



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

11 - 16 MAY 2020

INTRODUCTION

This week's Bible passages are taken from the NT readings set for Morning Prayer each day. We continue our progress through Luke's Gospel, with each day's thought based mainly on the verses in bold type.

MONDAY - Luke 4:38-44

³⁸ After leaving the synagogue Jesus entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹ Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

⁴⁰ As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them.

⁴¹ Demons also came out of many, shouting, 'You are the Son of God!' But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

⁴² **At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them.** ⁴³ **But he said to them, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.'** ⁴⁴ **So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.**

Thought for the day

After his previous experience of temptation in 'the wilderness', it's surprising that Jesus would intentionally seek God in a 'deserted place'. Or perhaps not. We tend to focus on the devil and his temptations but forget that it was God who enabled Jesus to resist through his word. So our recollection of those wilderness temptations should be of thanks to God for the way he strengthened Jesus. In today's passage too there's a temptation for Jesus - to stay where he was appreciated and wanted. But God had other plans for him. Most of us, probably quite often, are tempted to retreat into the comfortable and familiar, and especially so at this time of isolation and strangeness. God may have other plans for us; we need to be attentive to him even in our wilderness.

TUESDAY - Luke 5:1-11

¹ Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴ **When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.'** ⁵ **Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.'** ⁶ When they had done

this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.⁷ So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' ⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' ¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

Thought for the day

Imagine the grumbling: We need some sleep; What would he know? Why didn't you stick up for us Simon? Who does he think he is? But, as so often, Jesus did indeed know best, not just for the present moment but for the whole of the future lives of his disciples. Improbable as it seemed then, they would indeed end up 'catching people'. While in isolation, or having to cope with unexpected pressures at work and home, we have been suddenly thrown back onto our own resources, and may feel exposed by their limitations; but, as for the disciples, Jesus is always there for us, walking alongside us and, if we let him, showing us the way.

WEDNESDAY - Luke 5:12-26

¹² Once, when Jesus was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.' ¹³ Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, 'I do choose. Be made clean.' Immediately the leprosy left him. ¹⁴ And he ordered him to tell no one. 'Go', he said, 'and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them.' ¹⁵ But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases. ¹⁶ But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.

¹⁷ One day, while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting nearby (they had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem); and the power of the Lord was with him to heal. ¹⁸ Just then some men came, carrying a paralysed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; ¹⁹ but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. ²⁰ **When he saw their faith, he said, 'Friend, your sins are forgiven you.'** ²¹ **Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, 'Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'** ²² **When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, 'Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier, to say, "Your sins are forgiven you", or to say, "Stand up and walk"? ²⁴ But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the one who was paralysed—'I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home.'** ²⁵ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. ²⁶ Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'

Thought for the day

If the Pharisees could only have recognised the potential for God to break into their world, so circumscribed as it was by rules of their own making, they might have realised that the answer to 'Who is this?' lay within their second question 'Who can forgive sins but God alone?' They saw in Jesus a teacher and healer, but they didn't perceive God. Do we also have clear ideas about where we will find God in other people? The respectable? The

important? People like us? Do we fail to find him in the marginal, the rejected, the misfits, those for whom Jesus had a special care?

THURSDAY - Luke 5:27-39

²⁷ After this Jesus went out and saw a tax-collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.'²⁸ And he got up, left everything, and followed him. ²⁹ Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house; and there was a large crowd of tax-collectors and others sitting at the table with them. ³⁰ **The Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax-collectors and sinners?'** ³¹ Jesus answered, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; ³² **I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.'**

³³ Then they said to him, 'John's disciples, like the disciples of the Pharisees, frequently fast and pray, but your disciples eat and drink.'³⁴ Jesus said to them, 'You cannot make wedding-guests fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? ³⁵ The days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.'³⁶ He also told them a parable: 'No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, "The old is good."'"

Thought for the day

When Jesus described himself as the Door of the sheepfold, he told the Pharisees that he had come to give his flock life in all its abundance (John 10:10). And at the marriage at Cana he turned an absurdly large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11). He wanted people to revel in God's bounty, and especially those who were generally looked down on. So he enjoyed his meals with them and brought them closer to God. Fasting can be a valuable discipline in its place, but it should never be used as a barrier to prevent others discovering how good life is in God's kingdom.

FRIDAY - Luke 6:1-11

¹ One sabbath while Jesus was going through the cornfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them. ² But some of the Pharisees said, 'Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?' ³ Jesus answered, 'Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?' ⁵ Then he said to them, 'The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.'

⁶ On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. ⁸ Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Come and stand here.' He got up and stood there. ⁹ **Then Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?'** ¹⁰ After looking around at all of them, he said to him, 'Stretch out your hand.' He did so, and his hand was restored. ¹¹ But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Thought for the day

At the heart of this dispute was the interpretation of the Commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy (Deut 5:12-15). This was intended as an encouragement to rest for the whole nation but had been amplified by 'clarifying' regulations which stifled any type of activity, however worthwhile and Godly. Jesus would have none of this and would not be prevented from doing good on the holy day. In our society Sunday is virtually indistinguishable from any other day; how do we, or how should we, keep it holy?

SATURDAY - Luke 6:12-26

¹² Now during those days Jesus went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. ¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: ¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

¹⁷ He came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰ Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹ 'Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²² 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³ Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴ 'But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

²⁵ 'Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶ 'Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Thought for the day

Jesus never underestimated the power of prayer. So before he chose his twelve disciples he spent a whole night with God. He knew that these twelve had to be the right twelve, as indeed they became. We may feel that Jesus set the bar impossibly high. But the idea of spending time in prayer before making important decisions of any kind seems right, giving God time and space to influence us and give us confidence in whatever we decide to do.