Peter’s denial, and looked at him when it occurred the third time (22:61). Jesus was under arrest yet in complete control.

 As He was led away, Jesus urged people not to weep for Him but for themselves. He quoted Scripture. He asked God to forgive His attackers, and He promised a criminal hanging next to Him that he would be with Him. No one could do these things without being fully surrendered to the power and plan of God. The suffering was great, yet God’s strength and peace were greater.

 The resurrection was in God’s plan and stated promise, yet those closest to Jesus could not fathom what He had done. With His resurrection, He defeated death and commissioned His disciples to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins to the whole world (24:47).

 Praise God for His plan, power, and peace.

Saturday, November 4, 2017—John 1-3

 Beginnings are a good place to start. Going back as Genesis does to creation, John introduces the Word (1:1-4), the only begotten God, who was at the Father’s side (1:18), who became flesh (1:14) and brought grace and truth to fulfill the Law (1:17). From the beginning, John wants readers to see Jesus as God incarnate coming to give mankind the right to become children of God (1:12).

 John the Baptist wanted people to see Jesus as the Lamb on God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29), the true Son of God (1:34). John’s desire was for people to see less of him and more of Jesus, so some of John’s disciples began to follow Jesus and explore His mission. Jesus told them they would see astounding things because of Him (1:51). After the first of many miracles, He revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him (2:11). Only after His death and resurrection did some of Jesus’ teachings finally make sense (2:22). Walking with Jesus and growing in faith are a life-long adventure.

 The ministry of Jesus was so compelling, a leader of the Jews came to Him at night for a conversation. Jesus saw through any pretenses and spoke directly to his need. To see the Kingdom of God, Nicodemus had to be born again. This required trusting Jesus to take away sin by being lifted up as a symbol of sin (3:14-15).

 Thank God for having from the beginning a plan for Jesus to remove His wrath from us.

*Read the Bible Through 2017*

Week 44

Sunday, October 29, 2017—Luke 4-6

               In reviewing Jesus’ life and the power of the gospel story, Luke recognized an important player in the narrative—the Holy Spirit. Luke mentions Him quite frequently and introduces us to Him and His role in Luke 4. Full of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned from His baptism to face great temptation from Satan in the desert. Satan went after Jesus with the same foundational instincts he used against Adam and Eve. The power of the Spirit (4:1) allowed Him to quote Scripture and remain obedient. The power of the Spirit (4:14) enabled Him to return home and teach faithfully despite finding little acceptance and having his life threatened.

               His healing and teaching were means to an end—preaching the kingdom of God. This is why He was sent (4:43). The Spirit was always present, but His power for healing was available only at certain times (5:17). He called men to walk with Him (5:1-11, 5:27-28, 6:12-16) in proclaiming and expanding the Kingdom, but He made a practice of withdrawing to lonely places to pray (5:16), His true source of power, direction, and truth. This provided renewal of His communion with the Spirit and the Father.

               Frustrating the religious leaders became a regular characteristic of Jesus’ ministry (5:21, 6:1-11). This makes more sense when the reader realizes Jesus was calling His follower to a counter-cultural life (6:17-42), and the religious leaders were responsible for much of the culture as it was. He was calling for heart transformation (6:43-45).

               Thank God for His Spirit who transforms, empowers, and guides.

Monday, October 30, 2017—Luke 7-9

               Faith is more than simple belief in a fact. Faith, as Hebrews says, is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. A centurion came to Jesus seeking healing for his servant, and his faith was so strong he knew Jesus needed only to say the word. He did not have to visit his home. Jesus declared to the crowd around him He had not seen such faith in all of Israel (7:9). A woman believed a touch would heal her (8:47).

               Faith believes what is yet to be seen. Faith also stirs holy wonder, loud praise, and verbal proclamation in those who see Jesus bringing people from death to life (7:11-17). Faith assures those who are suffering for the sake of Christ that He truly is the One worthy of praise and obedience (7:18-23). Faith believes Jesus is worthy of worship and can forgive sin no matter how heinous (7:50). A life of faith produces fruit in the faithful (8:1-15). The faithful are light to the world, putting belief into practice (8:16-21).

               Not everyone responds in faith to Jesus. Three kinds of soil did not produce fruit. The people of the Gerasenes saw Him deliver a man from demons and asked Him to leave (8:37), yet Jesus continues to send His disciples because there remain those who will respond (9:1-9).

               Pray for a growing faith in Jesus as Messiah (9:18-27) and a fuller vision of who He is (9:28-36). Faithfully follow no matter the cost (9:57-62).

Tuesday, October 31, 2017—Luke 10-13

               October 31 is Halloween, a day the church used for generations to prepare for celebrating the saints and many forerunners. Today, Halloween is a day for celebrating different, darker elements, but for many children, Halloween means going out on mission for a “harvest” or candy and goods.

               Jesus sent His disciples out on mission, telling them to pray for other workers to join them. The harvest was plentiful, but the workers were few. Their task was to pray to find a man of peace in each village who would help their task in establishing Kingdom work and gathering souls. Their power would be astonishing, but their joy was to be continually centered around the astounding fact they were redeemed (10:20), and their mission remained simple—love God and love people (10:25-37).

               Prayer was the persistent connection His disciples were to have with the Father, and the Holy Spirit was the greatest gift God would give them as they sought Him (11:1-13). To be on mission and see a harvest would be impossible without the Spirit because of forces seen (11:37-53) and unseen (11:14-28) working against the Kingdom. While formidable, these have no comparison to the One who can condemn the soul (12:5).

               In Luke 12, Jesus gives a summary of Kingdom living—trust the Spirit, be rich toward God, do not worry; treasure God above all, be continually watchful and working for Him, and expect difficult times. Pray for a Spirit like His (13:34) which weeps over those who don’t know Him.

Wednesday, November 1, 2017—Luke 14-17

 In these four chapters, Luke emphasizes repeatedly the humility required for Kingdom living. When the disciple realizes the majesty of Jesus, he will be careful not to think too much of self. The fact that Jesus has chosen him and granted him Kingdom-family status is awe-inducing.

 Jesus likened the Kingdom to a banquet to which the least of humanity has been invited. Those who see God as peer rather than master find ways to brush off His invitation when His call is not convenient. Those who can do nothing to repay Him, however, are the ones He targets and the ones who find themselves most humbled and thankful. To follow Him, then, becomes a matter of gladly counting the cost (14:25-34).

 Telling three parables about lost things, Jesus taught the Kingdom concept of rejoicing over repentance. He welcomed sinners (15:2) because He wanted them to return to Him. Most, like the older brother, resent any form of repentance because they haven’t learned to enjoy being with the Father and having His riches available for serving Him while enjoying life.

 Warren Wiersbe summarizes chapter 16 with these ideas: We can waste money (16:1), we can serve God with money (16:2-9), we can try to serve God and money (16:10-18), or we can let money be god (16:19-31). The choice makes all the difference in Kingdom living and flourishing.

 Pray for a heart that sees God as master and self as unworthy servant (17:6-10). Praise Him for personal value which comes in Christ.

Thursday, November 2, 2017—Luke 18-21

 When we pray, we treat God as if He is God. We worship. We declare our dependence on Him. We compare His majesty and character to the issues we face. When we pray, we tap into the Divine power of all the universe. No wonder Jesus taught His disciples they were to pray and never give up (18:1). Luke discusses prayer and the Holy Spirit in a number of instances in his Gospel because of the link between the two.

 When we treat people as people, they are able to respond to the gospel. Jesus called Zacchaeus from the tree and wanted to go to his house. Hebrew culture emphasized hospitality, but no one likely had wanted to go to Zacchaeus’s house for some time. He was a traitor, no longer a Jew in the eyes of many. When Jesus treated him with personal dignity, he repented without a single word of condemnation.

 When we think too highly of ourselves, we reject the authority and message of God for our own (20:9-19). Jesus says we are to give God what is His, but we mistakenly give His things to the powers of the world when we lose sight of His authority and worth. The punishment and consequences are devastating (20:47).

 When we trust Him completely, He promises to take us through the hardest of situations with His presence and power. “By standing firm you will gain life” (21:19). Pray for a continually maturing relationship which properly recognizes Him as God and obeys appropriately.

Friday, November 3, 2017—Luke 22-24

 Though His final days were chaotic, Jesus was never distracted from His mission. He sent His disciples into town with a strange instruction—find a man with a jar and ask to use his upper room for our Passover meal. “They left and found things just as Jesus had told them” (22:13). How did He know?

 God had been preparing this for millennia, and He was working it all out for His glory. Neither the chaos nor the suffering would deter Him from what Jesus came to do. As they had the Passover meal together, Jesus further illustrated His divine sovereignty—indicating how elements of a thousand-year-old meal had been pointing to Him all along. He predicted