

# Luke's Gospel and Bread for the World Sunday

Year C of the Revised Common Lectionary  
Luke 14–24, September 1–November 24, 2019

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For many years, churches of all faith traditions have celebrated Bread for the World Sunday on the third Sunday in October. For those churches following the Revised Common Lectionary, October 20, 2019, is the Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost, and the appointed Gospel is Luke 18:1-8, the parable of the widow who persists in seeking justice from a dishonest judge.

Other churches observe Bread for the World Sunday on other weekends in the fall: as early as September 1, the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost, through November 24, the Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, also observed as the Reign of Christ.

The Gospel lessons appointed for these Sundays stretch from Luke 14 through Luke 23, the second half of Luke's Gospel. These chapters continue themes from the first half of the Gospel — and offer robust material to inspire our efforts as Christians to change the policies and conditions that allow hunger to persist.

It's been said that Jesus "eats his way through the Gospel of Luke." There are lots of stories and parables about food and meals, and Jesus is a frequent guest at banquets and meals. Examples include the parable of the wedding feast in Luke 14:1,7-14 (the 12th Sunday after Pentecost); eating with sinners and tax collectors in Luke 15:1-2 (the 14th Sunday after Pentecost); and Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10 (the 21st Sunday after Pentecost).

Significantly, in Luke's final chapter, the Risen Christ is present at two meals: first with the disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) and, then, just before his ascension (Luke 24:41-43), when he asks a larger group of disciples, "Have you anything here to eat?"

These readings from the second half of the Gospel reflect both the language and themes from Luke's account of the *feeding of the 5,000* in Luke 9:10-17. There, we hear that Jesus makes sure there's more than enough for everyone who is hungry.

This story is also about discipleship. At the beginning of Chapter 9, Jesus sends the disciples on a mission to cast out demons, cure diseases, and proclaim the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). Now, in the feeding of the 5,000, the disciples play a central role: Jesus tells them, "You give them something to eat."

In Luke's Gospel, the feeding of the 5,000 helps us understand who Jesus is. Luke's accounts of Elizabeth and Mary's pregnancies, Jesus' birth, and his upbringing echo or parallel the stories and themes of the great King David and the longing for a Messiah to restore that golden age.

Jesus, though, turns out to be a *different kind of Messiah*. After the feeding of the 5,000, Jesus makes the first prediction of his death (Luke 9:22). Here and elsewhere, references to the Son of Man in Daniel and the Suffering Servant of Isaiah expand who Jesus is. Rather than going to Jerusalem to be enthroned as a new King David who overthrows foreign rulers, Jesus goes to Jerusalem to be put to death for the redemption of not just Israel — but all nations.

But, "on the third day" (Luke 24:46), Jesus is raised from the dead. The full impact of his resurrection is revealed in *the unique and lengthy account of the disciples on the road to Emmaus* (Luke 24:1-35). In that account, the same language used in the feeding of the 5,000 is repeated when Jesus "breaks bread" with the two disciples. As we listen with those disciples, we see that Jesus' death and resurrection was the central theme of the entire Gospel — and the fulfillment of all God's promises throughout the Scriptures.

Looking back, we now see references to the resurrection in earlier chapters. For example, immediately before the story of the feeding 5,000, we hear that Jesus brings Jairus' daughter back to life (Luke 8:40-55). In the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 (the 16th Sunday after Pentecost), we hear "even if someone rises from the dead." Unlike the rich man's five brothers, the disciples were eventually convinced by "someone" — Jesus — who was raised from the dead. And living in "resurrection time" enables us to see beyond the impasse that the Sadducees present to Jesus in Luke 20:27-38 (the 22nd Sunday after Pentecost).

As we, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, re-hear the stories and teachings in Luke 14-24, other themes in Luke's Gospel inspire our work to end hunger: the lost are found, the last becomes first, those who have been excluded are given hospitality, and wealth and possessions are used to serve God and our neighbors.

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Today, *we are among those who are found* — like a lost coin and the lost sheep (Luke 15:1-10, the 14th Sunday after Pentecost), the humble tax collector (Luke 18:9-14, the 20th Sunday after Pentecost), and the “lost” Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10, the 21st Sunday after Pentecost).

Significantly, the women “found” the tomb where Jesus was buried to be empty (Luke 24:2). Because the tomb is empty, the lost are now found by the Risen Christ. Our being found creates joy that inspires and sustains us to see that all in need are fed.

Hearing these stories also builds *faith*. It is faith that sustained the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8 (the 19th Sunday after Pentecost) and brings about healing for the Samaritan leper in Luke 17:11-19 (18th Sunday after Pentecost). Faith is also characteristic of the seed that falls on good soil (Luke 8:4-15), and faith as small as a mustard seed (Luke 17:5-10, the 17th Sunday after Pentecost) grows into more than enough to enable us to persist in seeking justice for people struggling with hunger.

Faith also enables us to grapple with the ambiguity of wealth and possessions. Some are called to “give up all

your possessions” (Luke 14:33, the 13th Sunday after Pentecost). For others, like Zacchaeus, it will be half (Luke 19:8, the 21st Sunday after Pentecost). In other cases, less than scrupulous behavior can end up helping others and minimizing the danger of wealth (the shrewd manager in Luke 16:1-13, the 15th Sunday after Pentecost).

What’s clear from all the many parables and teachings in Luke’s Gospel is that, we — as disciples living in resurrection time — are now free to use our possessions on behalf of those who are most vulnerable. Even in the face of violence and persecution, when others see only doom and destruction, we find ways to testify to the life we share with the Risen Christ (Luke 21:5-19, the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost).

So, today, as we listen to the Scriptures and “break bread together,” we invite others — the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind — those who have been forgotten or excluded — to be part of the banquet of God’s abundance (Luke 14:7-14, the 12th Sunday after Pentecost).

## Year C of the Revised Common Lectionary September 1 - November 24, 2019

**September 1**, Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 14:1, 7-14, An Inclusive Wedding Banquet

**September 8**, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 14:25-33, The Cost of Discipleship

**September 15**, Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 15:1-10, Lost Sheep and Lost Coin

**September 22**, Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 16:1-13, The Dishonest (but Shrewd) Manager

**September 29**, Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 16:19-31, The Rich Man and Lazarus

**October 6**, Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 17:5-10, Mustard Seed Faith

**October 13**, Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 17:11-19, Ten Lepers, Only One Thankful

**October 20**, Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 18:1-8, A Persistent Widow

**October 27**, Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 18:9-14, A Humble Tax Collector Prays

**November 3**, Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 19:1-10, Jesus Finds Zacchaeus

**November 10**, Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 20:27-38, A Question about the Resurrection

**November 17**, Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost: Luke 21:5-19, Destruction of the Temple Foretold

**November 24**, Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Pentecost, the Reign of Christ: Luke 23:33-43, the King of Jews is Crucified with Two Criminals



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425 3rd Street SW, Suite 1200  
Washington, DC 20024  
800-822-7323 [bread.org](http://bread.org)