towards life are so important because your attitude tells other people what you are really like. Thankfulness is the attitude we are talking about today.

As I read this account from Luke's Gospel, I imagine that Jesus' heart must have been just broken. I mean here was this great miracle of physical healing and only ONE in a world of MANY came back to say Thanks! This was really big because in that day and time, understanding of law and custom, their physical healing meant that they could now be restored to their families, friends, jobs, place in society—this was a huge thing. But 9/10 DIDN'T Come back to say Thanks. I imagine that Jesus' heart must have just been broken. (Wade Arp)

- *Do you think that God's heart just breaks when His people choose NOT to be thankful?!*
- *Do you think that God's heart just breaks when His people choose to have hearts that are so blinded by self, they are unable to see God?*
- *Do you have an attitude of gratitude?*