

SUNDAY Gospel of the Unseen

Scripture: Luke 18:35-43

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” Then he shouted, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

MONDAY Luke 17:1-37 The kingdom of forgiveness and gratitude

Jesus amazed his disciples, saying they should forgive “Even if someone sins against you seven times in one day.” (We more often hear the “seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22) version.) “Increase our faith!” the disciples said. But Jesus said faith isn’t a matter of quantity. He healed ten lepers who showed just a little faith. Only one (a Samaritan) bothered to say “thank you.” When Pharisees asked when (in the future) God’s Kingdom would come, Jesus’ answer focused mainly on the need for his hearers’ to recognize and trust God daily.

- On his way to Jerusalem, somewhere near the border between Galilee and Samaria, Jesus met the ten lepers. After Jesus healed and delivered them all, only a Samaritan praised God. Are there any experiences or obstacles that make it harder for you to have a more grateful spirit? Are there things you have forgotten or neglected to thank and praise God for?
- In 17:21, Luke used the Greek words *entōs humōn*, which could mean either that God’s kingdom is “among you” or “within you” (or, perhaps, both?). What different emphases and nuances do you find in the two possible meanings? To what extent does each of them ring true to your experience of living in the Kingdom of God that Jesus preached?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, sometimes I, too, want to ask, “When is your kingdom coming?” This day, help me to worry less about the future, and to recognize your kingdom’s presence among us, and within me. Amen.

TUESDAY Luke 18:1-30 When outsiders make it in

Jesus contrasted God with an unjust human judge. The real issue, he said, was not if we can trust God, but if God can trust us: “Will the Human One (or, Son of Man) find faithfulness on earth?” Jesus’ culture devalued tax collectors and children. Jesus said those “nobodies” were more likely to receive God’s favor than a self-satisfied Pharisee or a ruler who loved things

more than God. “Who then can be saved?” his startled hearers asked. Jesus replied, “What is impossible for humans is possible for God.”

- In 18:1-8 Jesus used a common rabbinic teaching device: a “how much more” image. “If even an unjust judge will do justice if pressed hard enough,” he asked, in effect, “how much more can we trust God to do justice?” Then he asked if he will find faithfulness on earth. In other words, can we keep trusting God to do justice even in the face of disappointments or delays? How is your heart answering Jesus’ question about faith?
- Most people in Jesus’ day thought material riches ALWAYS meant God’s favor. When the wealthy young ruler whose possessions “owned” him turned away, Jesus said that it was very hard for the wealthy to enter God’s kingdom. His hearers, reflecting their belief, replied, “Then who can be saved?” Are you confident that, whether you are a somebody or a nobody, your salvation is “possible for God”? What difference does that make in how you live each day?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to give up trusting in my own righteousness, much less in my material possessions. Be the center and source of my life, now and forever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY Luke 18:31-19:10 The blind (physically and spiritually) see

“We are going up to Jerusalem,” Jesus said again at the start of this passage—and he was nearly there. These stories happened in Jericho. You can see Jericho and Jerusalem marked on this map near each other at the north end of the Dead Sea ([click here](#)). The disciples still failed to understand Jesus, but at Jesus’ touch a physically blind man and a spiritually blind tax collector both began to see.

- Jesus asked the blind man, “What do you want me to do for you?” (18:41). The man promptly and clearly identified the need he felt. If Jesus had asked wealthy, healthy Zacchaeus the same question as he sat in that sycamore tree, do you think he could have answered as clearly? Now imagine Jesus asking you that question. What need(s) do you sense most clearly?
- Luke 18:34 said after three years the disciples still didn’t “get” the meaning of Jesus’ words about dying and rising. Yet 19:8 suggested that in one day Zacchaeus’ values and actions changed radically. Has God ever changed any part of your life quickly or dramatically? In what areas are you patiently struggling to grow, even with God’s help?

Prayer: Loving Lord, the grit and dust of this world too often blinds me to your presence and your kingdom values. Please restore my inner vision, that I may see you and your purposes in my life more clearly. Amen.

THURSDAY Luke 19:11-28 Playing it safe doesn’t work

Jesus used a bold story about a king and his servants to teach a lesson about faithful service. This story (told a bit differently in Matthew 25) praised the servants who went all out to serve their master—the master even rewarded them with more responsibilities. This story also cautioned against playing it too safe, as it told of the king rebuking the “worthless servant” who was too afraid to risk anything.

- Jewish listeners would immediately have seen a story about kings and servants as an image of God's relationship to Israel. God had given Israel a task – to show God's glory and love to all nations. How has God gifted you? In what ways do those gifts point to the task God has given you? Are you ever tempted to play it safe and keep your gifts in a "scarf," rather than using them actively to do God's bidding in the world?
- Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen when he went to Jerusalem. He was embodying God's kingdom, and that meant a clash with the political and religious leaders. He knew the risk, but he didn't play it safe. What does it look like if you play it safe with your faith? What does it look like to trust God and take risks? Where might God be calling you take a risk for God's sake today?

Prayer: King Jesus, I want to serve you faithfully. Help me to see in what ways you have gifted me and help me to use those gifts to serve you boldly and faithfully. Amen.

FRIDAY Luke 19:29-20:19 Triumphantly entering a heartbreaking city The long journey that began in Luke 9:51 ended, and Jesus entered Jerusalem. He very deliberately entered in a way that echoed history (cf. 1 Kings 1:32-39) and prophecy (Zechariah 9:9-10), and made a clear claim to peaceful kingship. But he wept over the city, tears that tell us he loved the city's people. Yet their heedless leaders did not love him. As they plotted his death, Jesus told a story that exposed the murder in their hearts.

- The prophet Zechariah wrote that a righteous king would ride on a donkey's colt, and bring Jerusalem salvation and peace. How did Luke hint that Jesus pre-arranged his ride into Jerusalem to fulfill that prophecy? Who sang and praised Jesus (verses 37-39)? Who found his entrance into the holy city offensive? Would you more likely have been with "the establishment" who didn't want the orderly *status quo* disrupted, or with the upstart rabbi from Galilee?
- Jesus' vineyard story drew on a beloved Scripture (Isaiah 5:1-7), which called Israel God's vineyard. But Luke 19:47 and 20:19 show the hatred that surrounded Jesus during his last week. We, like the Jerusalem leaders, can have blind spots. Is there anything God's spirit is nudging you to face honestly in your life? Do you have the courage to face it, to know "the things that lead to peace"?

Prayer: Loving Lord, when you were born, there wasn't room for you. When you came to Jerusalem, they still didn't have room for you. Lord, I open my heart—I want to make room for you in my life always. Amen.

SATURDAY Luke 20:20-21:4 Expertly laid traps and humble devotion

Jesus' enemies, "somebodies" all, tried urgently to create a cause for his death. They tried to get him to criticize paying Roman taxes, or to agree with them that faith in a resurrection was absurd. But neither their trick questions nor their great outward show of piety fooled Jesus. For him, greatness lay not in earthly rank, but in people like the humble widow, whose tiny gift only he noticed.

- Jesus described pious frauds in verses 46-47: "In long robes ... love being greeted with honor ... places of honor ... cheat widows out of their homes ... to show off they say long

prayers.” Why do people like that often achieve prominence, often even if many people “see through them”? What inner choices do you need to make to avoid being like that?

- The Sadducees didn’t believe in resurrection, and they tried to make the idea sound ridiculous. What made absolute trust that death was not the end, that “the worst thing is never the last thing,” of crucial importance to Jesus? Do you share his confidence? If so, in what ways does it shape your day-to-day life for the better?

Prayer: King Jesus, you were not a naïve, innocuous presence. Your piercing insight made some people very uncomfortable. But your purpose was always to redeem. Give me a measure of your insight, and a large dose of your redemptive heart. Amen.

Family Activity: Jesus showed immense love and compassion for the homeless and hungry. We follow in Jesus’ footsteps by taking care of those who are homeless and hungry. Serve as a family at a Saturday morning. Take the opportunity to make soft mats for people who are homeless, prepare and serve a meal at a local shelter or fill backpacks with food. Watch for times to serve outside of church, too. Maybe a local food bank or community center is in need of clothing or food. Can you go through your belongings and donate gently used or like-new items? Be in prayer for all people, and share the love of Jesus with them. Thank God for the opportunity to give.

This study was adapted from The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.