

Extravagant Hospitality series

Extravagant Welcome

Luke 23:26–49

As we move towards the close of our mini-series on Luke's Gospel, we continue to see how Luke continually draws attention to the lavish welcome that Jesus and God offer to *all* people. Even at Jesus' crucifixion, Jesus cares for some of the least likely people in first-century Jewish society (as well as beyond the borders of Israel).

Be sure that you're familiar with this inclusive agenda of Luke's whole Gospel. Especially if you have not already done so, you might want to revisit the sample passages identified in last week's study notes (see there the lists in Q2 and the quotation in Q3).

Begin by revisiting the passage and its special emphases

The sermon touched on all of Luke 23, although we concentrated on the actual crucifixion detailed in 23:26–49. You can explore the following using the wider or narrow passage.

1. Working through the passage, make a list of all the different individuals and groups whom Luke records watching and responding to the crucifixion. What diversities can you see?
2. How does Jesus respond to these diverse kinds of people?

Put yourself in different people's shoes

The Gospels invite us to consider what it means to be different characters in each narrative. We ought not leap immediately and solely to what it looks like to be a disciple.

3. We ought not speculate too much. But what might it have been like to be each of the people who encountered Jesus (e.g. one of the mourning women; either of the crucified criminals)? How do you think attitudes might have differed before and after the encounter with Jesus?
4. With equal caution: What do you think it might have been like to be *Jesus* at each of these encounters? What feelings/attitudes might we infer Jesus experienced at each encounter?
5. We can be much more confident that Luke wants us to identify with Theophilus, the first reader of this Gospel (1:1–4). As we witness each encounter with Jesus, what do you think Luke wants his reader to feel in response? This is a fruitful question to devote time to, and you might draw on other parts of Luke's Gospel as well.

Reflect on Luke's presentation of Jesus

This week's sermon drew attention to Jesus' innocence ("as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death", 23:15) and to the diverse array of people Jesus encounters and responds to.

6. For extended study, review many of the occasions throughout this Gospel where forgiveness occurs. *Who* and *what* is forgiven? Luke 5:17–26; 7:36–50; 15:20–24; 17:3–4; 18:9–14. (Can you discern how many of these examples are unique to Luke's Gospel? What significance might this observation have?)
7. Identify and reflect on the two crucial examples of forgiveness in this week's passage (both are unique to Luke). *Who* and *what* is forgiven? What do you think Luke wants his reader to feel when they see this?

(This week we didn't focus through to the end of the chapter where Jesus is buried: Luke 23:50–56. Have you ever noticed that the creeds always include this? Jesus “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, *and was buried*”. What role might this play in defending the gospel to those who do not yet welcome it?)

Practise applying the forgiveness and welcome Luke emphasises

8. First, each of us is a fortunate *recipient* of God's forgiveness through Jesus.
 - Are there any people or groups in Luke we might each most identify with?
 - Are there any grounds on which we dare feel *deserving* of God's interest and welcome?
 - Take time to praise God for the unwarranted privilege of his forgiveness!

9. Next, it's clear that Jesus (and Luke) expects those who receive forgiveness to express it toward others.
 - Which passages listed in Q6 highlight this expectation?
 - Are there any people or groups in Luke we might be surprised to find Jesus welcoming?
 - Are there people or groups in our own wider society we cannot imagine God forgiving?
 - How will we respond when such people seek God among us?

10. How can we continue to express gospel hospitality to those already seeking God as part of the GWAC community? Who are the people we find easy to overlook or reluctant to welcome?