

## Study 9: Discipleship in a threatening world

*May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.*

Please prepare for our meeting by reading **Luke 11:37-12:48** and thinking about the following questions. If you haven't time for everything, just do whatever you can – no one will check up on you. If possible, please bring a Bible with you to the meeting.

Questions marked with an asterisk are about your personal spiritual life, and intended mainly for personal meditation – you should not feel any pressure to talk about personal things unless you wish to.

As Our Lord continues his last journey to Jerusalem, his teaching becomes increasingly confrontational and challenging. Many people, especially Pharisees and scholars, have been unresponsive or downright hostile to his teachings and miracles, and this is his last opportunity to shake them out of their complacency. Even his followers are continually lapsing into sluggishness and worldly anxieties.

But there is also comfort and reassurance for all those who follow Our Lord through difficulties and hostility, including the disciples on this last journey, Luke's readers as they suffer persecution from the Roman authorities, and ourselves on our own journey.

### 1. Challenging the Pharisees and scholars (11:37-12:3)

- i) We generally think that it is 'good manners' for guests in a house to fit in with the customs of the household as far as they reasonably can, so we may find it surprising that Our Lord, when visiting a Pharisee, did not follow the Pharisaic customs. Do you think that this was his normal behaviour, or was it a deliberate act to startle his host?
- ii) What can we learn from verse 41 about how to avoid defilement when we eat?
- iii) What criticisms does Our Lord make of (a) the Pharisees, and (b) the scholars of the law? (Not all qualified scholars were Pharisees, and most Pharisees were not qualified scholars.)
- iv) \*Do any of these criticism apply to you?

### 2. Do not be anxious (12:4-7 & 13-34)

- i) Is it right for a Christian to plan prudently for the future?
- ii) \*Do you believe that the Lord will provide for your needs?
- iii) \*How much of your own treasure is laid up in heaven?

### 3. Speaking up for Our Lord in a hostile environment (12:8-12)

- i) \*Do you feel able to speak up for Our Lord when you are with people who are hostile, or even when you are in danger? Can you trust the Holy Spirit to help you? Have you ever experienced his help?
- ii) What do you think is the difference between blaspheming the Son of Man and blaspheming the Holy Spirit?

#### **4. Stay alert (12:35-48)**

- i) St Luke characteristically records three common-sense examples of the importance of staying alert and doing our duty conscientiously, focusing on self-interest rather than saintliness. Our Lord in his mercy sets the bar for entering the kingdom of Heaven very low; so why do we still so often find it too high to suit us?
- ii) Can you think of any strategies to help yourself to stay alert?
- iii) Does this passage have a special message for the apostles and for all who have any leadership role in the church (clergy, teachers, parents, liturgists, PCC, helpers, etc.)?