



# CATHOLIC SCRIPTURE STUDY

Catholic Scripture Study Notes written by Sister Marie Therese, are provided for the personal use of students during their active participation and must not be loaned or given to others.

## SERIES I

### THE GOSPEL OF LUKE AND ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Lesson 13 Commentary Luke 11 and 12

Lesson 14 Questions Luke 13 - 16

### JESUS TEACHES ON PRAYER, HAPPINESS, CHRISTIAN LIFE, AND WOES TO SOME Luke 11 and 12

#### I. ON PRAYER

##### A. The Lord's Prayer in the Christian Community.

**1. Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer to His Disciples (Luke 11:1-2a).** These were people who may have known Jesus personally but who also had met Him in faith and acknowledged Him as Lord. They recognize their sinfulness (Luke 5:1-11), accept His call, and enter into His presence, forgiven and ready to join in His mission. Our presence to Jesus is an awareness, a personal openness, an acceptance, an active relationship. Presence invites a response. Without that, it remains unfulfilled just as when someone speaks but no one listens. Presence is the basis of personal communication. Mary was present to the Lord and she listened to His word. Martha became too busy. Anxious about many things, she lost touch with the one thing necessary, the most fundamental component of discipleship: presence to the Lord and communication with Him. With this, we can pray the Lord's Prayer.

**2. The Lord's prayer is for those who follow Jesus.** It is Jesus whom we are "to follow." This means leaving everything (Luke 5:11, 24; 18:28). It means turning away from a former way of living and from everything connected with it. This will be taking up a cross (Luke 9:23)—each day. It means walking with Jesus through suffering to glory (Luke 24:26). In this way we show our solidarity with Him. We share His values, mission, solidarity with all peoples, and become almost as sacramentals, effective signs and witnesses of Christ's commitment to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Without the help of Jesus, these things are impossible for us. That is why we are directed to pray in the Lord's Prayer for the Kingdom, for a self-sacrificing meal, for forgiveness when we fail and for perseverance and strength in life's ultimate test.

**3. The Lord's Prayer is for those who are forerunners of Jesus.** This idea is found exclusively in Luke. We are to "go before him" as John the Baptist did. John prepared for the coming of Jesus in history, and the disciples

are sent to prepare the Lord's final coming in glory. At the beginning of the journey the 12 are sent out; then the seventy-two are sent, to prepare for the coming of Jesus. To be forerunners, the disciples need hope and courage. For this, we need great openness to the Lord in prayer. The fulfillment of our prayer for the hallowing of the Name and the coming of the Kingdom is in our Father's hands. Keeping open to Him, we persevere in prayer, trusting that our prayer will be fulfilled. Like Jesus, we say, "Not my will but yours be done."

## **B. The Lord's Prayer in Christian Experience**

**1. Seeing Jesus at prayer** attracted the disciples to prayer. Here, they were completely taken up by that special moment and they reverence it in silence and respect. They asked their question only after Jesus had finished praying. We need, as disciples, to enter into the experience of Jesus' prayer, to pray as He did, or we shall never learn how to pray as Jesus taught His disciples. Knowing the prayer He taught is not the same as praying it. How can we do this?

**2. By identifying with the early Christians**, and experiencing a living community of believers when we share the Lord's table, we come to experience one another as brothers and sisters in the Risen Lord whose life we share in the breaking of the bread.

**C. Praying to God as Father.** We can know God from within, in a personal relationship. Jesus teaches us to respond to God's invitation to us by addressing Him as Father, thus responding to Him. This is like a verbal embrace, an opening to His self-communication and fatherly care; it begins a transforming personal relationship. We have received the Spirit of Jesus which cries out "Abba! Father!" It is like Jesus praying again in our community. His Spirit is the source of our growth and development.

**D. Hallowed be Thy Name.** Only the Father can bring about the hallowing of His Name, but He cannot accomplish this without His children. To hallow is to make holy; to be hallowed is to be made holy. In the Magnificat, Mary proclaims that God's name is already holy: "Holy is his name," while the Lord's prayer looks to the future and prays that the Father's Name be hallowed then. We do this with the Son, through the Holy Spirit. Thus, like the Kingdom, the hallowing of the Father's name is already among us even as we look forward to a final revelation which is far above our present possibilities. We look in hope to the full disclosure of the holiness of God and His name, and we contribute to the Christian vision unfolding in history.

**E. Your Kingdom Come.** God is present in word (name) and in deed (kingdom) in history. These were present in the work of Jesus, a "prophet powerful in deeds and word" (Luke 24:19). We pray for the Father to communicate Himself in revelation and to show Himself in the transformation of persons and society.

Luke, like no other evangelist, took pains to insert Jesus' story into the context of earthly kingdoms. He carefully situates this history with regard to the Roman Empire. "Kingdom" at that time designated not only organizational and territorial limits, but also a set of personal relationships among the rulers and the ruled. Thus the words "rule" and "reign" are better than kingdom.

In Luke we do not pray for the earthly coming of a kingdom which is already established in heaven. Rather, we pray for the fulfillment of a kingdom which is already in our midst, but in promise (Luke 17:20-21). Luke's recording of Mary's Magnificat shows an extraordinary reversal of values in all earthly kingdoms that it affects. The mighty are put down, the lowly raised up. Jesus' rule as Son is nothing short of revolutionary, but it comes about only through His death and resurrection; as it will be in a

personal transformation in us—a death to self and a rising to a new life in Jesus.

When we pray for God’s kingdom, it actually comes progressively. Prayer is an act, which has results, not just words. Those who pray for the kingdom to come, meaning it, open their minds and hearts to the Father’s kingship. “Seek first His kingship over you (Matthew 6:33). Those who pray for the kingdom put everything aside, take up their cross and follow Christ into the Father’s rule with the power of the Spirit. Through the Spirit we transcend our own selfishness, our tendency to dominate, our need to aggrandize and acclaim, our possessiveness and exclusivism.

#### **F. Give Us Each Day Our Daily Bread.**

The word for bread here is the Greek “episousios” and appears nowhere else in the Greek world or in the New Testament. It is a new word, a neologism. Luke wants to express a new experience of meal which is uniquely Christian. Only experiential knowledge of the Christian meal can bring its significance. It refers to the one taken with Jesus, the Christ, and our Lord. In scripture it is also called the Lord’s Supper and the Table of the Lord (1 Corinthians). Luke calls it the “breaking of the bread.” See Luke 24:35 and Acts 2:42. These names eventually replaced the expression “our episousios bread” in the Lord’s prayer.

In Scripture bread = food = a meal = a whole set of relationships among those who gather to share the meal. The “Christian Meal” is first of all a call to discipleship and a reconciling event (Luke 5:27-32, 7:36-50).

It also shows how Christians are sent on mission (Luke 9:1-17).

The Christian meal shows how they are to welcome one another in hospitality on their Christian journey to the Father (Luke 10:38-42).

It shows how they are to relate to one another and share with the poor (Luke 14:1-4; 16:19-31).

The meal shows how they are to celebrate the return of a Christian who was lost or dead but who is now found and alive (Luke 15:1-32).

**G. The Bread of Each Day, Gift of the Father.** Each day is a day in a historical journey through the Passion to the Father. Luke 9:31 shows this journey to be an exodus. Like that of the Old Testament, the Christian exodus begins with a Passover supper. Like the Israelites who were given bread from heaven in the form of manna in the course of their exodus, those who join Jesus in His exodus also need a heavenly nourishment.

St. Teresa of Avila, in her book on the Our Father says that our daily bread in this phrase refers to the Eucharist—to live by Christ is our food, as His food was the will of His Father. The bread of each day is, again, the bread of those who view life and history as a journey to the Father in the following of Jesus, whose death gave new meaning to the cross in our life and transformed it into Christian commitment.

**H. And Forgive Us our Sins Even as We Ourselves Forgive Everyone Who is Indebted to Us.** The Father’s act of forgiving us touches in some way our forgiving others. Luke used the word “sins” in the first phrase and “debts” in the second phrase—debts of those who are indebted to us. In the Old Testament there are three kinds of debts:

**1. Of justice:** paying wages for work done, owing money to someone; in our culture, this is objective and once the debt is paid, there is no further relationship between the parties. Not so in the culture of the New Testament. The debt of justice is now changed to a debt of gratitude; the relationship, the personal element continues between the two parties.

**2. Of gratitude:** Luke 16:5-7 tells us that in accepting the reduction of the debt, the master's debtors took on a debt of gratitude towards the manager, who offered something not required by justice. This required that they see to his personal needs once he became unemployed. See Luke 7:42-43 and Romans 4:1-8 for the same thing. Debts of gratitude result from gifts freely given and freely accepted. When the gift is love and life, it calls for loving service and lifelong gratitude. When the gift is life in Christ, it can be repaid only with the gift of our own life.

**3. Of offense:** This results from a personal affront and calls for repentance. Yet this alone can never remove the debt; it can only be absolved by the one who has been offended. Forgiveness is a gift. When it is offered, the debt of offense is transformed into a debt of gratitude. When the one offended is our Father who has freely given us life, revealed Himself to us, given us a share in His kingdom, and graced us at the table of the Lord, the debt of gratitude is immeasurable.

Only God can forgive such a debt and make it a debt of gratitude. We, too, have to do the same in our relationships and offer forgiveness and bring about reconciliation. "Love first," says Chiara Lubich in her book, "Christ in the Midst." "Where there is no love, put love, and you will find love," says St. John of the Cross. If we take courage, and do this, we discover that Jesus' way is truly the best way to restore peace. Note Jesus' forgiveness on the cross (Luke 23:42) and Stephen's forgiveness in Acts 7:60. What a change of heart for the disciples to then learn to forgive!

Not only is it difficult to forgive, but to ask forgiveness is difficult. It is humbling. The Pharisee praying in the temple could not do it; but the sinful tax collector did. There is no escaping humility; the choice is between humbling oneself or being humbled by God. The first leads to honor; the second shame.

**I. And Do not Bring Us to the Test.** This is the only negative request in the Lord's prayer. It shows our positive submission to the Father's will even as we express it. The test referred to is one to which we could be subjected and one we do not seek. When a difficult challenge cannot be avoided, it can be transformed into a positive and enriching experience by seeing it as a test.

There were tests in Jesus' life: Luke 4:1-13; 8:13. Tests in Christians' lives: Luke 8:18. In the Lord's prayer we ask that the word of God develop deep roots in us and that we not be brought to the test unless or until this is the case.

## **II. TWO PARABLES ON PRAYER (Luke 11:5-13)**

Luke places here two parables of Jesus on prayer and persistence in it, giving us the formula, A.S.K. (ask, seek, knock) that we use in our Bible Study. Jesus emphasizes how much God delights in answering our prayer, as a good father enjoys giving good to his child.

## **III. FURTHER TEACHING (Luke 11:14-32)**

**A. Scoffers.** Jesus cast out a devil and scoffers in the crowd accused Him of being in league with "Beelzebub" (a term for Satan), and demanded a further sign from heaven of His authenticity. Jesus replied carefully to both, with Luke's characteristic note of mercy for the people. He gives a warning we should heed: when we have repented and been cleansed of our sins, our devils, we are in danger of a new attack of Satan. We need to fill the new emptiness with fortifying prayer, reading, good deeds, and sharing in our Christian community. We need these even if we have not sinned.

**B. Praise of His Mother.** In verses 27-28, Jesus turned a praise of Mary as His physical mother to a praise she more deserved: who "hears the word of God and keeps it." Jesus then included all who do as His own brother and sister,

even His mother. Blood relationship, race, or religion are not the cause of our holiness. Our personal relationship with God is.

**C. A “Sign from Heaven.”** Jesus next answers the request for a sign from heaven with a reference to the sign of Jonah (He alludes here to His three days in the tomb and restoration to life) and remarks that the story of Jonah has a lesson in the repentance of the Ninevites, who could rightfully condemn a generation who heard Jesus and did not repent (Luke 11:29-32).

**D. A Light in Darkness (Luke 11:33-36).** Another saying is added for the disciples. The light of the Gospel, the light of faith, is our best guide or else we are in darkness, while believing that we see. Also, our light from Jesus is meant to be spread around to light up our world. This is called spreading the Good News: “evangel” in Greek—evangelization as an act. Pope John Paul and our own U. S. bishops have recently urged Catholics to meet the challenge of the “Bible Churches” whose strong action in this Christian duty are taking even Catholics into their communities. It is our challenge to spread what we have; to begin to know how through workshops, Bible Studies to which we invite others, etc. Jesus expects it of us (Luke 11:33-36).

**E. Words for the Pharisees and Scribes (Luke 11:37-54).** Lastly, in this chapter, Luke tells us Jesus’ strong words to the Pharisees on their hypocrisy and deception of the people (Luke 11:37-53). We can all so easily be guilty of this, condemning others while we only do lip service and outward observance of our faith. It is these very leaders who always hound Jesus, feel the sting of His personal popularity and His goodness, which rebukes them silently. They step up their opposition from now on.

#### **IV. REJECTION, OPPONENTS— FOLLOWERS, SERVANTS (Luke 12:1-59)**

**A. Warning to the Rich (Luke 12:1-3).** Remember that Luke’s special section (Luke 9:51 - 19:27) concentrates on growing opposition to Jesus from leaders of the Jews, and growing training of His disciples on Jesus’ part. In this chapter, Luke gives mostly strong and valuable teaching from Jesus to His followers then and now. Twice does He speak to “the crowds” into which His opponents always blend. He warned the rich with “piled-up wealth”, of sudden death when one is “not rich in the sight of God.” That could surely go for those of us who seek wealth while not developing spiritually and in the love and service of Jesus. At the end, in verses 54-59, He asks the important question, “Why can you not interpret the present time, when you can foretell weather?” He warns the crowd of a “jailer” who can throw into prison for unpaid debts, where there is no release until the last penny is paid. Jesus tries to convert the crowds to a Godly life as He goes.

**B. Strong Teaching to His Disciples (Luke 12:4-7).** But Jesus warns His disciples against the “yeast” of the Pharisees. Yeast can spoil and change whole batches of dough. So can false teaching and bad influence. Jesus declares that all the hidden malice of His enemies will be made known in future. To his “friends” (a rare word in the Gospels which usually say “disciples”) He counsels courage and wisdom to fear only God, who never neglects nor takes His eyes off His children, who loves them even to counting the hairs of their heads.” And then, surely with a smile, He adds, “Fear nothing, then. You are worth more than a flock of sparrows.”

**C. A Promise (Luke 12:8-12).** In Luke 12:8, Jesus makes a solemn promise to those who acknowledge Him before all, and He uses for Himself the “Son of Man” title He always uses from the book of Daniel, describing one who comes in power and majesty from heaven. Daniel says “like a Son of Man” but Jesus, who is truly man, claims the title both as a humble identification with us, and a veiled claim to His

having come from heaven. Here He promises to disown those who disown Him, before all the heavenly court; but to acknowledge those who “own” discipleship to Him, before all the angels. Let us remember that disowning Him is more than a matter of words; it is our manner of life—living by His words or not, no matter what we say.

#### **D. Teaching the Crowd (Luke 12:13-21).**

Here Luke has portions of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, teaching trust in God, not in possessions; dependence on providence instead of self and talents and human aid, and again promises His disciples that “It has pleased your Father to give you a Kingdom. He cries out, “O weak in faith! Seek instead your Father’s kingship over you and the rest will follow.” This could be a daily meditation for us all week, examining our real belief in the truth of this marvelous advice. We have read stories of Christians’ staunch faith in God’s Providence, in saints obtaining miracles of nature, of cures, through it. What about ours?

**E. Preparedness (Luke 12:22-59).** And to His disciples, He also teaches preparedness for His return, which will come to most of the human race through personal death. “Let your belts be fastened around you... The long robes of that day were caught up in a belt for working hours or physical labor. They signify energy, effort, in an enterprise; they can signify discipline, self-control, and observance of the rules God and the

Church have set as the way to holiness. “Let your lamps be burning... “ What do lamps signify here, in the sense of living the word, being ready to account for your life?

Toward the end of this instruction, Jesus exclaims how deeply He wishes to light a flame on earth—a flame of faith, of truth, of goodness (Luke 12:49). Here He must have felt helpless before the coldness of His enemies, of His people, and He speaks of the baptism (of suffering) that He must receive, though He is in anguish to get it over (Luke 12:50).

#### **CONCLUSION**

And so, the Savior goes on steadily toward the city of Jerusalem, knowing that He will be put to death there. His example here of continuing His role—the work God gave Him to do: His teaching, warning, promising, exhorting all who followed, who opposed, is a light to us in our difficulties with our roles, our failures, opposition, etc. But His Father gave Him a kingdom and a resurrected life; and He will give us the share of co-heirs with Christ, as St. Paul says, if we, at His coming, are ready at that time. Even though our own family rejects us and opposes us in our following of Christ, our peace will come through our choice of Jesus over all obstacles on earth—our pearl of great price.

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Day 4 Read Luke 13:31-35.

- a. What quality in Jesus does verse 33 reveal?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Read Luke 14:1-24. How is this parable in verse 7-14 the reverse of human nature?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Give an example of following Jesus' advice today.

Day 5 Read Luke 14:25-35.

- a. Explain Jesus' teaching in verse 26.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Do Christians actually face such situations for Jesus? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Read Luke 15:1-32. What is the common theme of these parables?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- d. Who is Jesus really describing in each?

Day 6

- a. Read the short chapter 16. What teachings here are the most challenging for us today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Why?