

TELL ME THE STORIES OF JESUS

Power

July 24, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – The Year of the Lord’s Favor (Luke 4:19)

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

As the world awakens from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new possibilities with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture:

Luke 11:1-13 NRSV

He 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.’ ²He 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; ⁶for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.” ⁷And 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.” ⁸I 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.

⁹So 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. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives,

and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ¹¹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, will give a snake instead of a fish? ¹²Or if the child asks for an egg, will give a scorpion? ¹³If 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!'

Commentary:

The disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray, but Jesus does not give the disciples magic words to say. Instead, Jesus teaches them about the nature of the one to whom they pray. Luke 11:1-13 begins and ends emphasizing that disciples of Jesus can pray to God as to a heavenly Father/Parent. The prayer starts with an understanding of what it means to revere God as Father/Parent. The "our" petitions assure that God will provide for the physical and spiritual needs of those who worship him. The concluding and climactic petition asks for protection. The parable of the neighbor in need raises the issue of God's reliability, arguing that if a neighbor will get up in the middle of the night to answer one's need in order to avoid being shamed, how much more can the one who prays count on God's readiness to answer a call for help. The sayings that follow encourage confident and persistent prayer in the knowledge of God's goodness.

When the disciples ask for a lesson on prayer, therefore, Jesus responds with a lesson on the nature of God. The greatest stimuli to prayer are the awareness of our need and absolute dependence on God and our knowledge and experience of the character of God. Only those who know their own need and God's love will be able to truly pray.

The triple sayings in vv 9-10 seem to offer assurance that ours is a God who gives, opens, and allows us to find. Certainly that is true. The danger comes when we take these sayings as a blank check on which we can write anything our hearts desire. Jesus assured his followers that God answers prayer, but he did not guarantee that they would receive whatever they requested. The assurances that follow the Lord's Prayer assume that those who ask, seek, and knock are asking from their need and for God's will, seeking the kingdom, and knocking at the door as a neighbor in the night. We may be anxious about the necessities of life, but Jesus calls us to a higher pursuit. Our praying should be consistent with our seeking. Then, when we pray as Jesus taught us, the assurance that God answers is hardly needed.

- Adapted from The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, pp. 238-9

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Think about how you approach God in prayer? Do you always assume your wants and desires will receive a positive response from God?
2. How persistent are you as you pray? Do you find yourself continuing to ask God to respond?
3. Do you really know what you need?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Luke 10:36-37 NRSV

⁹So 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. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.