

# Zechariah & Luke: The Returning King

## Lesson 12: The Merciful King

**Key Verse:** *Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? Luke 18.8b*

People watching is an interesting pastime while waiting for your flight. If you pay attention to the subtle clues, you can make an educated guess about other's final destinations. When traveling we tend to dress in accordance with the temperature and climate of where we are going, not of where we are leaving. If it is 98 degrees in the departing city, yet people milling about a flight gate are wearing heavier boots, long-sleeved tops, and have a coat folded over their arms, they are likely flying *much* further north than Texas! Trusting that the weather will be as predicted in the city of your final destination determines how you dress and prepare before departure. Likewise, **faith** in God or in your own good works determines how you live as you prepare for your eternal destination. Anyone whose eternal destination is heaven enters only because God is pleased to be **merciful** to all who cry out to Him, "God, Son of David, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

*Merciful King, thank You for the mercy You freely offer to this sinner. As I study You this week, Rabbi Jesus, increase my belief in You.*

**Luke 18.1-19.27: CH 18** And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. **2** He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. **3** And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, 'Give me justice against my adversary.' **4** For a while he refused, but afterward he said to himself, 'Though I neither fear God nor respect man, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice, so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.'" **6** And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge says. **7** And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? **8** I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

**9** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: **10** "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' **13** But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' **14** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

**15** Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. **16** But Jesus called them to him, saying, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. **17** Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it."

**18** And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" **19** And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. **20** You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'" **21** And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth." **22** When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." **23** But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. **24** Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! **25** For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

**26** Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" **27** But he said, "What is impossible with man is possible with God." **28** And Peter said, "See, we have left our homes and followed you." **29** And he said to them, "Truly, I say to 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 receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come eternal life."

**31** And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. **32** For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. **33** And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise." **34** But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

**35** As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. **36** And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. **37** They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." **38** And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" **39** And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" **40** And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, **41** "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." **42** And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." **43** And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

**CH 19** He entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. **3** And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. **4** So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

**5** And 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 and came down and received him joyfully. **7** And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." **8** And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."<sup>1</sup> **9** And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

**11** As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. **12** He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. **13** Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.' **14** But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.' **15** When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business.

**16** The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made ten minas more.' **17** And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' **18** And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your mina has made five minas.' **19** And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' **20** Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your mina, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief; **21** for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man. You take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' **22** He said to him, 'I will condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? **23** Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

**24** And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to the one who has the ten minas.' **25** And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten minas!' **26** 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. **27** But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'"

**Diamonds:** Just as Zechariah changed his writing style, Luke changed his format. Rather than revealing Jesus's intentions and teachings after the story (if at all!), Luke provides the main idea or purpose of Jesus's words before the event unfolds, or the parable is taught. Thank you, Dr Luke!

1. Write down the main idea, lesson, or issue Jesus is addressing using the following verses:

- a. 18.1
- b. 18.9
- c. 18.15
- d. 18.18
- e. 19.11

2. (Choose one or two to complete) Review what Jesus has taught us before about each of these topics. What new or illuminating instruction does He provide in Chapters 18 and 19?

- a. 11.1-13; 18.1-8
- b. 10.29-37; 18.9-14
- c. 10.21; 18.15-17

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<sup>1</sup> Zacchaeus is best understood to be telling Jesus of how he makes restitution to those he is treating unfairly. It is as if he is saying, "I give half of what I have to the poor, and anyone I defraud I give back four times what I stole."

d. 11.29-32; 13.18-21; 18.18-30

e. 13.18-24; 19.11-24

3. Which of these topics is most important to you today, and why? Which lesson is of great value to you today? How is your Rabbi changing you, or addressing areas He has revealed need your obedience to His commands?
  
4. For the fourth time, Jesus tells His apostles of what is to come in His shame-filled, gruesome death and shocking resurrection on the third day (18.31-34). Why do you think the reality of what was to come was hidden from them? What does this teach you about God?

**Deity: Merciful**<sup>2</sup>~ (Luke 18.13-14, 35-43; 19.5-9) “God’s mercy describes Him as perfectly having deep compassion for creatures (people), such that He demonstrates benevolent goodness to those in a pitiable, or miserable condition, even though they do not deserve it (Luke 8.36). This definition is partly based on the words used in the original text of the Bible for ‘mercy’. *As with grace, this perfection does not consider the merit or lack of merit of the people to whom God gives mercy.*” (italics added)

5. How does Jesus’s parable in Luke 18.9-14 explain God as merciful? Consider the last sentence of the above paragraph (in italics) to guide a portion of your answer.

“Just as the mercy seat was the place where atonement was made and God’s wrath against sin was averted, so now is Jesus the place where atonement is made and God’s wrath against sin is averted. Jesus is the High Priest who offers the sacrifice, the sacrifice that is offered, and the mercy seat on which the sacrifice is offered.” (Hebrews 9)

The straightforward and instantly personable interaction between Jesus and Zaccheus is delightful (19.1-10). Each of their eagerness to find one another is somewhat palpable because of the action-filled vocabulary used in the story! Jesus ends their interaction with a precious reminder of His purpose and His role as Son of Man in fulfilling that purpose (V 10, see Lesson 6, “The Servant King”, Deity: The Son of Man).

6. Review your answer in Lesson 10, “The Shepherd King”, Question 8. How valuable was Zaccheus to the Kingdom of God? What do you notice in their interaction that reveals Zaccheus’s value to God?

7. Likewise, how valuable was the Kingdom of God to Zaccheus? How does Zaccheus reveal his value of the Kingdom of God, and meeting Jesus?

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<sup>2</sup> MacArthur&Mahue, p.183-184, 816

**Doctrine: Faith~** (Luke 18.9-14; 19.1-10) Faith means “trust”. “Biblical faith is the resting, or trusting, in Christ alone for salvation (John 3.16-21). More than simply a mental agreement of historical facts, genuine faith begins with a recognition and confession of the truth of the gospel (1 John 4.13-16), followed by a receiving of Christ as Lord and Savior of one’s life (John 1.10-13). Biblical faith is not blind faith, for it rests on the historical life, death and resurrection of Christ.”<sup>3</sup>

“Faith comprises the essence of our hope for the future (Hebrews 11.1). In simple terms, this means that we trust God for the future based on our faith in what He has accomplished in the past... The only solid evidence we have for our own future is drawn from the promises of God. Here faith offers evidence for things unseen. We trust God for tomorrow... Faith includes believing *in* God. Yet that kind of faith is not particularly praiseworthy (James 2.19). To believe in the existence of God merely qualifies us to be demons. It is one thing to believe *in* God; it is another thing to believe God. To believe God, to trust Him for our very life, is the essence of our Christian faith.”<sup>4</sup>

The story of the rich ruler’s interaction with Jesus reminds us that the “prosperity gospel” (or the bad theology that material prosperity and no hardships infer God’s acceptance of a person as righteous, implying an automatic admission into heaven) has been deceiving God’s people for thousands of years (Luke 18.18-30). There is no role for faith in God in this false gospel. Its materially-based theology undermines trust in God and His promises by requiring trust in your material situation and your current circumstances.

8. What does the “prosperity gospel” imply for God’s daughters who are suffering with hardships such as poverty, single motherhood, homelessness, divorce, life-threatening illness, marriages on the brink of destruction, and other hardships of which no one is immune?

Peter’s reply in V 28 suggests authentic concern and confusion about the prosperity gospel and the gospel of salvation in the arrival of the Kingdom of God (through Jesus’s incarnation).

9. What promise does Jesus make in verses 29-30? How does Jesus’s promise rebuff and refute the idea of the prosperity gospel? Who in your life needs to be encouraged by Jesus’s promises (it’s okay if it’s you!)?

The manner by which the filthy rich ruler addresses Jesus implies that he knew Jesus is the Son of God (V 18). He calls Jesus using the personal pronoun “Good Teacher”. That, alongside Jesus’s rhetorical rebuttal in V 19, reveal Jesus’s direct address of the rich ruler’s heart problem: idolatry of material matters. His intentional betrayal of the truth of Jesus for his temporal securities is like so many before him who hoped to find a loophole for eternal life. (Perhaps this is one of the purposes of the prosperity gospel: looking for a loophole?)

10. What do you suspect is the source of the uber-rich ruler’s sadness (V 24)?

Through the parable of the “ten minas”, or the starting investment of about \$13,603.20,<sup>5</sup> Jesus reminds us that, though we all desire to know *when* His Kingdom will come, we would be wise to be *more mindful of how* we are

<sup>3</sup> The Gospel Project, *The 99 Essential Doctrines: #68 Faith*, Lifeway Christian Resources (2018)

<sup>4</sup> Sproul, R.C., *Luke: An Expository Commentary* (Sandford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2020 by R.C. Sproul Trust) pg.192

<sup>5</sup> [Forbes.com](https://www.forbes.com) the average nationwide wage is \$28.34/hour in 2023. Thus, a monthly income of \$4,534.40 (160 hours of work/month). This suggests a 2023 sum to invest of \$13,603.20, which is 3 months wages! Luke and Jesus must have loved math!

spending His investment in us! He invests in us by intentionally providing us with talents, skills, and expectations of His disciples for His glory! (Lesson 6, “The Servant King” again!) Jesus reminds us that there will be an accounting before Him, and there will be no excuses for not having been shrewd, judicious, and profitable in using His gift and talents developed by His Spirit in us (Luke 16.8, Lesson 10, “The Shepherd King”).

At the end of this parable, where Jesus rightly judges the foolish investor for his lack of faith, Jesus defines His enemy (19.27).

11. What is Jesus’s definition of His enemy? How does His definition of His enemy define faith?

God’s mercy and faith in Him prepare us for our final eternal destination. As we mill about our “airport gate”, God’s mercy, in addition to our faith in Him, prepare us for our final destination.

12. How are Zaccheus, the tax collector, the blind beggar, and the wise investors getting ready for their eternal destination? How does their faith reveal clues about their final destination?

13. In contrast, how are the self-righteous and self-important Pharisees, the grumblers, those who rebuked the blind beggar, and the foolish investor preparing for their final destination? How do their actions and decisions offer clues about their final destination?

**Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:** This week we ask you to write your SSP using both the doctrine of faith in tandem with God’s mercy. This can be as simple as you like – even crying out with one sentence!

### Lecture Outline:

**Aim:** Believers must activate their God-given faith.

- I. Humble Faith (Luke 18.1-17) **T1:** Believers activate faith by mercy-dependent prayer and humility.
  - a. How do you react to the injustices in your life?
  - b. How God-centered and persistent are your prayers? Do they reach upward, humbly crying out to God for mercy, or do they seek to manipulate God through your own merit?
  - c. Are your prayers punctuated w/ the pronoun “I” or the noun “mercy”?
- II. Healing Faith (Luke 18.18-43) **T2:** Believers activate faith by believing God for the impossible and acting upon that belief.
  - a. What have Jesus’ teachings taught you about activating your God-given faith?
  - b. What idols or misconceptions abt God are keeping you from experiencing the spiritual healing He offers?
  - c. What will you do to receive Jesus’ mercy?
- III. Heaven-bound Faith (Luke 19.1-27) **T3:** Believers activate faith to use their God-given gifts for His glory.
  - a. Which gift or gifts are you currently using to further God’s Kingdom?
  - b. How effectively are your gifts glorifying God?
  - c. If King Jesus was standing in front of you right now, would He commend you with the words: “Well done, good and faithful servant”?

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