

Good news for the Humble Luke 7:1-8:21

Proposition: The gospel is the answer to life's biggest problems; sickness, death and sin for those who are humble enough to believe.

All of scripture is God breathed and practical. Jesus said if you know me you know what the father is like. And when we look at the gospel accounts of Jesus' life I feel a fresh sense of wow. Last week – wow at the grace of God and the love of God for both repentant sinners and the cynical, analytical struggler. Jesus loves them both and wants to spend time with them both.

This week I want to give you an overview of a huge section of scripture, because through this overview you and I hopefully will go wow, that's what the kingdom looks like in a nutshell, that's how to deal with doubt, that's what faith that pleases God looks like.

Now I am going to jump all over these two chapters because God has inspired Dr Luke to fit them together perfectly. Collectively they carry an overview of what the good news about the Kingdom is all about. However I am going to start in the middle of chapter

7:22 Jesus said to the messengers sent by John, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. Blind people are now able to see, and the lame can walk. People who have leprosy are being healed, and the deaf can now hear. The dead are raised to life, and the poor are hearing the good news."

That's the central theme of these two chapters.

Luke 7:18-35

¹⁸⁻¹⁹John's followers told John everything that was being said about Jesus. So he sent two of them to ask the Lord, "Are you the one we should be looking for? Or must we wait for someone else?"

²⁰When these messengers came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to ask, "Are you the one we should be looking for? Or are we supposed to wait for someone else?" "

²¹At that time Jesus was healing many people who were sick or in pain or were troubled by evil spirits, and he was giving sight to a lot of blind people. ²²Jesus said to the messengers sent by John, "Go and tell John what

you have seen and heard. Blind people are now able to see, and the lame can walk. People who have leprosy ^[a] are being healed, and the deaf can now hear. The dead are raised to life, and the poor are hearing the good news. ²³God will bless everyone who doesn't reject me because of what I do. " ²⁴After John's messengers had gone, Jesus began speaking to the crowds about John:

What kind of person did you go out to the desert to see? Was he like tall grass blown about by the wind? ²⁵What kind of man did you really go out to see? Was he someone dressed in fine clothes? People who wear expensive clothes and live in luxury are in the king's palace. ²⁶What then did you go out to see? Was he a prophet? He certainly was! I tell you that he was more than a prophet. ²⁷In the Scriptures, God calls John his messenger and says, "I am sending my messenger ahead of you to get things ready for you." ²⁸No one ever born on this earth is greater than John. But whoever is least important in God's kingdom is greater than John.

²⁹Everyone had been listening to John. Even the tax collectors ^[b] had obeyed God and had done what was right by letting John baptize them. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the experts in the Law of Moses refused to obey God and be baptized by John. ³¹Jesus went on to say:

What are you people like? What kind of people are you? ³²You are like children sitting in the market and shouting to each other,

"We played the flute,

but you would not dance!

We sang a funeral song,

but you would not cry!"

³³John the Baptist did not go around eating and drinking, and you said, "John has a demon in him!" ³⁴But because the Son of Man goes around eating and drinking, you say, "Jesus eats and drinks too much! He is even a friend of tax collectors and sinners." ³⁵Yet Wisdom is shown to be right by what its followers do.

They criticized John for being too sad always talking about sin and repentance and they criticized Jesus for being too happy and enjoying life too much. But these Pharisees would see that what they taught was true by how they live. The proof will be in the pudding.

The central theme of these two chapters is good news for the poor.

Let me paint the scene for you.

John the Baptist J the B has been put in prison by Herod and it's the worse prison in the empire. It's the most maximum security prison they had and historians say it was built especially for torturing people.

Now John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and he knew that Jesus was the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He knew that Jesus was the Messiah, Jeshua Hamasee.

He had heard the Lord stand up in the synagogue and read from

Isaiah 61: The Spirit of the Lord God has taken control of me! The Lord has chosen and sent me to tell the oppressed the good news, to heal the broken hearted, and to announce freedom for the prisoners and captives. This is the year that he Lord God will show kindness to us and punish our enemies.

There are over 400 prophecies about Jesus in the OT from where he would be born, his genealogy, how he would enter Jerusalem on a donkey, how he would die right through to Jesus dealing to Israel's enemies, peace and harmony in the world under his rule, the lion laying down with the lamb etc.

Now John then, and many of the Jews even now, expected all of those prophecies to be fulfilled when the messiah came. And yet the prophecies concerning ruling and judging and wiping out enemies actually related to his second coming. And so here's cousin John, he had been believing who Jesus was but now he is in prison and he is suffering and didn't the prophecies say that the messiah would bring justice and judgment and didn't he hear Jesus say that he would set the captives free. Well hello Lord. Here I am. Worse prison in the empire. Shake the building, send fire, send a legion of angels or something. And John was doubting, he was struggling with his faith in doubting dungeon.

John was looking at the prophecies that had not been fulfilled and was doubting.

Jesus sends a message back to John quoting

Isaiah 35:3-6

³Here is a message for all

who are weak,

trembling,

and worried:

⁴"Cheer up! Don't be afraid.

*Your God is coming
to punish your enemies.
God will take revenge on them
and rescue you. ”*

*“The blind will see,
and the ears of the deaf
will be healed.*

*“Those who were lame
will leap around like deer;
tongues once silent
will begin to shout.*

What is Jesus saying to John?

1. HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH DOUBT WHEN SOME PROMISES HAVE NOT BEEN FULFILLED?

DON'T FOCUS ON WHAT HAS YET TO HAPPEN. FOCUS ON WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY DONE.

John as you struggle to understand why I haven't set you free or brought justice yet, don't be afraid, cheer up, I am going to fulfill those prophecies too but right now these prophecies have already been answered, the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk.

John is in doubting dungeon and he can't work it out. God promised that messiah would bring justice and judgment. Jesus said he would set the prisoner free and as he looked without understanding to the unfilled promises his mind filled with doubt. Is Jesus really the One. Jesus said no John, I've got it sorted – focus for now on what you can understand – prophecies are being fulfilled. Ephesians 6 calls the practice of bringing to mind the things that God has done as putting up the shield of faith to deal with the enemies flaming arrows. And it works . Focusing on the answered prayers that you do understand and you have seen and experienced will build your faith. Use them like a shield. Focusing like John was doing on the things he didn't see fulfilled yet brings doubts.

John the Baptist was the greatest prophet in the OT and the last of the OT prophets and yet do you know

2. WHO IS GREATER THAN JOHN IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD? EACH OF US!

7:28 No one ever born on this earth is greater than John. But whoever is least important in God's kingdom is greater than John.

John understood the prophecies about Messiah better than any other prophet, he even saw and baptized the Messiah, he had a greater perspective of the plan of salvation for humanity than any other OT prophet, but he didn't understand it as well as you and I do

We are greater, more blessed than John in our perspective of the plan of salvation and in our position in the kingdom.

We understand God's plan so much better than any OT prophet or John, the greatest prophet of all and since Jesus died for us and sent us the Holy Spirit, since we have received the Holy Spirit upon us Jesus said that we could do what he did and even greater things than he did. That potential is upon everyone of us. This section of scriptures comprises of three stories and a parable, and their central theme comes out of what Jesus told John's disciples to go and tell him in prison **22.. and the poor are hearing good news.**

Who are the poor?

Now when you and I think of the poor we think of some one who has to wear crocks instead of shoes or doesn't have a flat screen TV. But those people wouldn't be viewed as poor by Jesus.

When Jesus speaks about the poor in this passage or in the beatitudes where he says 'Happy are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God' he is not speaking about the crock wearers or those we consider physically poor. He is speaking about the humble.

These are people who don't go around saying – hey I am a good person I don't need God, if there is a God He will let me into heaven, I have got my own beliefs. The gospel is foolishness to the proud unteachable person. The parables are confusing to those whose hearts are not open to God.

But the poor, the humble person who recognizes that they need a savior. For those people the gospel is the power of God for salvation.

3. THE POOR ARE THOSE PEOPLE THAT RECOGNISE THAT THEY HAVE NEEDS THAT GOD ALONE CAN MEET.

That's a poor person who can receive the good news about the kingdom and be saved.

The first poor person we come to in this section is

a) A centurion (Luke 7:1-10). That is an important roman officer in charge of 100 soldiers.

This guy lives in the poshist part of the land Capernaum. He has power and influence but he is spiritually poor. Why? Because he is not a Jew. He is not part of the family of faith. He is a gentile. He sends messengers to Jesus to tell the Lord that his servant whom he really cares for is really sick and could Jesus help. The messengers say, hey Jesus you should help this guy, he is kind and gave us money for the church building project and he is worthy. The centurion however is humble and he knows that there is no such thing as a good person outside of Jesus. And while the messengers want to say hey this guy is worthy. The officer sends further messengers to say Jesus don't come to my home – I am not worthy. The gospel is for people who are humble enough to say, I have lied, I have been greedy, I have had unclean thoughts, I have sinned against God and I am not worthy.

He is one of the poor and he has a need that Dr's haven't been able to meet and he believes that God alone can meet it. **Sickness.** His servant is sick. One of the biggest problems we face in life and the Kingdom of God has the answer for sickness.

And so Jesus speaks the word and the servant is healed from a distance and Jesus marvels at this faith. Wow. That was great faith, much faith. In Matthew 15 we see the only the only other time when a gentile woman pleading for her daughters healing says even the dogs get the crumbs off the masters table and her child was healed by His words from a distance. That is much faith. That kind of faith causes Jesus to marvel. He's really pleased.

When you and I believe the word and we speak it out and trust God to fulfill it, that is great faith. Eg elders property.

The second poor person we come across is

b) A widow (Luke 7:11-17)

Now widows where often looked down on as needy second class citizens. And this widow was facing the second of life's biggest problems **death.** We are all going to die one day unless we are raptured. Its inevitable. Its out of our control. It's the most predictable event following your birth.

Her son has died. She is humble, broken. And as Jesus and His extremely happy crowd are coming into the outskirts of the city of Nain she and her crowd are coming out of the city with her son on a stretcher going to bury her only boy. Happy crowd meets grieving crowd and Jesus felt sorry for her, the Greek literally means he felt her pain in his heart.

And what does the Lord do for this poor person, this humble lady?

He tells the boy to get up.

Vs 15 The boy sat up and began to speak. Jesus then gave him back to his mother.

The third poor person that is mentioned who is helped by the kingdom of God through Jesus is the street worker we mentioned last week.

c) A repentant street worker (Luke 7:36-50)

This person isn't saying I am a good person. I don't need God. Three times in the text she is called a sinner. Simon the Pharisee and the 'good' people wouldn't even talk to someone like this, they wouldn't touch them or look at them or have anything to do with them. **Sin** is the other big problem in life that the kingdom has the answer. It makes up the top three. Three times she is called a sinner and yet three times we read that Jesus says to her your sins are forgiven. Now only God can forgive sins and so the Pharisees are shocked because Jesus yet again is claiming to be God.

Simon the Pharisee thinks that people are saved by doing good things and this gal certainly ain't good and so Jesus points out to Simon her good works

"He turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Have you noticed this woman? When I came into your home, you didn't give me any water so I could wash my feet. But she has washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. "You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. "You didn't even pour olive oil on my head, ^[a] but she has poured expensive perfume on my feet.

To Simon the legalist, the guy who thought he was a good person, he said look at her works. But to the woman he said

"But Jesus told the woman, "Because of your faith, you are now saved. ^[a] May God give you peace!"

Shalom, lasting peace with God is found, not through doing good things but by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary.

Should we do good works? Of course.

But its not faith or works. The biblical message is that its faith that works. Because we are saved, we believe, we are trusting in the Lord, we will live differently. The evidence will be there in our lives.

Finally this message of the kingdom that is good news to the poor. That is humble people who recognize they need God. This message that the kingdom of God has the answer to life' s 3 biggest problems, that is sickness, death and sin. This message will it be received and believed by all. As the church at RBC and other disciples around the world go around spreading the seed of the Word the truths about this good news will it always be received well.

4. **NOT EVERYONE WHO HEARS THE GOOD NEWS WILL BE SAVED (8:1-15)** Jesus has already pointed out in these three stories that it' s the poor, that is the humble and teachable who will experience the kingdom of God and salvation. The proud, self righteous person who thinks that they don' t need God won' t make it neither will this parable of the sower tells us the person whose heart is hard, who is shallow and those who are preoccupied with worry and the business of life.

The church, RBC, all of God' s disciples are to go about spreading the seed verbally. Only the seed that falls on the good soil, the humble, the teachable person will receive eternal life.

We will talk about this parable more extensively and more practically during the second week in missions month but suffice it to say today. Our Job is to spread the seed, the good news every where that we go. We don' t know what is in the hearts of other people. But they need to hear.

Prayer: help us focus on what you have done. Put to death doubts, grow our faith.

May we cause you to marvel at our great faith, just taking you at your Word. Thank you that you have the answer to sickness, death and sin. Thank you that we get to spread the good news as one of your children.

