

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 4

Luke 16-20

*This week's reflector is
Drew Maxwell.*

*He is one of the ministers at
Calvary United Church
in St. Jacobs, Ontario.*

Introduction

In the following chapters, the questions of money vs. generosity, rich vs. poor, compassion vs. self-centredness all arise. Luke highlights Jesus compassion for the poor. And, looming ever nearer is Jerusalem and the cross.

At the heart of the readings this week is one question: in what are you investing your heart and your life? To whom or what are you choosing to give authority in your life?

Monday

Luke 16

The Shrewd Manager & the Rich Man

The majority of Jesus' followers were not the wealthy or powerful – *how do you think they would respond to Jesus parables?*

The rich man ignores the poor and it has deep eternal consequence – it matters how we invest our lives. The shrewd manager invests in winning people's support.

Jesus says, "no one can serve God and money." As we begin to struggle with this question, these questions came to mind.

It might be worth taking some time today to think about what is taking up my heart? My time? My attention?

What are we investing ourselves in?

What sometimes masters us that we wish didn't?

It's early in the new year, maybe we can talk to God about letting go of some things we're investing time and energy in that aren't helpful. And maybe commit ourselves again to investing in things that do matter to God and to us.

Tuesday

Luke 17

Today's readings made me think about small choices and their great consequences. Each section today emphasizes **the little things matter** – our choices, our faith, our attitude, our gratitude, all affect our spiritual lives, our ability to enjoy God and help bring God's Kingdom.

A few themes to think about:

Forgiveness – Jesus' goal is for us to receive forgiveness and offer it – no matter how many times we're asked. *Is there someone God's nudging you to forgive? Or approach for forgiveness?*

Gratitude

Only one leper returns with thanks. *What may God have given you that you haven't taken time to offer thanks?*

Are there others, today, you could stop and thank?

Generosity – Jesus says it's our heart attitude that matters: "whoever tries to keep his life ..."

"Am I able to be generous – with my time? My attention? My heart?"

Are there little changes I can make?

Wednesday

Luke 18

As Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem, Jesus wants to make sure they don't give up in the coming storm. (And maybe he's preaching to himself too?)

Underlying each parable is God's committed love that persists, even when we falter. If the unjust judge relents – how much more will the just, loving Father hear our prayers? He hears the heart cry of the ashamed tax collector and is freely willing to “justify.” His heart breaks for the rich man who can't let go and choose to give his life to God. He stops in a crowded city because of the cry of a blind beggar.

Take some time to imagine yourself in the scriptures today.

When Jesus asks the blind beggar, “what do you want me to do for you?”, can you hear him asking the same? Take some time to speak to him about the longings of your heart.

In each parable, someone lacks something –pray for those you know who are in need.

Thursday

Luke 19

Some commentators say the central verse of Luke is 19:10 “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

Does this sum up Jesus' ministry? His purpose?

How is his church doing at modelling this?

Zacchaeus' dilemma sums up the teachings and conflict over money in the previous chapters. Like a dam, wealth can block our ability to give of our hearts to God and to others.

The Parable of the ten minas asks us how we use what God has given us: to build God's kingdom or hoard it?

As we head into an uncertain economic times, can we allow God to search our hearts and see if money has a hold it shouldn't?

Can we pray for Zacchaeuses out there, to encounter the love and grace of Jesus? .

Coming to Jerusalem

If you have a chance, read Zechariah 9 which sets the stage for this chapter and much of holy week.

Friday

Luke 20

What is worth fighting over?

Jesus opponents try to trip up Jesus over seemingly trivial questions.

What do you notice about how Jesus deals with conflict?

What does he stand against/for?

The teachers and Pharisees respond in anger to Jesus' teaching – it hits a little close to home. Sometimes, scripture feels like that and is God's way of asking us to examine our own lives – with Him.

But, as we search our own hearts, remember the grace and forgiveness of yesterday's scripture – Jesus' concern is to bring the lost home and set us free from destructive things that master us.

Is there anything that feels like it could be Jesus speaking directly to you?

Are there areas you're involved with that are getting caught up in the trivial?

Is there anything God might ask you to stand against?