

THRESHOLD  
BIBLE STUDY

JESUS,  
*the* COMPASSIONATE  
SAVIOR

PART TWO

Luke  
[12-24]

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# How to Use Threshold Bible Study

**T**hreshold Bible Study is a dynamic, informative, inspiring, and life-changing series that helps you learn about Scripture in a whole new way. Each book will help you explore new dimensions of faith and discover deeper insights for your life as a disciple of Jesus.

The threshold is a place of transition. The threshold of God's word invites you to enter that place where God's truth, goodness, and beauty can shine into your life and fill your mind and heart. Through the Holy Spirit, the threshold becomes holy ground, sacred space, and graced time. God can teach you best at the threshold, because God opens your life to his word and fills you with the Spirit of truth.

With Threshold Bible Study each topic or book of the Bible is approached in a thematic way. You will understand and reflect on the biblical texts through overarching themes derived from biblical theology. Through this method, the study of Scripture will impact your life in a unique way and transform you from within.

These books are designed for maximum flexibility. Each study is presented in a workbook format, with sections for reading, reflecting, writing, discussing, and praying. Each Threshold book contains thirty lessons, which you can use for your daily study over the course of a month or which can be divided into six lessons per week, providing a group study of six weekly sessions (the first session deals with the Introduction). These studies are ideal for Bible study groups, small Christian communities, adult faith formation, student groups, Sunday school, neighborhood groups, and family reading, as well as for individual learning.

The commentary that follows each biblical passage launches your reflection on that passage and helps you begin to see its significance within the context of your contemporary experience. The questions following the commentary challenge you to understand the passage more fully and apply it to your own life. Space for writing after each question is ideal for personal study and also allows group participants to prepare for the weekly discussion. The prayer helps conclude your study each day by integrating your learning into your relationship with God.

The method of Threshold Bible Study is rooted in the ancient tradition of *lectio*

*divina*, whereby studying the Bible becomes a means of deeper intimacy with God and a transformed life. Reading and interpreting the text (*lectio*) is followed by reflective meditation on its message (*meditatio*). This reading and reflecting flows into prayer from the heart (*oratio* and *contemplatio*). In this way, one listens to God through the Scripture and then responds to God in prayer.

This ancient method assures you that Bible study is a matter of both the mind and the heart. It is not just an intellectual exercise to learn more and be able to discuss the Bible with others. It is, more importantly, a transforming experience. Reflecting on God's word, guided by the Holy Spirit, illumines the mind with wisdom and stirs the heart with zeal.

Following the personal Bible study, Threshold Bible Study offers ways to extend personal *lectio divina* into a weekly conversation with others. This communal experience will allow participants to enhance their appreciation of the message and build up a spiritual community (*collatio*). The end result will be to increase not only individual faith but also faithful witness in the context of daily life (*operatio*).

When bringing Threshold Bible Study to a church community, try to make every effort to include as many people as possible. Many will want to study on their own; others will want to study with family, a group of friends, or a few work associates; some may want to commit themselves to share insights through a weekly conference call, daily text messaging, or an online social network; and others will want to gather weekly in established small groups.

By encouraging Threshold Bible Study and respecting the many ways people desire to make Bible study a regular part of their lives, you will widen the number of people in your church community who study the Bible regularly in whatever way they are able in their busy lives. Simply sign up people at the Sunday services and order bulk quantities for your church. Encourage people to follow the daily study as faithfully as they can. This encouragement can be through Sunday announcements, notices in parish publications, support on the church website, and other creative invitations and motivations.

Through the spiritual disciplines of Scripture reading, study, reflection, conversation, and prayer, Threshold Bible Study will help you experience God's grace more abundantly and root your life more deeply in Christ. The risen Jesus said: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (Rev 3:20). Listen to the Word of God, open the door, and cross the threshold to an unimaginable dwelling with God!

## SUGGESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDY

- Make your Bible reading a time of prayer. Ask for God's guidance as you read the Scriptures.
- Try to study daily, or as often as possible according to the circumstances of your life.
- Read the Bible passage carefully, trying to understand both its meaning and its personal application as you read. Some persons find it helpful to read the passage aloud.
- Read the passage in another Bible translation. Each version adds to your understanding of the original text.
- Allow the commentary to help you comprehend and apply the scriptural text. The commentary is only a beginning, not the last word, on the meaning of the passage.
- After reflecting on each question, write out your responses. The very act of writing will help you clarify your thoughts, bring new insights, and amplify your understanding.
- As you reflect on your answers, think about how you can live God's word in the context of your daily life.
- Conclude each daily lesson by reading the prayer and continuing with your own prayer from the heart.
- Make sure your reflections and prayers are matters of both the mind and the heart. A true encounter with God's word is always a transforming experience.
- Choose a word or a phrase from the lesson to carry with you throughout the day as a reminder of your encounter with God's life-changing word.
- For additional insights and affirmation, share your learning experience with at least one other person whom you trust. The ideal way to share learning is in a small group that meets regularly.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR GROUP STUDY

- Meet regularly; weekly is ideal. Try to be on time, and make attendance a high priority for the sake of the group. The average group meets for about an hour.
- Open each session with a prepared prayer, a song, or a reflection. Find some appropriate way to bring the group from the workaday world into a sacred time of graced sharing.
- If you have not been together before, name tags are very helpful as group members begin to become acquainted with one another.
- Spend the first session getting acquainted with one another, reading the Introduction aloud, and discussing the questions that follow.
- Appoint a group facilitator to provide guidance to the discussion. The role of facilitator may rotate among members each week. The facilitator simply keeps the discussion on track; each person shares responsibility for the group. There is no need for the facilitator to be a trained teacher.
- Try to study the six lessons on your own during the week. When you have done your own reflection and written your own answers, you will be better prepared to discuss the six scriptural lessons with the group. If you have not had an opportunity to study the passages during the week, meet with the group anyway to share support and insights.
- Participate in the discussion as much as you are able, offering your thoughts, insights, feelings, and decisions. You learn by sharing with others the fruits of your study.
- Be careful not to dominate the discussion. It is important that everyone in the group be offered an equal opportunity to share the results of their work. Try to link what you say to the comments of others so that the group remains on the topic.
- When discussing your own personal thoughts or feelings, use “I” language. Be as personal and honest as appropriate, and be very cautious about giving advice to others.

- Listen attentively to the other members of the group so as to learn from their insights. The words of the Bible affect each person in a different way, so a group provides a wealth of understanding for each member.
- Don't fear silence. Silence in a group is as important as silence in personal study. It allows individuals time to listen to the voice of God's Spirit and the opportunity to form their thoughts before they speak.
- Solicit several responses for each question. The thoughts of different people will build on the answers of others and will lead to deeper insights for all.
- Don't fear controversy. Differences of opinions are a sign of a healthy and honest group. If you cannot resolve an issue, continue on, agreeing to disagree. There is probably some truth in each viewpoint.
- Discuss the questions that seem most important for the group. There is no need to cover all the questions in the group session.
- Realize that some questions about the Bible cannot be resolved, even by experts. Don't get stuck on some issue for which there are no clear answers.
- Whatever is said in the group is said in confidence and should be regarded as such.
- Pray as a group in whatever way feels comfortable. Pray for the members of your group throughout the week.

### Schedule for Group Study

Session 1: Introduction Date: \_\_\_\_\_

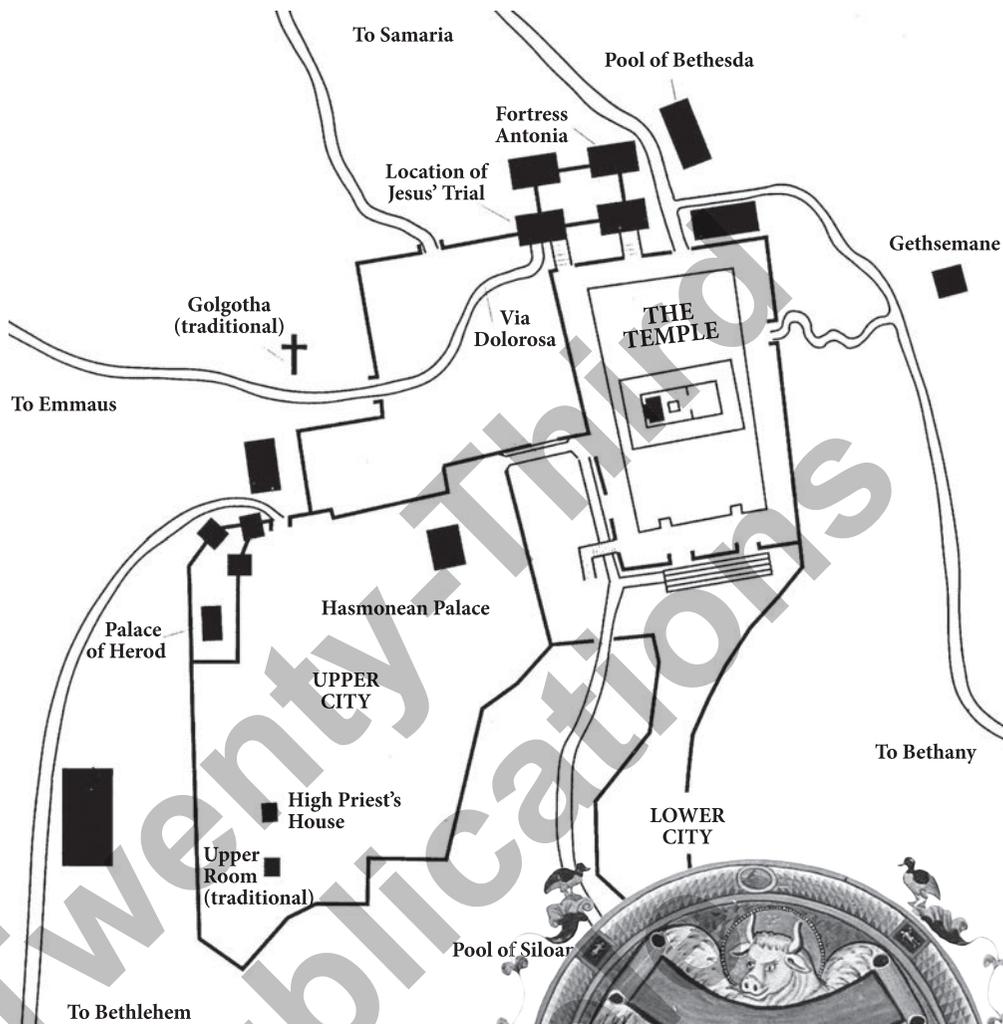
Session 2: Lessons 1–6 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session 3: Lessons 7–12 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session 4: Lessons 13–18 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session 5: Lessons 19–24 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Session 6: Lessons 25–30 Date: \_\_\_\_\_





**“Today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.”** Luke 13:33

# Jesus, the Compassionate Savior (Part 2)

At the end of Luke’s gospel, we find the risen Jesus walking beside two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, explaining the Scriptures to them. Later when these two disciples recognize Jesus at table with them, they reflect on their journey with him: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?” (24:32). As we read and reflect on the gospel of Luke, we are like those disciples on the road, as Jesus opens the Scriptures to us. The gospel is not just the historical record of what Jesus said and did. It is God’s living word. Through this living word, Jesus speaks to us and reveals himself personally to us. Every phrase of the gospel is like a burning ember that has the potential to spark off the page and spread. We can expect our hearts to catch flame and burn with desire within us as we encounter Jesus through God’s word. We can expect to hear him speak and to enlighten us as he opens the Scripture to us.

Luke is the only gospel to describe the preaching and teachings of Jesus as “the word of God” (5:1). Through the proclamation of the good news and the teachings of Jesus on the kingdom, God addresses his people. As the prophets spoke the word of God as recorded in the Scriptures of Israel, Jesus speaks so that people will hear the word of God. By comparing God’s word to a seed in his parable of the sower (8:11), Jesus describes how God sows the word indiscriminately to all people, regardless of the condition of their lives. The task of the hearers of the word is to prepare the ground of their hearts to receive that word and allow it to take root, grow, and bear fruit. “Those who hear the word of God and do it” are those who are truly blessed (8:21; 11:28).

Through Luke’s use of “the word of God” in the Acts of the Apostles to refer to the proclamation of the gospel by the early church, he links Jesus’ preaching and teaching with that of the apostles. Indeed, he describes the mission of the church itself as the expansion and growth of the word of God (Acts 6:7; 8:14; 11:1; 12:24; 19:20). The prophets of old spoke God’s word through the Spirit of God, that same Holy Spirit anointed Jesus to speak good news, and the Holy Spirit impelled the apostolic church to spread the word of God. In this same sense, the Torah and prophets of the Old Testament, the good news written by Luke and other evangelists, and the writings of the apostles and other ministers of the word in the New Testament are all inspired by the Holy Spirit to deliver the word of God to his people. Of all these sacred writings, we can truly proclaim, “The word of the Lord.”

When these writings—“the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms” (24:44), and the gospel, the Acts, and the New Testament writings—are proclaimed in Christian liturgy, we can be assured that the risen Lord will open our minds to understand the Scriptures, just as he opened the minds of his disciples in Jerusalem (24:45). We can also rest with confidence that when we read the Scriptures in faith, we can expect our hearts to catch fire as we listen to God speak to us, just as the hearts of the disciples were burning within them as Jesus opened the Scriptures to them on the road to Emmaus. Our challenge is to take away the obstacles that prevent God’s word from flourishing in our lives and to become disciples by listening, understanding, praying, and doing the word of God today.

## Reflection and discussion

- What difference does it make in my study of the gospel to trust that it is God's living word?
- How does Luke convince his readers that all Scripture is inspired and speaks the word of God?

## The Journey to Jerusalem

A large part of the second half of Luke's gospel consists of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Immediately after his Transfiguration, in which Moses and Elijah appeared in glory with Jesus and spoke about his "exodus" which he would accomplish in Jerusalem (9:31), Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51). For the next ten chapters, Luke sets the teachings of Jesus within the context of this journey toward the city in which his death and resurrection will take place.

For Luke, Jerusalem is the goal of Jesus' mission, but the journey toward Jerusalem is also important. Luke presents the journey as a time of training and formation for his disciples, and in this section, Luke presents the bulk of Jesus' teaching. The road that Jesus followed is also the way his followers must travel. This kind of journey involves change and often hardships. Along the road Jesus clarifies the nature and demands of discipleship. Whereas in Jesus' ministry in Galilee, Jesus ministered primarily to the crowds, in his journey to Jerusalem, he speaks directly to his closest followers.

This part of the gospel contains lots of material that is found only in Luke. For example, through the marvelous parables of the good Samaritan, the rich fool, the barren fig tree, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the shrewd manager, and the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus illustrates for his disciples the ways of God's kingdom. Only in this gospel do we find Jesus' teachings on humility, on whom to invite for dinner, on seeking places of honor, and on the importance of counting the costs of discipleship. In this section, we find the story of Martha and Mary, which narrates the necessary dimensions of discipleship, and the description of Zacchaeus, who shows the only way a rich person can be a disciple. These accounts set Luke apart from the other three gospels and demonstrate how Jesus guides his disciples to become his church.

Using the journey as a theological metaphor, Luke invites his readers to accompany Jesus as he makes his way to Jerusalem. As the road to Jerusalem with Jesus was a time of training, preparation, and growth, so it is for us. Luke's readers travel into discipleship, learning what it means to follow Jesus and to participate in the reign of God. This journey of the spiritual life is the process of coming to know Jesus and learning to follow in his way. Along the way we must always be learning from Jesus, and we must continually be changing as we take his words to heart and follow in his way.

As Luke's readers, we know that our journey is also the journey of the church. In fact, throughout the Acts of the Apostles, Luke describes the church as "the Way," another term for expressing the journey of discipleship. And just as the disciples were accompanied by the Risen Jesus on their journey to Emmaus, we know that we are accompanied by the Lord and guided by the Holy Spirit.

### **Reflection and discussion**

- What are some of the differences between the first and second half of Luke's gospel?

- In what way is my own growing relationship with Jesus like a road, way, or journey?

### Compassion for the Lost and the Outcasts

One of the primary characteristics of Jesus' ministry, particularly as Luke presents it, is his care for those who are marginalized. This concern for those in need is presented in the inaugural scene in the synagogue at Nazareth in which Jesus presents his mission as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, bringing good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to captives (4:18). The kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus seems to be characterized by a reversal of the world's status quo. He announces that those who are poor, hungry, and weeping are the ones who are now blessed (6:20-21). In fact, those who are hated, excluded, reviled, and defamed because of following Jesus are those who should rejoice and leap for joy (6:22-23).

Luke's gospel has an especially large number of teachings about money, greed, and possessions. The parable of the rich fool indicates the absurdity of greed and the futility of accumulating possessions (12:16-21). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus emphasizes that the conditions of the poor man and the rich man are reversed at death. By including these parables, Luke is urging Theophilus and his other readers to be detached from material possessions and to share them with those in need.

Because of the way that Jesus attracted the marginalized, he became known as the one who welcomes and eats with tax collectors and sinners (15:1-2). Table fellowship is emphasized throughout Luke's gospel, and Jesus is depicted frequently as sharing meals with outcasts and peppering his teaching with references to food, banquets, and feasts. In the parable of the great banquet, expressing the inclusiveness and abundance of God's kingdom, the host sends his servant out into the city streets and back alleys of the town to invite the poor, disabled, and outcasts. When there is still room left at the table, he sends

the servants out to the roads outside the town, encouraging everyone to attend from all directions (14:21-23).

Jesus' saving ministry is characterized by seeking out and finding the lost. His parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son illustrate the joy in heaven over a single sinner who repents. When Zacchaeus, the wealthy tax collector, becomes a disciple, Jesus declares that he himself has come "to seek out and to save the lost" (19:10). The point of each story is that God will go to great efforts and rejoice with great joy to find and restore a sinner to himself. Jesus shows himself to be a model for his disciples. Their mission, like that of Jesus, is to love people and draw them to God. They must reflect his concern and compassion, seeking out the lost and rejoicing with the heavens over every repentant sinner.

Jesus' care for the outcasts reaches its climax on the cross. The one who has sought to save sinners and seek out the lost throughout his life now asks God's forgiveness for his torturers (23:34). Jesus dies between two criminals, breathing his last with the same kind of people with whom he associated throughout his ministry. His words of mercy for his executioners seem to have inspired one of the two criminals crucified with him to repent and place his faith in Jesus. The words of Jesus, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise," solemnly declare that he can and does save those who turn to him. This reconciled criminal is the final example and result of Jesus' mission to call sinners to repentance, to seek out and save the lost.

### Reflection and discussion

- In what ways does Luke emphasize the theme of reversal throughout his gospel?

- How might reflecting on Luke's gospel begin to change my priorities and the focus of my life?

### The Holy Spirit: From the Gospel to Acts

At the beginning of Luke's gospel, the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary to give birth to Jesus. The Holy Spirit then animates and leads Jesus throughout the gospel's presentation of his saving ministry. At the beginning of Luke's second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary and the apostles to give birth to the church. The same Holy Spirit then animates and leads the church throughout its foundational days as presented in Acts.

Throughout his life Jesus is filled with the Holy Spirit, empowering him to pray, to teach, and to heal. After his baptism by John, the Holy Spirit descends upon him in a manifest way (3:22), and then Jesus, "full of the Holy Spirit," is led by the Spirit into the wilderness (4:1). In the first act of his public ministry in Nazareth, Jesus declares that the words of the prophet are fulfilled: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (4:18). Luke notes that Jesus "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" as he prayed to his Father (10:21).

Luke highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' life because he wants to emphasize the Spirit's role in the life of his readers. Jesus promises that the Father will "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (11:13), and at the end of the gospel the risen Jesus instructs the apostles to wait in Jerusalem because he is sending upon them what the Father promised, the gift of the Holy Spirit to clothe them with power from on high (24:49). The Holy Spirit's guidance and empowerment in the life of Jesus sets the pattern for the Spirit's work in the lives of his followers.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit animates the whole church in its evangelizing mission. In Acts, Luke mentions the Holy Spirit over fifty times, so much so that some have suggested that the book might be better entitled the Acts of the Holy Spirit. As we read and reflect on Luke's gospel, we should

be aware that the same Spirit who breathed in Luke as he wrote lives today within the church and works within each of us as we read Luke's inspired work. God binds his own Spirit into these texts and meets us on the holy ground of these sacred pages.

### Reflection and discussion

- What wisdom have I been given while studying the first part of Luke's gospel that will guide me as I continue?
- How do I expect the Holy Spirit to work within me during these weeks of reading and reflecting on Luke's gospel?

### Prayer

*Father of the poor and the lost, send your Holy Spirit upon me as I continue to listen to your word through the words and deeds of Jesus your Son. As I continue to study this gospel of Luke, help me to keep changing and growing as I learn and pray. May I follow Jesus along the journey to Jerusalem, listening to his teachings and learning from him the way of discipleship. As the risen Jesus opened the minds of his disciples to understand the Scriptures, let me trust in his guiding presence with me as I seek to understand your word in this holy gospel.*

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS, GROUP SESSION 1

1. If the group is meeting for the first time, or if there are newcomers joining the group, it is helpful to provide nametags.
2. Distribute the books to the members of the group.
3. You may want to ask the participants to introduce themselves and tell the group a bit about themselves.
4. Ask one or more of these introductory questions:
  - What drew you to join this group?
  - What is your biggest fear in beginning this Bible study?
  - How is beginning this study like a “threshold” for you?

5. You may want to pray this prayer as a group:

*Come upon us, Holy Spirit, to enlighten and guide us as we begin this study of Luke’s gospel. You inspired the writers of the Scriptures to reveal your presence throughout the history of salvation. This inspired word has the power to convert our hearts and change our lives. Fill our hearts with desire, trust, and confidence as you shine the light of your truth within us. Motivate us to read the Scriptures, and give us a deeper love for God’s word each day. Bless us during this session and throughout the coming week with the fire of your love.*

6. Read the Introduction aloud, pausing at each question for discussion. Group members may wish to write the insights of the group as each question is discussed. Encourage several members of the group to respond to each question.
7. Don’t feel compelled to finish the complete Introduction during the session. It is better to allow sufficient time to talk about the questions raised than to rush to the end. Group members may read any remaining sections on their own after the group meeting.
8. Instruct group members to read the first six lessons on their own during the six days before the next group meeting. They should write out their own answers to the questions as preparation for next week’s group discussion.
9. Fill in the date for each group meeting under “Schedule for Group Study.”
10. Conclude the session by praying aloud together the prayer at the end of the Introduction.



**“I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.”** Luke 12:8-9

## Warnings against Hypocrisy, Denial, and Greed

**LUKE 12:1-21** <sup>1</sup>Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. <sup>2</sup>Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>3</sup>Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops.

<sup>4</sup>“I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. <sup>5</sup>But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! <sup>6</sup>Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God’s sight. <sup>7</sup>But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>8</sup>“And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; <sup>9</sup>but whoever denies me before

others will be denied before the angels of God. <sup>10</sup>And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. <sup>11</sup>When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say; <sup>12</sup>for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say.”

<sup>13</sup>Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” <sup>14</sup>But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” <sup>15</sup>And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” <sup>16</sup>Then he told them a parable: “The land of a rich man produced abundantly. <sup>17</sup>And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ <sup>18</sup>Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. <sup>19</sup>And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’” <sup>20</sup>But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ <sup>21</sup>So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

Jesus continues to travel with his disciples toward Jerusalem, offering them warnings and exhortations about the way they live. Although a huge crowd of thousands surrounds him, Jesus knows that his popularity is temporary, and he urges his disciples to be vigilant. He warns them not to become hypocritical like the Pharisees, pretending to be something they are not, hiding their failings behind a pious façade. Such a lifestyle is futile before God who sees all things (verses 2-3). Everything hidden will be uncovered, and everything that is secret will be revealed. For the hypocritical disciple, his words are a warning; for the genuine disciple, they are a reassurance.

Jesus is aware of the rising opposition he and his disciples face. Like the prophets before them, Jesus and his disciples face persecution and death. Calling his disciples “friends,” Jesus urges them to be ready for martyrdom and not to fear those who can only kill their earthly bodies (verse 4). Rather, in a threefold repetitive warning, Jesus counsels his disciples to fear God, the only one who has sovereign care of their lives after physical death (verse 5).

Fear of God is not terror, but rather a respectful reverence for the authority of God, who will judge all people and determine their final destiny.

The Greek word for hell is “Gehenna,” a steep ravine on the southern and western sides of Jerusalem where trash was discarded and burned. Other Jewish writings portray Gehenna as a place of fiery punishment and a symbol of God’s judgment on the wicked. Jesus spoke of Gehenna as a gruesome contrast to the gracious care that God offers to those he remembers forever. If God does not neglect even the sparrows, the cheapest item sold in the market, how much more does he care for those he has created in his own image (verses 6-7).

Genuine disciples bear witness to Jesus before other people. At the time of judgment, Jesus will testify on behalf of those who have testified on behalf of him (verse 8). In times of persecution, some will speak a word against Jesus, as Peter will do before the authorities in Jerusalem, but they will be forgiven when they repent (verse 10). But when people “blaspheme against the Holy Spirit,” denying the power of God’s Spirit within them and obstinately rejecting their allegiance to Jesus, they reject their ability to be forgiven. When disciples are brought before Jewish and Roman authorities, they should trust in God and not worry about how they will defend themselves (verse 11). Rather than speaking against the work of the Holy Spirit, they will allow the Spirit to speak within them. The Holy Spirit will give them the words to say, so that they can bear witness to Jesus. Luke will show us examples of the trust and testimony of Peter, Stephen, and Paul in the Acts of the Apostles.

When someone in the crowd asks Jesus to step into a family dispute about an inheritance, Jesus takes the occasion to teach about the danger of focusing on material wealth. He warns them about greed, and he stresses that “life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (verse 15). No one can pull a U-Haul behind the hearse. A truly rich life is one oriented toward God and focused on his will.

Jesus reinforces his teaching with a parable about possessions. The rich man with the bountiful harvest has no place to store his abundance, so he decides to expand his storage capacity. The parable is full of the pronoun “I,” and the man’s wealth is described as “my crops,” “my barns,” “my grain,” and “my goods” (verses 17-19). His future perspective is self-centered and self-indulgent. With no thought of his responsibilities before God or the needs of others, the rich man’s security is fleeting. His wealth cannot last and his greed

leaves him empty when God demands his life. Because the man trusted in his possessions instead of in God, he is impoverished at his death in what matters to God.

### Reflection and discussion

- What is a respectful “fear” of God (verse 5)? In what sense does Jesus tell us, “Do not be afraid” of God (verse 7)?
- What is the difference between the plans of the selfish rich man in the parable and the prudent plans we must make to provide for our family and retirement?
- What should I include in my investment portfolio in order to become rich in what matters to God?

### Prayer

*Jesus, my Friend, send your Holy Spirit so that I will have the courage to bear witness to you, even when I am overwhelmed by insecurity and fear. Free me from the seduction of greed, and help me to store up genuine riches in your sight.*