

Devotionals Dec 8 – Jan 7, 2022: The Gospel of Luke (2): An Offensive Savior

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The great Messiah whom God had promised to his people had finally arrived! But he was not at all the type of savior that most people were expecting. Where were the great displays of power and majesty that one would expect from the King of kings? Where was the mighty warrior who was going to overthrow the Roman government? This man actually submitted to the government instead of rebelling against it. The religious leaders of Jesus' day were waiting for a savior who would tell them that they were doing a good job following all the rules, reinforce their authority, and establish a glorious earthly kingdom for the Jewish people. What they got instead was a simple carpenter from Nazareth who paid attention to women and publicans and healed both important centurions' servants and poor widows' sons. He was more concerned with showing compassion to people than conquering them. And to top it all off, he told the Pharisees that all the Old Testament rules that they loved so much were now obsolete. The Jewish people were perplexed, the religious leaders were outraged, and even John the Baptist expressed doubt about whether Jesus is really the Christ. He did not fit expectations.

Above all else, Jesus preached God's truth to the people with authority and wisdom. He healed incurable diseases, delivered many from demon possession, and raised people from the dead. But although he possessed all the power in the world and beyond, his life on earth was still characterized by lowliness. As he pointed out to John the Baptist's messengers, his work was being accomplished through humble, faithful daily labor. He was meek and loving both to those who followed him and to those who opposed him. His tender love for the sinners whom he came to save was evident while he was on this earth. He also taught the people that they must reflect this tender love to others. When you read through Jesus' teaching in Luke 6 this month, notice all the commands he gives to love, give, pray for, be merciful to, judge not, condemn not, and forgive others. Jesus' works testified to who he was just as our works also testify to who we are in Christ. Jesus taught in Luke 6:44, "For every tree is known by his own fruit." What fruit is evident in your life? Can your friends, classmates, and coworkers see that you have a living faith by your humble, faithful daily labor?

As the news about Jesus' teaching in the synagogues and his great miracles was spread throughout the area, it resulted in both positive and negative attention from the crowds of people that gathered to watch and listen. Some people believed in and followed him, while others—most notably the religious leaders—hated his message. Because they had wrong expectations concerning Jesus, they were offended by his actions and the content of his teachings. They had expected a great place for themselves in an earthly kingdom. Their pride caused them to stumble over his claim to be the only way of salvation and his demand for complete service. Most of the Jews rejected Jesus and ultimately crucified him, fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies that Jesus would be "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3).

The truth about Jesus is still a stumbling block to many people when it is preached today. Just as Jesus was not appealing to men when he was on this earth, the message of the gospel is unattractive and even offensive to those who do not have God-given faith. Most people do not want to hear that Jesus is the only way of salvation. They want to serve whatever god they think is best, whether it be Allah, Buddha, or the god of self. And they want to live life their own way instead of God's way. Do you ever struggle with this temptation? The Christian life is a difficult path from an earthly perspective. There is no room in the life of a Christian for pride and selfish goals. In Jesus' own words, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). But as he goes on to point out in verse 25, what good is it for a man to gain the whole world if he loses his soul?

Jesus gives a beautiful beatitude in Luke 7:23: “And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” The life of a Christian may be difficult, but it is a blessed life. One can only experience this blessedness by being united to Christ by faith. By faith, our hope is in our Savior—not the one that we want him to be, but the true Savior that is set forth in Scripture. Only this Savior has the power to save those who are dead in sin just as he brought the dead back to life when he was on this earth. By faith, our sufficiency is not in what we can gain on this earth, but in what Christ has accomplished for us. By faith, we trust that someday soon he will come back again so we are able to take our place in his glorious, eternal kingdom forever!

Date	Read	Study Question	Sing or Pray
December 8	Luke 4:14–19; Isaiah 61:1–3	What is Jesus teaching us about the nature of his ministry when he quotes from Isaiah 61?	Psalter #2
December 9	Luke 4:20–30	What was Jesus showing the people with his examples from the Old Testament? Why did this make them so angry?	Psalter #4
December 10	Luke 4:31–44	What further proof do we find in this passage that Jesus is the Son of God?	Psalter #5
December 11	Luke 5:1–11	What were these men losing by following Jesus? What were they gaining? How about you?	Psalter #6
December 12	Luke 5:12–26	What did Jesus do to restore himself in the busyness of his ministry? How often do you do this?	Psalter #10
December 13	Luke 5:27–32	What do we learn about Jesus and the purpose of his work from what he says to the scribes and Pharisees?	Psalter #12
December 14	Luke 5:33–39	What does Jesus’ parable about old and new teach us about the Old and New Testaments?	Psalter #13
December 15	Luke 6:1–11	How were the Pharisees abusing God’s good gift of Sabbath? What does Jesus teach us about the proper use of the Sabbath by his words and actions?	Psalter #14
December 16	Luke 6:12–16	Look up the meaning of the word “apostle.” What does it tell you about the calling of these twelve men?	Psalter #16
December 17	Luke 6:17–26	What are the differences between the blessing of God’s kingdom that Jesus describes and what people are usually referring to when they say they are “blessed”?	Psalter #18
December 18	Luke 6:27–42	What is real love according to Jesus’ teaching in these verses?	Psalter #20
December 19	Luke 6:43–49	What do these two parables teach us about the importance of our actions?	Psalter #21
December 20	Luke 7:1–10	What does the healing of the centurion’s servant teach us about true faith?	Psalter #22
December 21	Luke 7:11–17; 1 Kings 17:17–24	How was Elijah a picture of Jesus? How is Jesus greater than Elijah?	Psalter #23
December 22	Luke 7:18–23	What was Jesus trying to teach John with his answer to John’s doubtful questions?	Psalter #25

December 23	Luke 7:24–28	How are believers today even more privileged than John the Baptist and others who lived during Jesus' earthly ministry?	Psalter #28
December 24	Luke 7:29–35	What was Jesus trying to point out about the religious leaders who did not believe by comparing them to quarreling children?	Psalter #33
December 25	Luke 7:36–50	Notice the contrast between Simon the Pharisee and the sinful woman. Why was one forgiven and not the other?	Psalter #36
December 26	Luke 8:1–3	Can you list three things that these verses teach us about Jesus and his earthly ministry?	Psalter #41
December 27	Luke 8:4–21	Why did Jesus speak in parables according to verses 9–10?	Psalter #43
December 28	Luke 8:22–25	How does learning and understanding more about God strengthen our faith in him?	Psalter #46
December 29	Luke 8:26–39	After being delivered from demon possession by Jesus, how does this man's life change? How did your life change when you were freed from the bondage of sin?	Psalter #50
December 30	Luke 8:40–56	What are the similarities and differences between the healings of Jairus' daughter and the woman with an issue of blood? What does this teach us?	Psalter #56
December 31	Luke 9:1–6	What were the apostles told to do if a city did not receive their message? What did this action symbolize?	Psalter #59
January 1	Luke 9:10–17	Why did Jesus command his disciples to feed the people in verse 13 even though he knew they did not have enough food to do so?	Psalter #63
January 2	Luke 9:7–9, 18–22	Why did Jesus instruct his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the promised Messiah?	Psalter #70
January 3	Luke 9:23–27	What are the three requirements for true discipleship that Jesus lists in verse 23? What does this teach us about the Christian life?	Psalter #72
January 4	Luke 9:28–36	What does the presence of Moses and Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration reveal to us about Jesus?	Psalter #75
January 5	Luke 9:37–42	Why do you think the disciples were unable to cast the demon out of this boy?	Psalter #76
January 6	Luke 9:43–45	What is Jesus trying to teach his disciples by reminding them here of his impending suffering and death?	Psalter #79
January 7	Luke 9:46–50; Psalm 131	Why is humility an essential part of the Christian life?	Psalter #80

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