

GD Lesson NT 19
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"Thy Faith Hath Saved Thee" Luke 18-19, John 11

The title of this lesson should be "Thy Faithlessness Shall Damn Thee"

Historical Review

Jesus is approaching Jerusalem for the final Passover of his life. He knows what is going to happen, and is trying to prepare his disciples with frank talk (cf. Luke 18:31-34):

31 Then he took [unto him] the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. 32 For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: 33 And they shall scourge [him], and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. 34 And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.

and admonitions about faithfulness (Luke 19:12-27).

But, the disciples don't want to hear it. Why? Because, as Luke 19:11 tells us:

because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear.

There is a great deal of anticipation in the air as those Jews who believe Jesus is the Messiah have the expectation of him overthrowing the Romans in a miraculous and spectacular fashion. The Passover setting serves to heighten this expectation, as the Passover is the remembrance and celebration of Moses' deliverance of Israel from Egypt, complete with a multitude of miracles. The Jews at that time anticipate Jesus doing similar sorts of things to free them from Roman oppression. This explains the extraordinary reception Jesus receives during the Triumphal Entry. Even the apostles are jockeying for position in what they perceive to be the imminent kingdom (cf. Matt. 20:20-28, Mark 10:35-45):

20 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping [him], and desiring a certain thing of him. 21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two

sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.... 24 And when the ten heard [it], they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.

It also explains the exceptional antagonism (cf. Luke 19:38-39, John 11:45-57) he faced by the Sanhedrin and the attending pharisees at Jerusalem, as they fear him and the following he has amassed. The various miracles (cf. Luke 18:35-43, John 11:33-44) performed along the way only serve to polarize the two groups.

Chronologically, John 11 precedes Luke 18-19, most likely occurring during the events recounted in Luke 17.

Faith

Jesus' discussion of faith here is in the context of fidelity, steadfastness, trustworthiness in the sense we use the word "faithful" and not so much the theological or philosophical sense.

In both Hebrew ('enuwm) and Greek (pistos) the primary sense of the word is that of faithfulness. It is common in a religious setting to get caught up in semantics over what "faith" is, whether it is a noun or a verb and whether one has it or not and how one gets more of it.

Jesus knows he is to be killed in Jerusalem this coming Passover, so his desire is to encourage his disciples to be steadfast and persevere despite his imminent death. This is reflected in the parables he teaches, and they should be read in this context to be understood.

John 11

1 NOW a certain [man] was sick, [named] Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 (It was [that] Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) 3 Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. 4 When Jesus heard [that], he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. 5 Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. 6 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

Martha and Mary send for Jesus because Lazarus is sick, and Jesus delays two days.

7 Then after that saith he to [his] disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. 8 [His] disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again? ... 16

Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

So, Jesus is in mortal danger, and Martha and Mary are still calling for him to come back to save Lazarus.

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat [still] in the house. 21 Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 22 But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give [it] thee. 23 Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. 24 Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. 25 Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: 26 And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? 27 She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. 28 And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.

Jesus goes to see Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and when he meets Martha she is depressed and upset at Jesus for not coming more quickly to save Lazarus. Jesus tries to talk to her about spiritual things, but she isn't really all that interested, instead she goes and gets Mary.

Also, we learn in the preceding verses that Jesus is in mortal danger in this area, because there are people who want him dead. Yet, they are irritated the Jesus did not come right away.

29 As soon as she heard [that], she arose quickly, and came unto him. 30 Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him. 31 The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there. 32 Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. 33 when Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled,

Mary is mourning Lazarus and also faults Jesus for not getting there sooner. This causes Jesus to groan in his spirit.

34 And said, where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. 35 Jesus wept. 36 Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him! 37 And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died? 38 Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave.

Those mourning with Mary again fault Jesus for not saving Lazarus, again causing him to groan in his spirit.

Why is Jesus groaning in his spirit? Is he commiserating with Martha and Mary? No, he is upset by their being solely interested in physical things and for faulting him for not preventing Lazarus' death. His friends, those whom he loves most dearly are faulting him for not doing what they want. Jesus faces universal rejection, untold suffering, humiliation and death, and these people, whom he loves the most, are angry at him for not coming more quickly.

[SUMMARIZE] It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. 39 Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been [dead] four days. 40 Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? 41 Then they took away the stone [from the place] where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up [his] eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. 42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said [it], that they may believe that thou hast sent me. 43 And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. 44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.

45 Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. 46 But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done. 47 Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? for this man doeth many miracles. 48 If we let him thus alone, all [men] will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. 49 And one of them, [named] Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50 Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. 51 And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; 52 And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. 53 Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. 54 Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples. 55 And the Jews' passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves. 56 Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, what think ye, that he will not come to the feast? 57 Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew [it], that they might take him.

And what does it all result in? It causes everyone to believe he is the Messiah, but in the physical sense, not in the spiritual sense. And, it leads all of Sanhedrin to conspire against him to put him to death. This surely was a bittersweet event for Jesus, and it underscores how everyone wants physical delivery and salvation and not spiritual things. This is the epitome of Johannine irony.

What does this say about the faithfulness of even those whom are closest to Jesus in life?

Luke 18

[SUMMARIZE] 1 AND he spake a parable unto them [to this end], that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; 2 Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: 3 And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. 4 And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; 5 Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. 6 And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. 7 And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? 8 I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

What is Jesus saying about being faithful? The disciples should never give up, no matter what. If you wouldn't give up on unjust people, then don't give up on God, who is just. The question isn't whether God is just, the question is whether people are faithful.

Jesus just had his closest friends turn on him, do you think this influenced how he is feeling at this point?

35 And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: 36 And hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. 37 And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. 38 And he cried, saying, Jesus, [thou] Son of David, have mercy on me. 39 And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, [Thou] Son of David, have mercy on me. 40 And Jesus stood, and commanded him to be brought unto him: and when he was come near, he asked him, 41 Saying, what wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? And he said, Lord, that I may receive my sight. 42 And Jesus said unto him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee. 43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw [it], gave praise unto God.

What is happening here? The blind man demonstrates his earnestness and unwaivering character by calling out to Jesus for

help. When the disciples try to silence him, he calls out all the more. And what does the blind man call him? What is the significance of this? It is a messianic reference to the Isaiah 11 "stem of Jesse".

Jesus praises the man's faithfulness despite the opposition from his own disciples. This is the kind of depth of conviction he is looking for.

Luke 19

[SUMMARIZE] 11 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. 12 He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. 13 And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this [man] to reign over us. 15 And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. 17 And he said unto him, well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. 18 And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. 19 And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. 20 And another came, saying, Lord, behold, [here is] thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: 21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. 22 And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, [thou] wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: 23 wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? 24 And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give [it] to him that hath ten pounds. 25 (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) 26 For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. 27 But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay [them] before me.

Here, Jesus gives a parable about faithfulness. If the servants are faithful in the nobleman's absence, then they are rewarded accordingly. If they aren't, then they are judged, and the enemies are killed.

This is a very direct warning to his disciples. He is leaving, and they need to be faithful to what they know, and his enemies will be destroyed.

Jesus very much wants the church he established to continue

in his absence. He doesn't want it to fall apart.

[SUMMARIZE] 28 And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem. 29 And it came to pass, when he was come nigh to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount called [the mount] of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, 30 Saying, Go ye into the village over against [you]; in the which at your entering ye shall find a colt tied, whereon yet never man sat: loose him, and bring [him hither]. 31 And if any man ask you, why do ye loose [him]? thus shall ye say unto him, Because the Lord hath need of him. 32 And they that were sent went their way, and found even as he had said unto them. 33 And as they were loosing the colt, the owners thereof said unto them, why loose ye the colt? 34 And they said, The Lord hath need of him. 35 And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. 36 And as he went, they spread their clothes in the way. 37 And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; 38 Saying, Blessed [be] the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. 39 And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. 40 And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

We then have the triumphal entry.

v36 "spread their clothes", cp. 2 Kings 9:13. Matthew's and Mark's accounts have the addition of branches of trees as well, and John's account references branches of palm trees, which might be connected to Lev. 23:40, also cp. Rev. 7:9. The exact symbolism of the palm fronds is obscure. It might be to shade the king or straw the ground to keep it cleaner.

[SUMMARIZE] 41 And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, 42 Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things [which belong] unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. 43 For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, 44 And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. 45 And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; 46 Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

Jesus then laments over the city and purges the temple of the moneychangers. This is the city full of people that just praised him as the Messiah, and what is his reaction to it?

47 And he taught daily in the temple. But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, 48 And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.

Sanhedrin are actively seeking to kill him, but cannot because of his popularity. How quickly things change by the end of the week. Why? How come the people desert him and he falls into the hands of the Romans?

Because the people are not faithful to him. They want a delivered from the Romans, and when he fails to deliver on what they want, they give up on him.

How are we like these people? How often are we caught up in making demands on the Lord that are very physical and temporal in nature, and we get angry when we don't get what we want. It becomes a crisis in faith?

How do we get beyond our immediate temporal physical needs and wants and focus on what is spiritual?

How can our faithfulness save us like is did for the blind Bartimeaus, the one person who's faithfulness was praised during an episode largely about faithlessness?

We need to be like the faithful servants in the parable of the pounds, who despite the opposition do what we are asked.