

Message Cheat Sheet

APRIL 13, 2025

Get more out of the message



LUKE

Luke 7:18-35

How can we become the Christ-centered church our world so desperately needs? Join us in Luke's Gospel, the most expansive biography of Jesus in the Bible. With the beloved physician as our guide, we hope to experience Jesus so we can participate with the new reality God is bringing into our world.

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The Big Idea

Jesus does not always meet your expectations. What will you do when He does not show up how or when you want Him to?

Good to Know

What's this passage all about?

- Remember John the Baptist? Whatever happened to him?
- Back in Luke 3, we learned he'd been locked up in prison for publicly calling Herod out on his sin. Apparently, his jail time had given him time to think. He'd been hearing things about Jesus that made him second-guess whether Jesus was indeed the prophesied Jewish Messiah. The Messiah was supposed to follow in the footsteps of his father David and—whether by force or invitation—become the new King of Israel. Jesus was...well, not acting very kingy.
- John asks the question we all must ask: "Jesus, who do you think you are?"
- In this passage, Luke is making it very clear who Jesus thinks He is. He thinks He's the Messiah—just perhaps not the one people expected.

Why This Passage Matters

- This attunes us to the surprising ways He shows up in our lives today. Are we looking for a made-up Jesus who acts in ways that suit us and never offends our enlightened sensibilities? Or are we receiving Jesus as He really comes to us?
- One of these options gives us a predictable king in our image. The other gives us the surprising and powerful Son of Man who refuses to play by our rules because He has something infinitely better in mind.
- **"Are you the one who is to come?" (v.19)** – This is code for the Messiah prophesied in places like Zechariah 9:9. There's a poem from the Book of Solomon (not a biblical book, but a popular one in Jesus' day) that described the coming Messiah as one who would "destroy the unrighteous rulers," "purge Jerusalem from Gentiles" and "smash the arrogance of sinners." If you were a good Jew back in the day, who do you think the "unrighteous Gentile sinners" were? You guessed it—the Romans, Herod their puppet king and his army of goons.

- **“the blind receive their sight...the poor have the Good News preached to them.” (vs. 22)** – Instead of saying “Yes, I’m the Messiah” and getting people riled up with the expectation of a non-biblical, militant Messiah, Jesus reminds John’s messengers of the Messianic portrait painted by Isaiah. It’s as if He’s saying, “Yes, I’m the Messiah, but my mission isn’t to smash the Romans. It’s to smash sin, death and the devil.”
- **“blessed is the one who is not offended by me.” (vs. 23)** – The Greek word for “offended” is a word picture of someone who is tripped up by an obstacle. Just as Jesus had said “blessed are the poor” in Luke 6, here He was saying “how awesome is it for people to embrace the real me! God’s blessing is on those who follow the Biblical Messiah who brings healing and reconciliation rather than a made-up one who brings revenge and domination.”
- **Yikes!** Jesus’ answer would have created a tense atmosphere. The crowds (who were very familiar with John) were undoubtedly wondering, “Did Jesus just publicly slap John’s hand for his lack of faith? Is there a rift between these two great men?” Jesus was telling them—no, there’s no rift. In fact, in Jesus’ mind, John was the best of the best.
- **“A reed shaken by the wind” (vs. 24) or “a man dressed in soft clothing.” (vs. 25)** – Here’s Jesus being funny again. Reeds were grasses that grew in thickets—up to 16 feet tall—all around the Jordan River, where John spent his career baptizing people. Using a little sarcasm, Jesus was saying, “Why did so many people go out to the middle of nowhere to see John? To take in the local flora and fauna? To see a man who modeled the latest fashion trends?” (This is hilarious, by the way, because John was famous for dressing like a caveman.) No! They went to see him because he was a prophet who spoke the very Word of God. In other words, Jesus was saying: John is awesome.
- **“Yet the very least in the kingdom is greater than he” (vs. 28)** – John prepared people for Jesus, but Jesus’ disciples were actually experiencing the kingdom for themselves. As great as John was, his greatness is nothing compared to those who humbly participate in Jesus’ new kingdom. This statement is one of the greatest affirmations of believers like you in all of Scripture!
- **When all the people heard this (vs. 29)** Luke inserts a parenthetical description of how two camps emerged: one consisted of sinners who gladly accepted Jesus as He is, while the other consisted of deeply religious Pharisees and scribes who couldn’t accept Jesus as the Messiah.
- **Children, flutes, dances and wine (vs. 31-35)** – Ok, what is this? Jesus paints a picture: the people who are rejecting Him are like bossy kids trying to orchestrate a dancing game while their parents shop in the marketplace. These overbearing brats play the flute for a make-believe wedding game and get mad because John the Baptist and Jesus won’t play along. The same thing happens when they play “funeral.” Why aren’t John and Jesus dancing to their tune? Why won’t they fall in line with their strict rules or raise a fist at the Romans? So the bullies in charge say, “It’s because they’re crazy! John’s demon-possessed, and Jesus is a boozier.”
- But in fact, the reason John and Jesus don’t play the Pharisees’ games is because they weren’t trying to be hip, trendy, or politically correct. They were being biblical. And the children of the wise do the same.

Group Guide

Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

Conversation Starters

1. What was John questioning about Jesus? From what you know about the cultural and political context of the time, why do you think he had those questions?
2. Read Isaiah 26:19, 29:18, 35:6 and 61:1. What evidence did Jesus point to in order to help John with his questions?
3. Look at how greatly Jesus admired John in verses 24-28. What was Jesus saying about ordinary believers like us in verse 28? How does this challenge our midwestern notions of "greatness"?
4. Jesus compared the hyper-religious Pharisees to overbearing kids who were pouting because Jesus didn't play their games. What are the games we might wish Jesus would play today? What does He seem to be more interested in?
5. Who do you relate to most in this passage? John? The Pharisees? The tax collectors?
6. What's an unspoken expectation you have of Jesus that the Holy Spirit is calling you to trade in for something better?
7. How might you reflect the biblical Jesus to a world that desperately needs Him this week?

Prayer

Jesus, help us see you as you really are. Forgive us for all the ways we keep trying to reshape you toward our preferences and help us surrender to your better plan. Help us live into greatness the way you define it. Amen.

Looking for more prayer opportunities?

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