

Bible Study Guide: The Scandalous Jesus

Luke 7:11-35

An Orderly Account: Encountering Jesus in the Gospel of Luke

Hook to Get Conversation Going

Imagine you're scrolling through social media and see two wildly different reactions to the same viral video—one group is in awe, praising it as life-changing, while another group mocks it as overrated or offensive. Why do people respond so differently to the exact same thing?

In a similar way, Luke 7 shows us crowds encountering the real Jesus—some filled with reverent fear, others impatient with His timing, and still others stubbornly rejecting Him altogether. As we study this passage, ask yourself: *Which response most resembles my own heart toward Jesus right now?* Share with the group one word that describes how you typically respond to Jesus in daily life (e.g., awe, frustration, indifference).

Summary of the Passage

In Luke 7:11-35, Jesus enters the town of Nain and interrupts a funeral procession by raising a widow's only son from the dead, displaying His sovereign power over death and evoking fear and praise from the crowd (vv. 11-17). John the Baptist, imprisoned and struggling with the timing of God's plan, sends messengers to ask if Jesus is truly the expected Messiah; Jesus responds by performing miracles and gently calling John (and us) not to be offended by His ways (vv. 18-23). Finally, Jesus rebukes the stubborn generation that rejected both John's ascetic ministry and His own gracious one, comparing them to childish complainers who refuse to accept God's ordained path (vv. 24-35). Through these scenes, Luke confronts every reader with the divided responses to Christ and calls us to repentant faith.

Summary of the Text (from the sermon manuscript)

Raising the Widow's Son (7:11-17)

Jesus encounters utter devastation—a widow losing her only son—and out of pure compassion touches the bier (becoming ceremonially unclean) and commands the dead man to arise. The young man sits up and is given back to his mother (echoing Elijah in 1 Kings 17). Fear grips the crowd; they glorify God but underestimate Jesus' full identity as Lord over life and death. His fame spreads.

John Questions Jesus (7:18-23)

Imprisoned John hears reports of Jesus' miracles and sends disciples to ask, "Are you the one?" This reflects not unbelief but impatience—why is the Messiah not yet acting as Judge to deliver His forerunner? Jesus heals many that hour and replies by pointing to fulfilled messianic prophecy, closing with, "Blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

Jesus Challenges the Crowd (7:24-35)

Jesus affirms John as the greatest prophet, yet notes that the least in the kingdom (those who know the cross) surpass him. Tax collectors justified God by receiving John's baptism, but Pharisees rejected God's purpose. Jesus likens the stubborn generation to petulant children who complain no matter what tune is played—John came ascetic and was called demon-possessed; Jesus came eating and drinking and was called gluttonous. Yet "wisdom is justified by all her children"—those who submit to Christ prove His ways right.

Discussion Questions

1. **Content:** In verses 11-17, Jesus raises the widow's son without being asked, out of His own compassion. How does this miracle reveal both His divine authority and His tender heart? How does it point forward to the greater resurrection accomplished at the cross and promised to all who are united to Christ by faith alone?
2. **Content/Application:** John the Baptist believed Jesus was the Messiah yet struggled with impatience in suffering (vv. 18-23). Why is impatience a common temptation for believers under God's sovereign providence? How does Jesus' response ("Blessed is the one who is not offended by me") encourage us to trust Christ's timing rather than demand explanations?
3. **Content/Application:** Jesus describes the stubborn crowd as children who refuse to dance or mourn to any tune (vv. 31-35). What does this illustrate about human resistance to God's ordained ways? In what areas of life (e.g., suffering, morality, church life) are we most tempted to "play our own tune" and expect God to conform?
4. **Application:** The sermon identifies three responses—holy fear, impatience, and stubbornness. Which of these most characterizes your current walk with Christ? How does the gospel free us from stubborn unbelief and impatient demanding, enabling us to live in reverent fear of the Lord who conquered death for us?

Leader Hints

For Adult Neighborhood Group Leaders

- Encourage vulnerability: Many adults wrestle quietly with impatience in prolonged trials (health, marriage, work, prodigal children). After question 2, give space for brief sharing of current struggles, then redirect to Christ's sufficiency and the promise of Romans 8:28-32.
- Keep Christ central: Whenever discussion drifts toward self-effort or moralism, gently point back to the cross—Jesus' resurrection power (v. 14) guarantees our future resurrection, and His patient grace toward doubting John models how He receives us.
- Close with prayer that reflects Reformed confidence in God's sovereignty: thank Him for ordaining both miracles and delays for our good and His glory.

For Middle and High School Sunday School Teachers

- Make it relatable: Teens often feel impatience with God's timing (waiting for relationships, college acceptance, family issues). Use modern analogies (e.g., waiting for a delayed text or game update) to connect to John's prison experience before reading the text.
- Engage visually and actively: Draw three columns on a board ("Fear," "Impatience," "Stubbornness") and have students place sticky notes with personal examples under each. Discuss how the gospel moves us toward "holy fear."
- Emphasize grace: Teens can feel condemned for doubts. Highlight Jesus' kindness to John—"greatest born of women" despite weakness—to show that true faith includes honest struggle, but rests finally in Christ's finished work.
- End with a simple gospel invitation: Wisdom's children submit joyfully to Jesus as Lord and Savior.