

# Journey Through the New Testament

## Luke 16 – 20

### *Series: Authentically Human*

### *“Lessons from the Margins”*

3-31-19

#### *Introduction*

In the readings this week, Jesus and the disciples continued in their journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, Jesus gave instructions regarding discipleship and faith but it wasn't the behavior of the religious that served as the examples. Those who exemplified faith and humility in Jesus's parables and encounters were the lowly and unimportant of society. The leper, a widow, a tax collector, children, and a beggar were people without power, people who lived in the margins. They were the “least, the last and the lost,” as often highlighted in Luke's account. The time and compassion that Jesus gave to people in need illustrated God's mercy and the values of God's kingdom, values that are very different from those of the world.

#### *Opening Prayer*

O God, how easy it is for us to be prideful, self-righteous, and prejudiced against those who are different from us. Open our hearts that we may learn the lessons of faith and compassion from the parables of Jesus and from those around us who live faithfully, even those in the margins. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**Lesson Notes:** In order to grasp the significance of Jesus' interactions with those on the margins, it is helpful to understand the social and religious realities of the Greco-Roman world of the New Testament. This quick summary touches on just a few of the distinct divisions between those with status and power and those with none.

**Samaritans** shared a common ancestry with the Jews but they had intermarried with foreigners and built their own place of worship rather than the temple in Jerusalem. Jews considered them impure and would not associate with them or even walk in Samaria. **Lepers** had a contagious skin disease and were separated from society and considered unclean. The leprosy of the Bible was probably not the same as the modern type. **Women** had no legal rights and belonged to their husband. If **widowed**, a woman had no inheritance rights. Her only source of survival was to have a son or male relative to take care of her. They were often exploited. **Tax collectors** were hired by the Roman government to collect taxes. They charged extra to make a profit for themselves. Jews considered them unclean since they had contact with Gentiles.

*Beggars* were often people who were lame or infirmed in some way and collected money on the streets and at the temple gates. *Children* in Israelite history were seen as gifts from God and important for inheritance and family legacy. In general society, however, children held the lowest rank of all people and had no rights. (*Harper-Collins Bible Dictionary*)

### ***Bible Study Selected verses from Luke 17, 18 (CEB)***

***Lesson Notes:*** The scriptures below may be read and studied as a whole group, or you can divide into smaller groups and assign a scripture to each group to read and discuss using the questions that follow.

Luke 17:11-19 (Samaritan leper)      Luke 18:1-6 (persistent woman/widow)  
Luke 18:9-14 (tax collector)      Luke 18:15-17 (babies/children)  
Luke 18:35-42 (blind beggar)

### ***What?***

1. What character in the scripture demonstrated faithful behavior or a right attitude?
2. What stands out in terms of their position in society?
3. What lesson or example did each character demonstrate?

### ***So What?***

1. So, what do you think the disciples, Pharisees and on lookers would have thought about these lessons from “those” people? Why?
2. So, what do these passages reveal about the ways of the kingdom of God and who can belong?
3. Can you recall a time when you learned a lesson from an unexpected source? A child? Someone persistent in prayer? Someone poor? The sick or frail?
4. What groups or types of people live in the margins of our culture today?

### ***Now What?***

1. In our culture, what shapes our sense of importance and status?
2. How do these influences hinder us from living authentically, according to the kingdom of God rather than the world’s standards?
3. Now that you have consider Jesus’ way of living and loving authentically, what step can you take to live in this way? Explain.

### ***Closing Reflection***

*O Lord, deliver me from the arrogance of assuming I know enough to judge others.*  
(Ted Loder, *Guerillas of Grace*)