

Study Guide for the Week of March 6, 2005

Who Was Jesus? He Loved the Unlovable...

This study guide is designed to help you to become more familiar with the Bible. Study these passages on your own, with a friend, or with a group. If you or someone you know needs a Bible, please take one from under a chair in the Worship Center. They are there for you to take home and use! Sermon manuscripts are available at www.saintpauls-umc.com.

Monday. We will read from Luke tomorrow, but today **read Romans chapter 12** in the New Testament. This chapter is rich with images of what it means to live out the Christian life. There are several themes in here that apply to Sunday's sermon. Verses 3 and 16 teach us to not look down on others, but to associate with "the lowly." Verses 4-8 teach us that we are all various parts of one body therefore we should not envy what other parts can do or begrudge what we cannot do. Verses 9-13 give advice for showing our love for others. What areas do you need to work on in your life? What areas do we need to work on as a church?

Tuesday. Read Luke chapter 13. This chapter contains several parables and depicts Jesus' interaction with a number of people. Verses 1-9 contain Jesus' strong encouragement to get into a right relationship with God because we don't know when our lives on earth will end. Several sections in this chapter show us the conflict that Jesus was having with the religious authorities of that day. Jesus saw healing on the Sabbath as a blessing, they saw it as breaking the law. Jesus operated on grace, the Pharisees operated out of legalism. What in this chapter is speaking to you today?

Wednesday. Read Luke chapter 14. Verses 7-14 teach us about humility. This is simple practical instruction. It also teaches us about sharing the bounty that God has given to us with those who cannot repay. In verses 15-24 Jesus is speaking to the Jews whom God had invited to be a part of his kingdom, but they had refused with various excuses so the Gentiles were invited instead. In verses 25-33 we must be careful to realize that Jesus uses the word "hate" to make a point. He wants his followers know that following him has its costs and may be difficult. But he also reminds us that we don't make that journey alone. He walks with us every step of the way.

Thursday. Read Luke chapter 15. In chapter 14 Jesus' tone seems almost harsh, but in chapter 15 we see his deep compassion. He tells three parables about the lost--lost sheep, lost coins, and a lost son. Notice the word "rejoice". God doesn't curse those who, for whatever reason, find themselves lost. He goes and searches and rejoices when he finds him or her. The parable of the prodigal son is, in some way, the story of each of our lives. We all have taken God's goodness for granted, we all have wandered away, we all have found ourselves in a helpless situation and eventually seen the father's goodness. How do these stories relate to your story? Were you lost and then found? Are you feeling lost now?

Friday. Read Luke chapter 16. The first part of this passage is somewhat troublesome. The main lesson to be learned is this: If Christians were as eager and ingenious in our attempts to attain goodness as the man in the story is to attain money and comfort, we would have deep rich faith! What effort do you put into to your faith as compared to your search for pleasure, wealth, or comfort? In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus is pointing out that the sin of this rich man was that he looked on the world's suffering and need and felt nothing, and did nothing. The rich man was not cruel to Lazarus, he simply chose not to see him. On Sunday Aaron talked about how Jesus chose to truly see people. By telling us this story Jesus is asking us to truly look for those who fit Lazarus' role in our world. How can you do this?