

# **The Theme of the Poor in Luke – Acts Study Guide**

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# **Luke – Acts**

## **The Theme of the Poor**

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# Luke – Acts

## The Theme of the Poor

### Part 1: Leader's Notes

*Foreground Action: Jesus' Mission to Restore*

Lk.4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through all the surrounding district. 15 And he began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom.

He stood up to read,

17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him.

He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, b/c he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,

to let the oppressed go free,

19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

20 And he rolled up the scroll,

gave it back to the attendant,

and sat down.

The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

#### Questions

1. There was a Roman garrison stationed in Nazareth. How would that have made the Nazareth inhabitants feel?
2. What might they have expected Jesus to say about the Romans soldiers occupying Nazareth? What kind of Messiah were they expecting?
3. What is the soundtrack playing in the background?

*Soundtrack/Background Music: The Isaianic Servant*

- Isa.61:1 The Spirit of the LORD God is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God.
4. Who did the Jews at Nazareth think 'the poor' and 'the oppressed' were?
  5. What are ways you may be in the 'poor and oppressed' category?
  6. Who do you expect Jesus to say 'the poor' and 'the oppressed' are?
  7. But why does Jesus add the phrase, "recovery of sight to the blind" (Lk.4:18)?
  8. Who are 'the blind'?
  9. Was Isaiah 61:1-2 the only passage Jesus was referring to? Discuss also Isaiah 42:1-7:

*Soundtrack/Background Music: Spiritual Sight to the Nations*

- Isa.42:1 Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom My soul delights; I have put My Spirit upon him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise his voice, nor make his voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed until he

has established justice in the earth and the coastlands will wait expectantly for his law. 5 Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it, 6 “I am the LORD, I’ve called you in righteousness; I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you; and I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations 7 to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.

10. How is that passage connected to the phrase, “and recovery of sight to the blind” (Lk.4:18)? What does that phrase itself hearken back to?

*Soundtrack/Background Music: The Fall Into Self-Focused Sight; True Sight Restored*

- Gen.3:7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they realized they were naked.
- Isa.42:1 I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations 7 to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison.
- Lk.2:30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation, 31 which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, 32 a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.

11. So who is Jesus restoring? Who are the poor, the captives, the oppressed, the blind? How does that differ or agree with the Jews in the Nazareth synagogue in their interpretation of Isaiah 61?
12. Why is this “recovery of sight” phrase at the center of the chiasm in Lk.4:18? Because it’s the main point.

*Foreground Action: The Restoration of Who?*

Lk.4:22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” 23 He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” 24 And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. 25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; 26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

#### Questions

1. Why was this so offensive? Who was the widow of Zarephath? Who was Naaman the Syrian? Why demonstrate God’s grace going to Gentiles?
2. Who was Elijah’s mission to? The Northern Kingdom of Israel
3. And Elisha’s? Also the Northern Kingdom of Israel
4. Did the Northern Kingdom accept and embrace their ministry? No.
5. What happened to the Northern Kingdom of Israel afterwards? They were overthrown. In 722 BC, Assyria swept in and destroyed many of them and took others captive.
6. Was the Northern Kingdom of Israel a legitimate community in the eyes of God? No. See 2 Kings 17. They did not worship at Jerusalem, have Levitical priests, obey the Davidic king, and maintain a true record of Israel’s history. Therefore, they did not actually worship God in truth.
7. What role did Elijah and Elisha play in relation to the Northern Kingdom? As the last prophets to that nation.
8. Who is Jesus saying he (and John the Baptist) is (are) to the Israel of that day? The last prophets.
9. Will Israel as a whole accept Jesus? No.

10. What will happen after Israel rejects Jesus? Destruction and exile.
11. Who will God's grace go to? Israel's traditional enemies, the Gentiles.
12. Notes:

*Soundtrack/Background Music: Elijah & Elisha*

<b>Motif</b>	<b>Moses – Joshua</b>	<b>Elijah – Elisha</b>	<b>John – Jesus</b>
Great prophet summons Israel to a covenant with God	Moses inaugurates the era of the Mosaic Law	Elijah is sent to the Northern Kingdom of Israel to protest the sin of the northern kings	John the Baptist warns that being part of the Abrahamic family is not simply genealogical
Dies before the final stage of ministry (conquest) truly begins	Moses dies on the mountaintop outside the land (Dt.34)	Elijah taken up by chariots outside the land (2 Ki.1)	John thrown into prison and later killed before the resurrection (Lk.3:19-20, 7:18-35)
Prepares a successor	Joshua	Elisha	Jesus
Who is 'baptized' in the Jordan	Joshua parts the waters of the Jordan to cross it (Jos.3:14-17)	Elisha parts the waters of the Jordan to cross it (2 Ki.2:14)	Jesus is baptized in the Jordan (Lk.3:21-22)
Successor marches into the promised land from the wilderness	Joshua spent 40 years in the wilderness and then led Israel into the land. Joshua parts the waters of the Jordan to cross it (Jos.3:14-17)	Elisha returns after Elijah is taken up (2 Ki.2:14). Elisha parts the waters of the Jordan to cross it (2 Ki.2:14)	Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness and then enters the land (Lk.4:14)
And proclaims God's judgment on the pagan inhabitants, who will be destroyed	The Canaanites	The Northern Israelites (!)	The whole nation Israel (!!!)
And rescues a faithful remnant	Rahab and her household spared	Widow of Zarephath receives provision and witnesses the resuscitation of her son; Naaman the Syrian is cleansed of leprosy	The disciples

Hence, Jesus' ministry was like that of Joshua and Elisha because he was now gathering to himself the remnant who would believe rightly before God scattered the nation...in holy war against them.

13. Why was Jesus particularly hard on the Nazareth synagogue Israelites? What was Jesus trying to accomplish vs. what were they concerned about? (Salvation to all humanity, bringing them together in one body vs. their ethnocentric nationalism)
14. If Jesus were to stand before you and proclaim his mission of giving God's blessing to someone, is there someone that Jesus can mention that would get you really mad at him?
15. Why would you be angry in that situation?
16. Can you give your anger over to God?
17. Comment: If we retitile the sections as follows, notice the clear message that comes through.

Lk.3:21 – 38	Jesus, the Climax of the Human Race
Lk.4:1 – 13	Jesus the New Adam Survives the Temptations
Lk.4:14 – 21	Jesus Comes to Restore...
Lk.4:22 – 30	Restore Both Jew and Gentile

18. If you redefine Christianity to serve the interests of your own group, what will Jesus come and do to that?
19. According to Luke, this is one of the first public declarations Jesus made. The gospel has to do with reaching and ministering to all humans and all human groups. What group is especially hard for you to minister to? Another ethnic group? Those who speak a different language? The poor? The homeless? The less educated and illiterate?
20. How much of your resources (time, money, energy, relational networking, strategic thinking, ministry focus, etc.) goes towards people who are basically like you?
21. Who would it really stretch you to minister to?

*Foreground Action: Disinheritance towards Greater Giving*

<sup>12:13</sup> Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’  
<sup>14</sup> But he said to him, ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?’<sup>15</sup> Then he said to them, ‘Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.’<sup>16</sup> And he told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man was very productive.’<sup>17</sup> And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’<sup>18</sup> Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.’<sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’<sup>21</sup> So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.’<sup>22</sup> And he said to his disciples, ‘For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.’<sup>23</sup> For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.’<sup>24</sup> Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!<sup>25</sup> And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?<sup>26</sup> If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?<sup>27</sup> Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.’<sup>28</sup> But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!<sup>29</sup> And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.’<sup>30</sup> For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.’<sup>31</sup> But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.’<sup>32</sup> Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.’<sup>33</sup> Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.’<sup>34</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

*Foreground Action: Invite People Over*

12 And he also went on to say to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment. 13 But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Questions

1. Who are the Pharisees? Lay out what we know about them. Specifically, try to define what kind of spirituality they had, and what they thought of others who weren’t Pharisees.

2. Break up into groups of 2's or 3's and talk about: 'How did the Pharisees party?' What might it have felt like to be at a Pharisee party? In general, what did the Pharisees expect of Jesus as their dinner guest? (They should come up with things like (1) 'a red-carpet affair' where Pharisees step onto the red carpet and people are looking at them, kind of like photographers and journalists taking pictures of famous celebs going to a party; (2) a hob-nobbing party; (3) an event where Pharisees are really aware of how they look and who they're with.) Essentially, they party to be honored.
3. Compare this to a wedding banquet. Have you ever been at a wedding reception party where you sat on the outside edge of the tables? How did that feel? (In some sense it's a bummer – we have to sit with our kid cousins and take care of them, for example.) BUT, is there still some kind of joy you have? Yes: The joy of celebrating with the bride and groom. (In Middle Eastern weddings, the groom was more the center of attention.) What kind of person goes to a wedding and tries to take center stage???
4. Why do you think Jesus compares the Pharisees' party to a wedding banquet, then?
5. When we think the kingdom is about **us**, and about getting recognition **for ourselves**, what happens to us? E.g. Shallow spirituality, bad motivations, people-pleasing, craving public roles to seem like we've got it all together, not taking opportunities to care for difficult people. But when we understand that the kingdom is a wedding banquet that is about Jesus, and not about us, then we can minister to junior high kids (for example), who give us no recognition and thanks! We can love difficult people. We can be the janitors of the church building. We can be genuinely humble because we know the party is about Jesus. Jesus will elevate and honor these people.
6. Notice that you can break down the passage into three roles. Guests, hosts, invitees. What attitude does Jesus want guests to have, according to v.7-11? What wrong attitude did the Pharisees have *as guests*? Why?
7. According to v.12-14, what kind of hosts does Jesus want?
8. What wrong attitude did the Pharisees have *as hosts*? They only invited each other. It was self-congratulation on associating with the right company.
9. What would it be like if you threw parties like this (v.12-14)? Costly, inconvenient, awkward.
10. How is eating with someone more than just serving them from behind a soup kitchen counter? Deeper relationship. Friendship.
11. How uncomfortable must the Pharisees have felt after v.14?
12. Why does Jesus care so much about parties? Jesus sees this eating/banquet/feast/table scene as a foreshadowing of the kingdom of God, where the ultimate banquet is coming. Jesus hates bad parties because they paint bad pictures of the kingdom. His parties are inclusive because his kingdom is inclusive. Exclusive parties are bad!
13. Where is the man in v.15 trying to take the conversation? 'This is something we can all agree on! Right, Jesus?' It's as if he's trying to strike common ground after a very awkward disagreement.
14. Where does Jesus take it in v.16ff.? Essentially says, 'Yeah, and you're not going to eat bread in the kingdom.' He makes it worse!
15. According to v.16-23, What wrong attitude did the Pharisees have *as invitees*?
16. What kind of excuses are these really? What attitude do the invitees in the parable have? That being invited means that you can go at any time.
17. Does being invited mean that one actually goes to the banquet?
18. What do you think of these excuses? It's kind of like, 'I just bought a new car, and I need to test drive it.' These are stupid reasons, and Jesus is saying that actually all your excuses are stupid. They're lame excuses. Leave your land behind. Bring your wife to the party if you have to. But COME! Otherwise you won't taste of his dinner!
19. Describe Jesus' definition of table fellowship in the kingdom of God from the point of view of guests, hosts, and invitees. How must our definitions change in accordance with his?
20. Emphasize: Why does Jesus get upset with bad parties? Because they don't portray the kingdom correctly! This is even more true in how the shepherd uses resources to celebrate the finding of a lost sheep, how the woman uses resources to celebrate the finding of a lost coin, how the father uses resources to celebrate the finding of a lost son.
21. Why does Jesus tell us to 'count the cost' in v.25-33? Because we are to use our resources to serve the downtrodden, without expecting anything in return. Boston's BIG DIG was foolishly planned, and it makes us look stupid. Likewise, people who try to be a part of the kingdom without counting the cost first are foolish.

22. Explain v.33. Why does Jesus want all our possessions? Does that have to do with hating your father and mother, etc.? Does that have to do with throwing parties for people who can't repay you? What does that mean for you?

*Foreground Action: Lazarus at the Gate*

<sup>16:19</sup> Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. <sup>20</sup> And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, <sup>21</sup> and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. <sup>22</sup> Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. <sup>23</sup> In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. <sup>24</sup> And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' <sup>25</sup> But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. <sup>26</sup> And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.' <sup>27</sup> And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house – <sup>28</sup> for I have five brothers – in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' <sup>29</sup> But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' <sup>30</sup> But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!' <sup>31</sup> But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

*Foreground Action: Rich Man, Rich Man*

Lk.18:15 People were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. 16 But Jesus called for them and said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. 17 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' 18 A certain ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' 19 Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 20 You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother.' 21 He replied, 'I have kept all these since my youth.' 22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.' 23 But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. 24 Jesus looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! 25 Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.' 26 Those who heard it said, 'Then who can be saved?' 27 He replied, 'What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.' 28 Then Peter said, 'Look, we have left our homes and followed you.' 29 And he said to them, 'Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, 30 who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.' 31 Then he took the twelve aside and said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For he will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, 33 and after they have scourged him, they will kill him; and the third day he will rise again.' 34 But the disciples understood none of these things; and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

Lk.18:35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. 36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was. 37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. 38 And he called out, saying, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' 39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' 40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to him; and when he came near, he questioned him, 41 'What do you want me to do for you?' And he said, 'Lord, I want to regain my sight!' 42 And

Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.' 43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. 19:1 He entered Jericho and was passing through it. 2 A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' 6 So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. 7 All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' 8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' 9 Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

#### Introductory Questions to ask your audience

1. What have you heard said about this passage? (Get all the excuses out there. Typically, this passage is taken as a contrast between legalism and grace, or about simply 'being willing' to give money away, or other individual issues). Say explicitly that most of those interpretations have to do with individualistic issues.
2. Who is childlike in this section? Who is not?
  - a. Rich ruler?
  - b. Disciples?
  - c. Blind man?
  - d. Zaccheus?
3. What is childlikeness?

#### Questions (as or after you brainstorm the childlikeness issue)

1. The Infants/Children:
  - a. Why do you think Jesus praises 'infants' and 'children'? Because they're dependent, teachable, don't cling to something as theirs, etc.
  - b. What does it mean to be 'childlike'? Bottom line: What is an infant? A new human life.
  - c. What does an infant represent? Newness of life, a new birth. (Say later, at a choice moment: Why does the kingdom of God belong to 'such as these'? Because you must be born again spiritually and start a new life in Christ. You have to be like an infant or a little child in that way.)
2. The ruler:
  - a. Who is this 'certain ruler'? What did he probably rule in? A Jewish synagogue.
  - b. Who does he think Jesus is?
  - c. Why do you think he asks about eternal life? What kind of internal need is he aware of? Or is he just testing Jesus? Probably authentically interested.
  - d. How is he not a child? Notice he regards himself as not being young any more. 'Since my youth,' which sounds long ago. This is one way he is not being a child. Perhaps he doesn't want to be a child because he has stockpiled all this moral currency by obeying the Law all his life.
  - e. What is so surprising about v.29? Why doesn't Jesus just say, 'I tell you the truth, if you've given up all that, you've got me!' We do have him, but we also have 'house and wife and brothers and parents and children.' In other words, we inherit a new family. We become a part of a new community.
  - f. This challenge is not so much about individualistic struggles with materialism as it is a challenge to join a new community, Jesus' community. And Jesus wants his community to be a radical one. That's why he demands everything of this man. It's just like Luke 14:33, where Jesus says, 'No one can be my disciple who does not give up all his (or her) possessions.' The reason is because Jesus calls us into a new community, where wealth is meant to be shared and be used strategically.
  - g. Countering Objections:
    1. The rich ruler is unique. No: His problem with materialism is not just his problem. This is evident because Peter and the disciples in v.28 also say that they had given away all they had. Thus, the rich ruler is typical. Jesus asks all his disciples to give up all they have. See Luke 14:33.

2. The rich ruler was being legalistic; Jesus was bringing him to the end of himself by asking him to do something that was and is impossible. No: Jesus does not say that he actually didn't live up to the Law, or that he did it with bad motives. Jesus doesn't debate that the rich ruler had indeed lived by the Law since his youth. The issue, rather, is that the rich ruler believed that he should continue to own his ancestral land. Jesus, on the other hand, is seeking to free Israel from its ancestral land and send his disciples out into the world.
  - h. What's the problem with trying to hold onto wealth and the Mosaic Law? It's incompatible with Jesus' agenda because it is from Israel's old life. Mosaic Israel (a stationary community tied to its land) needs to transition to Messianic Israel (a mobile community not tied to financial security) and become new. WE KNOW where Jesus is headed with his community, and he wants this man to be a part of it. But wealth gets in his way.
  - i. Let this point sink in, because it's not how we are used to thinking about the Law and Jesus. 'In Israel, what was appropriate until then was appropriate until then. Now with Jesus, everything changes.'
  - j. Think about Asian American culture. How important is it to be financially secure? VERY!
  - k. What would this rich ruler be able to give his kids? Not his land anymore! This ruler is so invested in the system, he can't be an infant and start with nothing.
  - l. Why might Peter remind Jesus in v.28 that the disciples have left homes and followed Jesus? He wants to be validated? He wants to be affirmed as being in God's will? He is childlike, and just wants to have Jesus give his okay.
  - m. What is Jesus' response? That you can't outgive God. You are entering a new community where people will be an extended family to you, and (hopefully) help you. And you will inherit much more in the next age.
  - n. How do you join a new family? As an infant. Jesus wants this rich ruler to join his kingdom family as an infant in it.
3. Individual heart level applications:
  - a. How can you more deeply love financial sacrifice? It is one of the distinguishing marks of Christians in contrast to the world.
  - b. The issue is not just 'being willing to give,' but 'being **eager** to give, being **glad** to give.' You should be disappointed if you don't get a chance to give. How can you cultivate more of this attitude?
  - c. If you feel the need to be financially secure and stable, pray that God would work in you to remove that.

#### Questions: Zaccheus

1. Comment: The disciples don't understand Jesus' saying, suggesting that they have not truly been born again yet (since the death and resurrection of Jesus had not yet happened). But the healing of the blind man outside Jericho symbolizes how someone in Jericho will 'see' Jesus truly. The blind man is also childlike in that he keeps calling out for Jesus, kind of like a needy child or baby calling out for Daddy or Mommy, even though someone tells them to stop.
2. How wealthy is Zaccheus? Where did he get his wealth? He is the drug dealer who pimps his own community. He is the arch-tax-collector: he sat at the top of the tax collecting pyramid. He got cuts off of everyone underneath him, and it was all based off of extortion from his fellow Jews (tax collectors for Rome didn't get paid a salary by Rome – they lived off an extra 'cut' they charged over and above the tax).
3. So you can imagine why no one helped him see Jesus! No one cared about him.
4. Who normally climbs trees? Children. Zaccheus is also 'short in stature'! So how is Zaccheus like a 'child' or 'infant'? He humbles himself to the place of a child. He allows Jesus to see him as a child and start relating to him as someone who is newly born in the kingdom family.
5. What might have discouraged Zaccheus from climbing the tree? Internal and external factors?
6. Why does Jesus greet and dine with Zaccheus? What does it mean when Jesus 'eats' with someone?
7. How does Zaccheus show that he's been 'born again,' as 'an infant'? He climbs up a tree, something only children did. Thus, Zaccheus is showing that he is a child, like the 'infant' of 18:15-17. He has inherited the kingdom through a new birth. And second, he redistributes his wealth, which the rich

ruler could not and did not do. He tries to make peace with those he's hurt and remedy structural problems.

8. Does Zaccheus expect a long line of claimants at his door, saying they want four times back? Surely he does. He was bracing himself for it! It's probably why he only gave half of his money straightaway to the poor. He's not just saying the other part just to sound nice in theory. He probably has wronged people and will need to pay back four times as much.
9. Why does Jesus say that 'salvation' has come to this house? Is it because Zaccheus was able to let go of his wealth?
10. Notice the familial term, 'son of Abraham,' applied to Zaccheus. He has become an infant in the true family of God.
11. Countering Objections:
  - a. That is salvation by works. No: He allows Jesus to have authority over him, including his use of money. Zaccheus has become committed to letting Jesus define his life. That is salvation.
12. How come Zaccheus could let go of his wealth while the rich ruler could not? Zaccheus is the drug dealer who pimps his own community but hates himself for it. The rich ruler is the socially 'legit' wealthy establishment person who is tied up with his money. Do we see ourselves as Zaccheuses or as establishment people? That will affect how we feel about our ill-gotten wealth (especially in America).
13. How can modern day Zaccheuses demonstrate the new birth?

*Foreground Action: The Impoverished Widow*

Lk.21:1 He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; 2 he also saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. 3 He said, 'Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; 4 for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on.'

Question

1. Why does Jesus commend this widow?
2. How could Jesus commend a person in her financial situation for giving? Why not give her her money back? What kind of person would let a poor widow give her last coins? (A person who believes that giving is all-important, for anybody and everybody.)
3. In what ways is she being rich towards God? What kind of treasure in heaven does she have?
4. In what ways is the widow a model for us?

*Foreground Action: Repentance Required*

Lk.24:45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; 47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

Questions

1. What is repentance in Jesus' name?
2. What does forgiveness of sins usually mean to us? Just a private decision of 'faith.'
3. When was the first mention of repentance in Luke's Gospel? With John the Baptist's preaching about money matters.
4. How has Jesus called people to repent? How has Jesus called people to repent specifically of materialism?
5. How have money matters figured in the overall message? Prominently.
6. Even if we assume that Lk.24:47 means more than repenting of materialism, we should not assume that it means less. In what ways can we grow in our repentance in money matters?
7. In what ways can we take more seriously our commission to proclaim all aspects of repentance?

*Foreground Action: How the Early Christians Regarded Wealth*

Acts 2:44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Acts 4:32 Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. 33 With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. 35 They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Barnabas (which means 'son of encouragement'). 37 He sold a field that belonged to him, then brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

6:1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. 2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.' 5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. 7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen. 10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. 11 Then they secretly induced men to say, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. 12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council. 13 They put forward false witnesses who said, This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law; 14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us. 15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw his face like the face of an angel.

Questions

1. If you were a part of this community, what might it have felt like?
2. What's challenging about this?
3. What's attractive about this?
4. Notice how they eat together? What does that seem to mean here? It's more than communion!
5. Why did Barnabas sell his land?
6. How do you sense the teaching of Jesus behind all this?
7. Let's set up the scene more: How was the food distributed? Land and wealth were sold and brought to the apostles (ch.4). The apostles bought food. How did they know where people lived? By word of mouth, relational networks. Since the apostles were from the Hebraic Jews and not from the diaspora Hellenistic Jewish community, they knew the Hebraic widows better. What kind of systemic problem does this create? The imbalance of power in the world causes an imbalance of power in the church. Tensions in the world create tensions in the church. Ethnic and cultural division in the world cause ethnic and cultural division in the church.
8. What does this show about table fellowship at this point? It had become a matter of economic redistribution.
9. Did the apostles demean 'serving tables' in order to favor 'preaching' and more 'spiritual' activities? No. Table fellowship was a central feature of their community life, and an expression of their unity

and care for one another. In fact, they needed to have so much integrity to handle all that money. Remember Judas Iscariot was the first money carrier. A better translation would be that the apostles did not want to 'manage the table fellowship.' It was a complex system of receiving money from the community, having absolute integrity in buying food with it, and then distributing it to the community where there was a need. 'Table fellowship' is a huge responsibility! They honor it by saying that they need 7 men devoted to it full-time.

10. Why do churches sometimes give up on redistributing financial resources and food among people?