

TODAY

A Catholic Journey Through the Gospel of Luke

SESSION 10

Where Are the Nine?

Luke 16–17

A shrewd steward, a beggar named Lazarus, and one grateful Samaritan in ten

Leader Preparation Guide

SESSION OVERVIEW

Discovery Aim: Participants discover why Jesus sends ten lepers to the priests, Leviticus 14 makes the priest the ordained verifier of cleansing, a pattern that walks straight into the confessional, and they watch the one returning Samaritan fall at Jesus' feet *eucharistōn*, giving thanks: the Eucharist's own verb. Along the way they face the Gospel's starkest picture of the afterlife and learn to handle it honestly.

Catholic Touchstone: Stewardship of unrighteous mammon; the particular judgment, which the Catechism teaches from tonight's Lazarus text (CCC 1021); the anti-Pelagian gem of the unworthy servants (CCC 2007); and gratitude as the shape of salvation completed.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The dishonest steward (16:1–13) is the parable that makes every Bible study flinch, so take it head-on. A steward, fired for waste, uses his last hours of signing authority to discount his master's debtors, buying himself a future of open doors; and the master, astonishingly, commends the dishonest steward for his prudence. Read carefully: Jesus commends the shrewdness, never the dishonesty, and his application makes the target plain: the sons of this world are wiser in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. Worldly people plan for their future with everything at their disposal; do the children of the kingdom plan for theirs? The instruction that follows is the parable's cash value: make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations. Money, morally neutral at best and unrighteous in its usual acquisition and grip, can be converted into eternity by one alchemy only, mercy: the poor you befriend with it become your receivers at heaven's door. St. Ambrose preached this conversion constantly: earthly wealth is loaned for mercy's use, and the only riches we keep are the ones we give away. Then the tightening series: faithful in very little, faithful in much (tonight's memory verse); and the flat impossibility, you cannot serve God and mammon, at which the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, scoffed, and Jesus answered that what is exalted among men is an abomination before God. That exchange is the doorway to Lazarus.

The rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31) is the only parable where Jesus gives a name to a character of his own invention, and the naming is the reversal: the beggar at the gate, dogs licking his sores, is Lazarus, God helps, while the rich man in purple and fine linen goes nameless into death. The scene after death, Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, the rich man in torment in Hades, the great chasm fixed, is tonight's steelman ground, and it must be handled with precision. The Catechism teaches the particular judgment from this very text (CCC 1021): each soul receives its eternal retribution at death, no reincarnations, no do-overs, and the parable's finality is real. But the strong Protestant use of the chasm, no one may cross from there to us, therefore purgatory is unbiblical and prayer across death is useless, overreaches the text, and the honest answer is exact: the parable depicts Hades, the intermediate realm of the dead before Christ's resurrection opened heaven, not the final state after judgment; purgatory, in Catholic teaching, is not the far side of that chasm but a purification of the saved on their way to God, a different doctrine with different texts (1 Cor 3:11–15; 2 Macc 12:38–46). The chasm forbids crossing between the damned and the blessed, which the Church affirms as fully as any Reformer. Say what the text teaches,

decline what it does not, and hedge honestly where the Church herself distinguishes. The parable's final blade is apologetic and aimed forward: if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead. Someone will, bearing that very name, and the Sanhedrin's response (Jn 11) will prove the sentence.

Luke 17 gathers sayings: millstones for those who scandalize little ones; the seven-times-a-day forgiveness that makes the apostles beg increase our faith, answered with the mustard seed; and the unworthy servants (17:7–10), which is the study's quiet anti-Pelagian treasure. When you have done all that is commanded, say, we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty: no creature puts God in debt, and the Catechism cites the Church's whole theology of merit as grace responding to grace, with no strict claim on God arising from our works (CCC 2007). Hold this beside the rewards Luke has promised all along (repaid at the resurrection of the just) and you have Catholic teaching whole: merit is real because God has freely promised to crown his own gifts, never because we have earned wages.

Then the ten lepers (17:11–19), tonight's summit. Between Samaria and Galilee, ten lepers stand at a distance, as the Law required, and cry the Jesus Prayer's ancestor: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. The command is strange until Leviticus is opened: go and show yourselves to the priests. Tonight's live discovery sends the group to Leviticus 14:1–4: the leper's cleansing must be examined and certified by the priest; the rest of the chapter (Leviticus 14:8–10 and following) unfolds the offerings and the eight-day liturgy of restoration to the community and the sanctuary. Jesus, who could heal with a word, deliberately routes the miracle through the ordained mediation his own Law established, and as they went they were cleansed: the healing happens inside the obedience, en route to the priest. The Catholic ear hears the confessional door open: Christ forgives, and Christ has chosen to route the certification and restoration of the healed through priests (Jn 20:23; CCC 1461). Then the tenth turns back, praising God with a loud voice, falls at Jesus' feet,

and Luke writes the participle with a smile: eucharistōn, giving him thanks, the verb of the Eucharist, and now he was a Samaritan. The blessed-outsiders thread reaches its penultimate entry. Jesus' three questions ache: were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? And the tenth receives what the nine did not: rise and go your way; your faith has made you well, sesōken, has saved you. Ten were cleansed; to one alone Jesus says sesōken, a word that means both healed and saved, and what set him apart was the faith that turned back in thanksgiving. Luke's word choice invites the deeper reading; the text passes no sentence on the nine. The nine did nothing wrong: they obeyed, they were healed, they went to the priests. They simply never came back to the Healer, and the Christian life of many a baptized Catholic is nine-tenths of this miracle. The chapter closes with the kingdom in the midst of you and the days of the Son of man, Noah's generation eating and drinking, oblivious, which the Time Note shows how to fold in briefly.

OLD TESTAMENT ROOTS AND FULFILLMENT

Prov 19:17 He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord: mammon's one conversion — **Lk 16:9**

Amos 6:4–7 Woe to those at ease on beds of ivory, unmoved by ruin at the gate — **Lk 16:19–21**

Deut 24:12–15 The Law's mercy to the poor debtor and the unpaid laborer, whose cry reaches God — **Lk 16:20**

Lev 14:1–4 The priest examines and certifies the cleansed leper — **Lk 17:14**

2 Kgs 5:1-15 Naaman the Syrian: the foreign leper who returned to give thanks — **Lk 17:15-18**

Gen 7:6-23 The days of Noah: the flood comes and sweeps away an unready world; Jesus supplies the eating and drinking — **Lk 17:26-27**

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom (*Sermons on Lazarus and the Rich Man (De Lazaro)*)

Chrysostom's seven sermons on tonight's parable shook Antioch: the rich man's sin, he observes, is never named as fraud or violence, only as a gate passed daily without seeing, and not to share our surplus with the poor, Chrysostom insists, is itself a theft from them, for our goods are the Lord's and were entrusted for distribution. Lazarus at the gate was the rich man's daily offer of salvation, declined with every course of every banquet.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on the ten lepers*)

Cyril marks the obedience inside the miracle: the lepers were cleansed not where they stood but as they went, faith walking toward the priests before sight had anything to show it. And in the Samaritan's return he finds the sacrifice God prizes: nine carried away their health as a possession; one brought it back as a thanksgiving, and to him alone was it said that faith had saved him, for gratitude is the health of the healed.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Ambrose of Milan (*Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke, on the steward*)

Ambrose refuses to let the shrewd steward scandalize: the Lord commends foresight, not fraud, and instructs us to do with justice what the steward did with cunning, convert what we cannot keep into what we cannot lose. The riches of this world, Ambrose preaches, are alien to us and pass through our hands once; only what is given to the poor travels ahead of us, and the friends mammon makes among them will testify for us at the everlasting doors.

CATECHISM CONNECTION

CCC 1021-1022 The particular judgment, taught with tonight's Lazarus text: each soul's eternal retribution at death.

CCC 633 Christ's descent to the dead: Abraham's bosom, the abode of the just who awaited the Redeemer.

CCC 2007 No strict merit before God: the unprofitable servants and the theology of grace crowning grace.

CCC 1461 Priests as ministers of reconciliation by Christ's commission; tonight's session hears the Levitical pattern of priestly verification as a fitting foreshadowing.

CCC 1360 The Eucharist as sacrifice of thanksgiving: the tenth leper's verb made the Church's central act.

THREAD WATCH

Blessed outsiders (develops tonight, resolves Session 14): The grateful one was a Samaritan. One entry remains in the tally: a thief, four sessions from now.

Great reversal (develops): Lazarus and the rich man is the Magnificat's starkest illustration: the hungry filled, the rich sent empty away, now with names and eternity attached.

Eucharistic vocabulary (develops, resolves Session 13): Eucharistōn at 17:16 joins take-bless-break-give in the pantry. Name the word tonight; Session 13 spends it.

Today / sēmeron (dormant, develops next session): Next week the title word lands on a tax collector's house. Say nothing.

SESSION GOALS

1. Rescue the dishonest steward from scandal: shrewdness commended, mammon converted by mercy, and the impossibility of two masters.
2. Teach the particular judgment from Lazarus as the Catechism does, and run the chasm steelman with exact honesty about what the text does and does not settle.
3. Bank the unworthy servants as the Church's own grammar of merit and grace.
4. Run the Leviticus 14 discovery: why priests, what the healing en route means, and where the pattern points.
5. Let the tenth leper's eucharistōn name the difference between being cleansed and being saved whole.

Time Note (75–90 minutes)

If pressed, fold the millstone and mustard-seed material (17:1–6) into leader framing on the way to Q4, and give the days of Noah (17:22–37) one summary sentence inside the Send. Never cut Q2 and Q3 (Lazarus and its steelman), Q5 (the Leviticus discovery), or Q6 (the tenth leper). The steward (Q1) can compress to ten minutes if the group does not flinch at it; budget fifteen if they do.

Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, ten cried to you for mercy and one came back. Make us the one. Teach us tonight to spend what we cannot keep on what we cannot lose, to see the Lazarus at our own gate, and to return to you with loud thanksgiving, tonight and at every altar, until gratitude becomes our health. Amen.*

WIN: OPENING QUESTIONS (10 MIN)

W1. What is the most creative, resourceful thing you have ever done under a deadline? Where does that energy go in your spiritual life?

W2. Think of a gift or a rescue you never properly said thank you for. What kept you from going back?

BUILD: INTO THE TEXT (50–60 MIN)

HOW TO LEAD THIS SECTION

Two flinch-points tonight: a parable that seems to praise fraud and a parable about hell. Meet both with calm precision; the ANSWER boxes carry the exact distinctions. Then the lepers lift the night: end on gratitude, not on the chasm.

1. Read Luke 16:1–13. Be precise: what exactly does the master commend the steward for, and what does Jesus tell us to imitate? What does make friends by means of unrighteous mammon mean in practice, and who are the they who receive us into eternal habitations?

Leader: *Shrewdness, not dishonesty. The sons of this world plan harder for retirement than the sons of light do for eternity. In the Church's longstanding reading, the friends are the poor; mercy converts mammon. Ambrose in the Voices box.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The commendation is surgical: the master praised the dishonest steward for his **prudence**, his decisive, future-facing shrewdness, never his fraud, and Jesus' application names the shame: the sons of this world out-plan the sons of light. Worldly people mobilize everything for a future that ends; disciples yawn toward a future that does not. The instruction converts the parable to cash: make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, money being unrighteous in its usual grip on us, and the friends, in the tradition's steady reading from Ambrose onward, being the poor, who, received into the eternal habitations ahead of us, become our welcoming committee. Proverbs said it first: he who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord. St. Ambrose's summary is the whole doctrine: convert what you cannot keep into what you cannot lose. Then the ladder tightens to tonight's memory verse, faithful in very little, faithful in much, and snaps shut on the impossibility: you cannot serve God and mammon. Not should not; cannot. Two masters is one too many.

2. Read Luke 16:19–31. Only one character of Jesus' own invention in all his parables has a name (Abraham appears here too, but as a figure of history, not of the story's making). Who gets it, who loses his, and what was the rich man's actual sin? Then map the geography after death: where is each man, what is fixed between them, and what is the rich man's last argument with Abraham about?

***Leader:** Lazarus, God helps, named; the rich man anonymous in death. The sin: the gate, passed daily. Abraham's bosom, Hades, the chasm. The last argument: send someone from the dead to my brothers; they have Moses and the prophets.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The naming is the first reversal: the beggar whom the world stepped over carries a name in heaven, Lazarus, God helps, while purple-and-linen goes into death anonymous. His sin is never named as cruelty; it is the gate: a man at his door, daily, visibly, in need, and a life so upholstered that ruin at the gate never interrupted a single banquet, exactly Amos's woe against those at ease who are not grieved. St. John Chrysostom preached it without anesthesia: the surplus withheld from the poor is theft from them, and Lazarus was the rich man's daily, declined salvation. After death, the geography of Hades: Lazarus carried to Abraham's bosom, the rich man in torment, a great chasm fixed. His pleas descend from water to messengers, and Abraham's last answer is the parable's blade: if they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if some one should rise from the dead. A man named Lazarus will rise (Jn 11), and the authorities will plot to kill him; Another will rise, and the guards will be bribed. Evidence was never the shortage. Willingness was.

3. Steelman chain: The strong Protestant argument from this parable: the chasm is fixed, none may cross, therefore purgatory is unbiblical and prayers for the dead are useless. State it at full strength. Then interrogate the text's setting: when does this scene take place relative to Christ's death and resurrection, what realm is it depicting, and what exactly does Catholic teaching claim purgatory is and is not?

***Leader:** Honor the argument; the finality is real and CCC 1021 teaches particular judgment from this text. Then the precision: the scene is Hades before the resurrection opened heaven (CCC 633); purgatory is not the far side of the chasm but the purification of the already-saved; the chasm separates the damned from the blessed, which the Church affirms absolutely. Hedge where the Church hedges.*

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Grant the steelman its truths first, because they are Catholic truths: death fixes the soul's fundamental state, the Catechism teaches the particular judgment from this very parable (CCC 1021), and no one migrates from damnation to blessedness; the chasm is as fixed for Rome as for Geneva. Where the argument overreaches is in what it makes the chasm separate. The scene is Hades, the realm of the dead before Christ's resurrection, Abraham's bosom being the waiting place of the just to whom Christ descended (CCC 633), not the final heaven and hell after judgment; the parable is a snapshot of the old economy on the eve of its transformation. And purgatory, in the Church's actual teaching, is not the far side of that chasm and never was: it is the purification of those who die in God's friendship, already saved, being made ready for the vision of God, a doctrine resting on other texts (1 Cor 3:11–15; 2 Macc 12:38–46) and on the Church's unbroken practice of praying for her dead. So the honest summary: this parable teaches the finality of judgment and

teaches it hard; it neither mentions nor touches the purification of the saved. We should not claim more, and the steelman should not claim more either. Where Scripture is silent and the Church has spoken, we say so in that order.

DIG DEEPER: UNWORTHY SERVANTS: THE GRAMMAR OF MERIT

Luke 17:7–10 is four verses of anti-Pelagian steel: when you have done all that is commanded, say, we are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty. No creature can put God in debt; obedience pays nothing down, because everything, including the power to obey, was his gift first (CCC 2007). And yet Luke's Jesus keeps promising reward, even, astonishingly, the master who girds himself to serve the watching servants (12:37). Both are true, and together they are the Catholic doctrine of merit: God freely promised to crown his own gifts, so reward is real and debt is never. We are unworthy servants whom the Master, unaccountably, plans to wait on.

4. Read Luke 17:11–14. Ten lepers, standing far off as the Law required, cry: Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Now the strange command: instead of healing them on the spot, where does he send them, still leprous? **Live discovery:** find Leviticus 14:1–4 and read what the priest's role is for a cleansed leper. Then look at exactly when in the journey the healing happens.

Leader: The find: the priest examines and certifies the healed leper and offers the restoration liturgy; only the priest's word reopens community and worship. And 17:14: as they went they were cleansed, healing inside the obedience.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

Leviticus 14 answers the strangeness: Israel's priests did not heal leprosy, they **verified** its healing, examined the cleansed man, offered the appointed sacrifices, and by their certification restored him to family, community, and sanctuary. Jesus, who heals with a word, deliberately routes his miracle through the mediation his own Law ordained: go show yourselves to the priests, spoken to ten men still covered in the disease, and as they went they were cleansed, the healing occurring inside the walk of obedience, faith moving before sight had anything to report. St. Cyril loved that detail, and a Catholic cannot miss where the pattern points: the risen Christ, who forgives sins by his own authority, chose to route the certification and restoration of the forgiven through priests: if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven (Jn 20:23; CCC 1461). Catholics have long seen in Leviticus 14 a fitting foreshadowing of the confessional, the appointed place where cleansing is spoken over you out loud and you are handed back to the community whole; the sacrament itself rests on Christ's own commission (Jn 20:23; CCC 1461). He could do it all invisibly. He prefers, as at the Jordan and the rooftop and here on the Samaria road, to work through the visible and the ordained.

5. Read Luke 17:15–19. One of the ten turns back. Walk his actions verb by verb, and catch the word Luke uses for what he does at Jesus' feet. Then weigh the three questions Jesus asks, and the difference between what all ten received and what the tenth alone is told.

Leader: Praising God with a loud voice, fell on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: eucharistōn. And he was a Samaritan. Ten cleansed (katharizō); one told your faith has saved you (sōzō). Gratitude is the gap.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The tenth man's return is a one-man liturgy: he saw that he was healed, turned back, praised God with a loud voice, fell on his face at Jesus' feet, *eucharistōn*, giving him thanks, and Luke adds the thread's next stitch: now he was a Samaritan. The verb is the one the Church would build her central act around; falling at Jesus' feet to give thanks is what the word Eucharist means. Jesus' three questions grieve more than they scold: were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? The nine did nothing wrong: they believed enough to walk, they were cleansed, they presumably reached the priests. They took the gift and never returned to the Giver, and to them Luke gives the word *katharizō*, cleansed. To the tenth alone: rise and go your way; your faith has **saved** you, *sesōken*. Ten received the miracle; one returned to the Giver, and what Jesus credits in him is faith, faith whose whole shape was thanksgiving. Luke's two verbs, *katharizō* for the ten and *sōzō* for the one, invite the deeper reading without pronouncing on the nine. A sacramentally busy life that never turns back in gratitude is nine-tenths of this story, which is why the Church begins her greatest prayer: let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

6. Read Luke 17:20–21. The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you. Said to Pharisees, with the King standing in front of them: what were they scanning the horizon for, and what were they missing at arm's length? Where does the same mistake happen now?

Leader: Brief closer. They audited signs while the Kingdom stood in sandals in front of them. Bridge gently to the Eucharistic parallel: the King in the midst, overlooked.

ANSWER: SHARE AFTER THE DISCUSSION

The Pharisees were sign-watchers, auditing the horizon for an apocalypse with a timetable, while the kingdom of God stood in the midst of them wearing sandals, healing their lepers, and eating with their sinners. The mistake is perennial: scanning the distance for a God who is at arm's length. The tenth leper is the alternative in one man: he stopped scanning, turned around, and found the kingdom at the feet he fell before. Ask a Catholic congregation where the King is in the midst of them and the tabernacle lamp answers; the question is only whether we are the nine or the one.

SEND: TAKING IT OUT (10 MIN)

S1. Name your gate: the person or need you pass so regularly you have stopped seeing it. What is one concrete act of unrighteous-mammon conversion you could make there this week?

S2. Where are your nine? Count the mercies of the last year you never went back and thanked God for, out loud, at his feet. What would returning look like this week, concretely?

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Make one deliberate act of thanksgiving after Communion this week: stay two extra minutes, on your knees, and name the mercies. Be the tenth.
- Convert some mammon: give to one person or cause where repayment is impossible, in honor of

the man at the gate.

- Before next session, read Luke 18:1–19:27: a persistent widow, a Pharisee and a tax collector at prayer, and a small man in a tree. The title word is waiting in that tree.

Scripture memory: **Luke 16:10**, *He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.* (RSV2CE)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: *Lord Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Cleanse what is leprous in us as we walk in obedience, open our eyes to Lazarus at the gate, and turn us back to your feet with loud thanksgiving. Let us not be found among the nine, Lord; make gratitude our health and Eucharist our habit. Amen.*

Leader Reference Card: Session 10

Every passage used tonight, in order of appearance. Leviticus 14 is the load-bearing bookmark.

Passage Used for

Luke 16:1–13 Q1: the shrewd steward; two masters

Proverbs 19:17 Q1: lending to the Lord

Luke 16:19–31 Q2-Q3: Lazarus and the rich man

Amos 6:4–7 Q2: woe to those at ease

1 Corinthians 3:11–15; 2 Maccabees 12:38–46

Q3 steelman: where purgatory's texts actually live

Luke 17:7–10 Dig Deeper: unworthy servants; CCC 2007

Luke 17:11–19 Q4-Q5: the ten lepers

Leviticus 14:1–4 Q4 live discovery: the priest verifies the cleansing

John 20:23 Q4: the pattern fulfilled

2 Kings 5:1–15 Background: Naaman, the first grateful foreign leper

Luke 17:20–21 Q6: the kingdom in the midst

CCC 1021–1022, 633, 2007, 1461, 1360 Catechism Connection

Next week: Luke 18:1–19:27: prayer, humility, and Zacchaeus. Bookmark Exodus 22:1; a tax collector in a sycamore is about to out-repay the Law of Moses, and the group should do the math themselves.