

Seek First the Kingdom of God - Luke 11-12

Ice Breaker: What is the best gift you have received from a parent or guardian?

In Luke Chapters 11 and 12 Jesus weaves together two ideas: one is a warning of the coming judgment because of the rejection of Christ by the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees; the other is encouragement to the disciples and the crowds to seek first the Kingdom of God. The questions in this study will focus on seeking the Kingdom of God.

Pastor Dave's Sermon (Read Luke 11:1-4)

Jesus was asked by his disciples how to pray. His answer was a shorter version of what can also be found in Matthew 6:9-15 that we call the Lord's prayer. Pastor Dave points out at first our prayers should focus on Engaging God on 3 levels: He is loving and can be approached intimately as Daddy, He is in heaven and can be approached personally for face to face communication, and He is Holy and therefore should be approached with respect and endearment. We are to remember that God has a Kingdom plan that he is working out both in heaven and here on earth. Our prayers should approach him for all our daily needs both physically and spiritually because he is the source of all things. Jesus's use of the word "us" reminds us to not only pray for our own needs but also the needs of others. We should pray for protection from times of trial that evil will bring.

1. Pastor Dave begins the sermon with ways people can misuse or misunderstand prayer. How does the Lord's prayer provide a good model for us to use when we approach prayer?
2. Why do you think Jesus's prayer has us focus on God and his Kingdom before focusing on our needs? What is the implication that Jesus uses the plural "us" in this prayer?
3. How changes can we make to pray more like Jesus?

Jesus' Teaching on Prayer (Read Luke 11:5-12)

Jesus gave two illustrations about how to approach prayer. First, you go to a friend at midnight to ask for 3 loaves of bread because you do not have enough for a friend who

is visiting while on a journey. But because of your boldness, your friend will give you everything you need. Second, we who are naturally evil know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

4. What do you think is the main point of each of these illustrations?

5. How does this passage tell us that God will do more than just take care of our physical needs?

6. What keeps us from going to God persistently and boldly in prayer for ourselves and others?

Jesus and Beelzebul (Read Luke 11:14-23)

Jesus was with a crowd of people while he was casting out demons. They had accused him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul, but He made the point that anyone who is in a divided Kingdom or household will fall. However, if Jesus is driving out the demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived.

7. What is Jesus's rebuttal to the claim that Jesus is an agent of Beelzebul?

8. What claim about himself does Jesus appear to be making? (11:20, 23)

Those who are Blessed (Read Luke 11:27-28)

A woman in the crowd praises Jesus's mother for giving birth to him. But Jesus says that those who hear the word of God and keep it are the ones who are blessed.

9. On what criteria does the woman base a blessing and how does Jesus change the focus?

10. How could changing our focus on what constitutes a blessing, change our response to God and others?

***(Optional Discussion) The Sign of Jonah (Read**

Luke 11:29-32)

Jesus tells the crowd that this generation is so wicked that the only sign given to them will be the sign of Jonah. The difference is that Nineveh repented and they will not. Nineveh and the Queen of the South will be in judgment over this generation.

11. In verse 16, the crowd asked for a sign from heaven. What do you think Jesus means by the sign of Jonah? How is Jesus's ministry comparable to Jonah's?

12. What can we learn from the response of Queen of the South and the men of Nineveh? (Supporting passages for context include Jonah 1:17, 3:5; 2 Chronicles 9:1-12)

The Lamp of the Body (Read Luke 11:33-35)

Jesus points out that light draws in others and we are to be sure that people see the light that we have and be careful not to let darkness come in.

13. What does Jesus mean by "the light"? (John 8:12, 2 Corinthians 4:3-6) Therefore what does "the darkness" mean? What is the purpose for putting the lamp on the stand?

Note: The eye is a metaphor for our perception. When our perception is healthy, we will see the light of Jesus and our whole body will be full of light.

14. What does Jesus mean by "See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness."? How can we be sure that what we believe about Jesus is consistent with the Gospel?

Warnings and Encouragements (Read Luke 12:1-12)

Jesus uses the omniscience of God (God knowing all things) to encourage the listener not to be afraid of people but have a proper reverence for God. First, He warns them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees: Jesus warns the disciples to avoid my hypocrisy because it will become known. Second, He encourages them not to fear those who can only kill the body; they are to fear the one who can cast them into hell.

15. Why is Jesus telling the disciples to be on their guard against hypocrisy?

16. Since no one is perfect, how is it possible not to be a hypocrite? What can we do “be on guard” against hypocrisy?

17. Why should we fear God and not people? Even though we should fear God, why does Jesus say not to be afraid? What criteria is used to determine who Jesus will acknowledge and who Jesus will disown?

18. How does an appropriate fear of God lead to salvation (8-9) and give us the power to share God with others (8, 11-12)?

Note on blaspheming of the Holy Spirit (Luke 12:10): Some scholars believe this condemnation is only for the time of Jesus and it refers to the leaders of Israel rejecting the messiah. Other believe blaspheming of the Holy Spirit is the complete and final rejection of Jesus that leads to a settled unbelief. Merely denying Christ or the Holy Spirit is not the unpardonable sin (See Peter’s denial Luke 22:54-62) as long as the Holy Spirit can still work in that person. If a person becomes open to hearing and responding to the Gospel later in their life, they have not blasphemed the Holy Spirit! We need to continue to pray for and share the Gospel with others regardless of how closed to the Gospel they appear.

Do Not Worry (Read Luke 12:13-34)

Jesus is using the omnipotence (being all-powerful) and goodness of God to encourage the listener not to worry about their earthly needs, but to seek His kingdom and these things will be added to them as well.

In the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12:13-21) when Jesus was asked by someone in the crowd to arbitrate a dispute with his brother concerning their inheritance, Jesus told the story of a rich man who thought he needed bigger barns to store his crops so that he would have a better life. But that very night God required his soul. Jesus warned to not let the concerns of this world keep us from being rich toward God.

19. What is Jesus’s point in the parable of the Rich Fool?

20. What do you think Jesus meant by being rich toward God? (21) In what ways can we be rich toward God?

In Luke 12:22-34 Jesus tells the disciples and the people listening not to be worried

about what they will eat or what they will wear. God will take care of them, just as He takes care of the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. Instead, seek the Kingdom of God and He will give it to you also. Instead, sell your possessions and give to the needy and you will provide yourself a treasure in heaven, "for where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

21. Why does Jesus say we should not worry? What should we do instead?

22. Practically, what does a Kingdom of God focused life look like?