



Parish of Finchampstead and California

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

8 - 13 JUNE 2020

INTRODUCTION

The NT readings for Morning Prayer continue their progress through Luke's Gospel; each day's thought is based mainly on the parts of the readings in bold type.

MONDAY - Luke 10:25-37

²⁵ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' ²⁶ He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' ²⁷ He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' ²⁸ And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

³⁰ Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."

³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' ³⁷ He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

Thought for the day

In Mark's Gospel (12:28-31) and in Matthew's (22:34-40) it is Jesus himself who presents this summary of the Law, based on Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. But here the conversation is reversed to provide a context for the parable of the good Samaritan, which is unique to Luke. The lawyer is clearly dissatisfied with the vagueness of the second part and wants greater clarity, because he feels the need to 'justify himself'. And before we criticise him, perhaps we should reflect on how and when we ourselves experience the same need to explain some aspect of our attitudes or behaviour - for most of us it is probably an instinctive response to deflect potential criticism. What parables might Jesus tell us?

TUESDAY - Luke 10:38-41

³⁸ Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. ³⁹ She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all

the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’⁴¹ But the Lord answered her, ‘**Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things;**⁴² **there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.**’

Thought for the day

Yesterday Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan to make a point that his questioner would have preferred not to hear. Today his teaching is delivered directly, but no more comfortably, to his friend Martha. It is so hard, isn't it, not to be 'distracted by many things'? Sometimes we too need to set activity aside for a while so that we can have the time and space to listen to Jesus.

WEDNESDAY - Luke 11:1-13

¹ Jesus was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.’² He said to them, ‘When you pray, say:

Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴ And forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.

And do not bring us to the time of trial.’

⁵ And he said to them, ‘Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, “Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶ for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.” ⁷ And he answers from within, “Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.” ⁸ **I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.**

⁹ **‘So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.** ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹² Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.’

Thought for the day

If we were asked to list the desirable characteristics of Christian living, I wonder whether persistence would appear near the top of our list. I suspect not. But here Jesus considers it important enough to attach to the Lord's Prayer. Persistence in prayer is important, not because God wants to withhold his blessings (as v9-13 make clear) nor because he has to be persuaded of our needs (see Matthew 6:8 which introduces the more familiar, longer version of the Lord's Prayer), but because asking, searching and knocking are iterative and conversational. This is prayer at its best, opening our hearts to God's will, not simply presenting a list of demands or wishes.

THURSDAY - Luke 11:14-26

¹⁴ Now he was casting out a demon that was mute; when the demon had gone out, the one who had been mute spoke, and the crowds were amazed. ¹⁵ But some of them said, ‘He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.’ ¹⁶ **Others, to test him, kept demanding from him a sign from heaven.** ¹⁷ But he knew what they were thinking and

said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house. ¹⁸ If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? —for you say that I cast out the demons by Beelzebul. ¹⁹ Now if I cast out the demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰ But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. ²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. ²² But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his plunder. ²³ Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

²⁴ 'When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting-place, but not finding any, it says, "I will return to my house from which I came." ²⁵ When it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.'

Thought for the day

You might have thought that Jesus had provided enough evidence of his extraordinary powers by restoring a mute person's speech. But, in spite of the crowd's amazement, some weren't satisfied and demanded a 'sign from heaven'. That was never a game Jesus would play, as he showed when confronted by Satan in the wilderness. But he understands the mischief behind the question - the idea that he himself is in league with Satan. Christians know that cannot be, but may not always be quite so good at speaking out against evil in our world, especially those things that 'don't really matter' (often they do). Apathy and collusion are great dangers, but Jesus stands firm against them (v23).

FRIDAY - Luke 11:27-36

²⁷ While he was saying this, a woman in the crowd raised her voice and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that nursed you.' ²⁸ But he said, **'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.'**

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, 'This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise at the judgement with the people of this generation and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here. ³² The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgement with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here.

³³ 'No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar, but on the lampstand so that those who enter may see the light. ³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness. ³⁵ Therefore consider whether the light in you is not darkness. ³⁶ If then your whole body is full of light, with no part of it in darkness, it will be as full of light as when a lamp gives you light with its rays.'

Thought for the day

Jesus was always inclined to point away from himself towards God his Father, as here. From v29 onwards his words sound like those of an OT prophet, calling people back to God, warning of the judgement to come, and telling them that he and his message are greater than Jonah's at Nineveh, and greater than all the wisdom of Solomon. His message brings light, but only to those who obey it. Perhaps today is a good day to reflect on the things that make it difficult to obey God's word, and on the best way of overcoming them.

SATURDAY - Luke 11:37-54

³⁷ While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him; so he went in and took his place at the table. ³⁸ The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner. ³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, '**Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also?** ⁴¹ So give for alms those things that are within; and see, everything will be clean for you.

⁴² 'But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practised, without neglecting the others. ⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honour in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the market-places. ⁴⁴ Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without realizing it.'

⁴⁵ One of the lawyers answered him, 'Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us too.' ⁴⁶ And he said, 'Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them. ⁴⁷ Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. ⁴⁸ So you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute", ⁵⁰ so that this generation may be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation. ⁵² Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.'

⁵³ When he went outside, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile towards him and to cross-examine him about many things, ⁵⁴ lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

Thought for the day

'Woe to you' - hardly the words we would ever want to hear from Jesus ourselves, words of such strength and threat. No wonder the Pharisees and their supporters 'began to be very hostile towards him' (v53). What had they done to provoke such invective? In the stark terms of v39, Jesus regards them as hypocrites, more concerned for outward appearances than for what is in their hearts. The way this attitude displays itself in their daily life is set out in lurid detail in v42-52. When we read these verses we may well be able to separate ourselves from such behaviour. But the nagging question remains - in what ways are we more concerned for the outside of our lives rather than for what lies within?