

Walking with Luke

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The following notes are from the "journal" of Pastor Jeff Borden. They were printed for reference and use for a teaching sermon shared July 13, 2008 in the Valley Chapel Free Methodist Church – Warsaw, NY

"You are permitted..."

I am currently working my way through the Gospel of Luke for a portion of my morning reading and devotional time. This morning as I prayed asking God to "grip my heart" with His words, I was drawn to these scripture verses:

"You are permitted to understand the secrets (*mysteries*) of the kingdom of God...so pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them. My mother and my brothers (*my family*) are all those who hear god's word and obey it." (Luke 8:10, 18, 21)

There is much that could be shared from this passage and more references that could be added to support several points; however, I am stirred to reflect upon my own heart...examining it through the lens of several questions -

- **"You are permitted to understand the secrets of the kingdom of God..."** My first response to this revelation is a feeling of privilege and honor; then I am prompted to answer the question how diligently do I seek the kingdom of God? Do I explore the depths of God's mystery and His kingdom? I think it is easier not to go too deep...the deeper one goes, the greater the responsibility and accountability becomes for that person to the kingdom. So, the question must be asked, is it ok to only go so far in exploring the knowledge and mystery of God's kingdom? He says; **"pay attention to how you hear..."**
- **"To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them."** Here it is; some of the hardest teaching of our Lord. Listening is not relegated or restricted to a passive act. It is not merely allowing sound waves to vibrate portions of the inner ear. The act of "listening" was (and is) an action that consists of several parts. Listening seeks, listening waits, listening receives, and most importantly...listening responds. If we think any less of listening or that this definition of listening is in error, we should seek to find out what Jesus said about "hearing" his words. Turning back to chapter six of Luke's gospel (Luke 6:46-49) we'll see just one example; "So why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say...?" **"But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them...My mother and my brothers (my family) are all those who hear god's word and obey it."**
- I cannot choose to not grow in His knowledge and grace; actually, I suppose I can...at the risk of having what knowledge and understanding I have being taken away.

I will choose to continue my meditation...and exploration of His kingdom. I also resolve to become His word and allow His kingdom to live in me. I will really (and fully) **LISTEN**.

One Thing

Continuing my journey through the gospel of Luke this morning and I was captured by the way the New Living Translation phrases a passage. The verse in question is Luke 10:42. Most versions translate the sentence to read this way; *"but one thing is needful..."* or *"one thing is necessary..."* The NLT chooses to translate this verse as such:

"There is only one thing worth being concerned about."

I must admit that the NLT choice of words for this passage sparked my thinking much more than did *"one thing is needful."* I don't think that either interpretation is any more or any less accurate than the other. I think both of them are faithful to the original text, although I haven't attempted to verify that in the Greek. I simply feel that according to my use and familiarity with our language (in other words, what I'm comfortable with), the New Living Translation conveys a much greater sense of urgency in what is being spoken by Jesus.

Here are some of my thoughts spawned by, *"There is only one thing worth being concerned about..."*

1. This translation seems to reflect Jesus' teachings concerning discipleship that are recorded elsewhere in the gospel accounts.
2. This translation causes me to think more intentionally about what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus; taking to heart his call to "count the cost."
3. I am urged to look up supporting teaching from Jesus and to ensure that what I find as support is contextually accurate.

What I found (I included the verse references in context, but excerpted the portion that caught my attention) -

Matthew 6:25-34 *"That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life— whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?"*

Matthew 10:32-39 *"If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it."*

Luke 9:23-25 *"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed?"*

Luke 9:57-62 "Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of God."

Luke 14:25-33 "If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison— your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters— yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own."

I happened to run across some thoughts that are similar to my takeaway from this passage of scripture while reading a devotional piece from Oswald Chambers, who writes as follows:

If the closest relationships of life clash with the claims of Jesus Christ, He says it must be instant obedience to Himself. Discipleship means personal, passionate devotion to a Person, Our Lord Jesus Christ. There is a difference between devotion to a Person and devotion to principles or to a cause. Our Lord never proclaimed a cause; He proclaimed personal devotion to Himself. To be a disciple is to be a devoted love-slave of the Lord Jesus. Many of us who call ourselves Christians are not devoted to Jesus Christ. No man on earth has this passionate love to the Lord Jesus unless the Holy Ghost has imparted it to him. We may admire Him, we may respect Him and reverence Him, but we cannot love Him. The only Lover of the Lord Jesus is the Holy Ghost, and He sheds abroad the very love of God in our hearts. Whenever the Holy Ghost sees a chance of glorifying Jesus, He will take your heart, your nerves, your whole personality, and simply make you blaze and glow with devotion to Jesus Christ.

What then is my takeaway? Being a disciple, a true follower of Jesus, is serious business. I don't think a casual approach is acceptable. I'm not judging or condemning anyone else; they will have to make their own decisions and come to their own conclusions about what Jesus meant when he spoke these words. I do think; however, that if these words were set aside for a moment and we looked at another set of words:

"You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength." (Deuteronomy 6:5 NLT)

I am prompted to ask another question; "God, how much is **all** ?"

Get it Right

I was reading today a passage that I have read many times, but (*for some reason*) it stood out to me in a way that it has never before. The passage is from Luke (of course) and follows a lengthy discourse from Jesus regarding priorities concerning the Kingdom of God, End Times, and being prepared for inheritance of God's Kingdom. The passage I refer to follows:

^{NLT} **Luke 12:57-59** ⁵⁷ "Why can't you decide for yourselves what is right?" ⁵⁸ When you are on the way to court with your accuser, try to settle the matter before you get there. Otherwise, your accuser may drag you before the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, who will throw you into prison. ⁵⁹ And if that happens, you won't be free again until you have paid the very last penny. "

I have always interpreted this passage of scripture at a glance. I've read it for what it is and simply went on to the next verse. I figured that the essence of what is being spoken here by Jesus is simply an exhortation for people to get along with one another...since that is how things should work in God's Kingdom. While this may be a true statement and fair interpretation, I don't think that this is the primary point that Jesus was trying to convey...not anymore I don't.

When this "epiphany" first came to me, I was like..."huh"? I kinda sloughed it off and went about my business. This morning in my reading it hit me again, so I went back and examined the passage in full context and came to this conclusion... Jesus is saying to us; "Get it Right."

Allow me to illustrate my findings:

I am not positively sure of the timeline of this account from Luke, but it is written as though it has been recorded from a single event. I think that it is fair to include the following passages as a single discourse:

- 1. Transparency of heart, honesty before men, and righteousness before God (Luke 12:1-12)
- 2. Satisfaction in God's provision, generosity, the pitfalls of greed (Luke 12:13-21)
- 3. Worry, failure to trust God, misplaced priorities, Kingdom first (Luke 12:22-34)
- 4. Imminent return of God, being prepared in heart and deed (Luke 12:35-48)
- 5. Jesus forcing choices...who's on His side? (Luke 12:49-53)
- 6. Discernment...(Luke 12:54-56)
- 7. **Get it right...(Luke 12:57-59)**
- 8. If you don't "get it right" (Luke 13:1-5)
- 9. Vivid illustration and warning to "get it right" (Luke 13:6-9)

I think points 1, 2, and 3 are various iterations of what "right" looks like; specifically, points 1-3. Points 4, 5, and 6 are reinforcements for the previous points, but highlight the urgency of Jesus' call to "get it right." Now we come to this passage where Jesus just interjects this blurb about civil lawsuits against one another. This seems completely out of context if this is the actual intent of this passage. So, what else can be discerned from this other than the surface interpretation?

I think Jesus is making a point through metaphor. I think this is a description of a journey through this life on the way to eternal life. What follows is my paraphrased understanding.

- - "Why can't you decide for yourselves what is right?"

- o **My paraphrase** = figure it out now...listen to what I've told you; go back to the history and experience of your ancestors and understand what's happening. It's "go" time.
- - "When you are on the way to court with your accuser, try to settle the matter before you get there."
- o **My paraphrase** = we ARE on the way to court (the judgment seat of Christ) and we'll be held to account for the life we have led. In this case, we are on our way to judgment with our accuser; we've fallen short...missed the mark(sin) and fallen out of right relationship with our Creator-GOD. As we walk this earth in the physical life, we have the chance to accept His offer of/for reconciliation...and "settle matters before we get there." In other words, we have the opportunity to "get it right" before we meet judgment...I had originally thought that we might be "on the way to court" (metaphorically) with "Jesus," but after being challenged in this thinking by my favorite study partner (my wife) I am convinced that her challenge is the more accurate thinking. I continue to think the essence of what we are to reconcile remains the same, but consider the person of the accuser (and one we "are on the way to court" with) differently. So...thanks, "hon," for the challenge and looking out to "keep me honest."

αντιδικος – Strongs No: 476 – **Transliterated:** antidikos:
Pronounced: an-tid'-ee-kos
αντιδικος Strongs No: 476
Transliterated: **antidikos:** Pronounced: **an-tid'-ee-kos**
from 473 and 1349; TDNT 1:373; n m
Trans. & freq. in the AV— *adversary* 5 times;
5 occurrences of Greek word in AV
1. opponent
a. an opponent in a suit of law
b. an adversary, enemy
1

- - "Otherwise, your accuser may drag you before the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, who will throw you into prison. And if that happens, you won't be free again until you have paid the very last penny."
- o **My paraphrase** = when we "get there" it will be too late...if we have not reconciled our hearts and attitudes with God while here on earth (in this physical life), there will not another opportunity.

I think the next points (8 and 9) are made to reemphasize the urgency of Jesus' message and make clear the metaphor of the civil lawsuit we just talked about. Really...how much clearer can he be?

Luke 13:3 "Not at all! And you will perish, too, unless you repent of your sins and turn to God."

Luke 13:5 "No, and I tell you again that unless you repent, you will perish, too."

Finally, he tells the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree:

Luke 13:6-9 *Then Jesus told this story: "A man planted a fig tree in his garden and came again and again to see if there was any fruit on it, but he was always disappointed. ⁷ Finally, he said to his gardener, 'I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down. It's just taking up space in the garden.' ⁸ "The gardener answered, 'Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I'll give it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. ⁹ If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can cut it down.*

I'm the fig tree. You're the fig tree. We (the people of God) are the fig tree. We are to bear the fruit of His image before all men...on this physical earth. These are urgent times...we need to be sure that we **"get it right."**
