**Luke 11-12 – conflict, division and rejection vs. mercy, justice, and love**

*11:1-13 – lessons on prayer*

* Luke stresses the importance of prayer for Jesus (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; with more to come), but has limited teaching about prayer. Luke’s version of the Lord’s prayer is even shorter than Matthew.
* The first lesson is the example of how to pray in 11:1-4 – the example of prayer  
  The lesson is very simple. There may be an implied contrast to how John taught his disciples to pray, which we may assume was a little more detailed and possibly more elaborate than this short example of prayer.
  + Recognition of God as Father (implies authority, love, loyalty, and provision)
  + Recognition of sanctity/holiness of God.
  + Prayer for coming of His Kingdom (Matthew expands on this by adding “May your will be done on earth.” Asking for God’s will to be done on earth is the same as asking for His Kingdom. This implies our willingness and desire to be part of His Kingdom, promoting His program, lest we be found to be enemies of His Kingdom.)
  + Prayer for a daily supply of minimum needs for survival. (This could be especially pertinent to the experience of the 12 and of the 72 in chapters 9 & 10 who went out to proclaim the Kingdom without bringing provisions.)
  + Prayer for forgiveness of sins, predicated on our own forgiveness of the sins (and debts?) of others.
  + Prayer for avoidance of trials (which neither Jesus nor his disciples ever managed to avoid). Perhaps this is meant to be a prayer for a pure heart so that trials do not try us and temptations don’t tempt us.

This example is remarkable for its simplicity and plain language. God seems to prefer prayer that is plain, direct, and honest.  
The prayer also implies 3 obligations on the petitioner:

* Active participation in and loyalty to Christ’s Kingdom
* Forgiveness of those who wrong us
* Conformity to the heart of God
* The second lesson (reinforced in 18:1-8) is in 11:5-8 – the shameless neighbor. (Vs. 8 should be translated “Because of his shamelessness,” not “because of his persistence.”)  
  Be shameless in prayer. Just as the hemorrhaging woman who touched the hem of Jesus’ garment, risking his rebuke, we should not hold back out of deference to God. Do not give up. Ask in His name for what is good.
* The third lesson is in 11:9-13 – even evil Fathers give good gifts.  
  God will assuredly grant good things to those who seek and ask. The promise of the Holy Spirit (the best gift) is an indication of what is most highly valued and for which we should pray.  
  Note the comment, “you, being evil.” This is consistent with Jesus’ retort to the ruler who called Him “Good teacher”: “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.” If God alone is “good,” then we are necessarily evil. Not a pleasant thought.

*11:14-23 – “in league with the devil”?*

Jesus replied to the accusation that he was acting with the power of Satan, he replied that that would mean that Satan was attacking himself. He then takes the opportunity to explain what role exorcisms played in his mission. Casting out demons by the “finger of God” (a symbol of God’s power, like the “arm of God” in the Old Testament, but emphasizing the ease with which He overpowers the demons) is one prong of the invasion of the Kingdom of God into this world. It is not just a demonstration of Jesus’ compassion and power; it is the necessary engagement with the enemy of the Kingdom. In order for the Kingdom to be victorious, Jesus must disarm the “strong man” by means of his greater strength.

In vs. 23 Jesus proclaims that neutrality is impossible; one must be on His side, or be against Him. This seems to contradict 9:50, where Jesus commented on those who were casting out demons but were not going along with the company who followed Jesus. “Do not prevent them for whoever is not against you is for you.” In this case the reference is to those who are also joining in the fight against Satan, but are not associated with Jesus’ company. We need to be wise about who we consider to be with or against us. In the end, if we are loyal to His Kingdom, then we are allies of anyone who is also allied with His Kingdom.

*11:24-36 – Conflict with “this evil generation” whose only responsibility is to repent*

Jesus issues a warning that victory over Satan requires replacing subjection to Satan with something else; God’s blessing is on those who hear and keep His word. (See also 9:35, 10:42.)

Instead of seeking a sign, this evil generation should be repenting, since Jesus (greater than Solomon or Jonah) is here.

A lamp’s purpose it to give light. This “parable” is applied differently here than in Matthew, where it is an encouragement to “let our light shine before others.” Here it is applied to the eye, which is the “light of the body.” This refers to the expression “the evil eye,” which means the *greedy* eye. If your eye is evil (greedy), your life will be full of darkness. But if it is “single/healthy”, your life will be full of light as if lit up by a lamp. The Greek word that is translated “healthy” usually means, “single” or even “generous.” Either the idea is that your perception must be undivided in its loyalty to the Kingdom or that it must be generous. It is not entirely clear which is meant here.

11:37-54 – Woes upon Pharisees and their bureaucratic support system (i.e. lawyers/scribes)

Jesus is prompted by his host’s (unspoken?) critique of his failure to wash according to customary ritual. He transgresses all social norms of accepted behavior. He mercilessly attacks his host and fellow guests as “fools” because they are meticulous in their observance of externals, such as cleansing, tithing, and social prominence, but entirely neglectful of the important things such as mercy, justice, and the love of God. We are all subject to the temptation to replace the fundamentals (mercy, justice, love of God) with external obedience , “proper” behavior, and social acceptance.

One of the lawyers/scribes cleverly notices: “when you say these things (against Pharisees), you insult us as well.” Jesus agrees. They will be judged as those who burden the people without helping them (neglecting mercy) and who not only refuse knowledge, but also prevent others from attaining it (by means of their deceitful attention to externals).

The response of the objects of Jesus’ scorn was to plot against Him. A better response would have been repentance (like the Ninevites did at Jonah’s preaching).

*12:1-21 – various warnings against hypocrisy, fear of this world, and greed*

12:1-3 – warning against hypocrisy, because the reality will come to light. Hypocrisy will fail.

12:4-12 – warning against fear of torture, because you are infinitely valuable to God whose power over you is greater. Do not give in; remain faithful. The Holy Spirit will aid in your defense.

12:13-21 – warning against greed. Jesus did not come to adjudicate claims related to the riches of this world. Accumulation of wealth is a fool’s errand. Vs. 21: There are 2 kinds of wealth – the accumulation of treasures for yourself, or being “rich toward God.” The latter is to be preferred.

*12:22-34 - The extravagant provision of God for his “little flock”*

Jesus tells his disciples (who had left everything to follow Him) not to worry about food or clothing. This would be a big challenge for those for whom provision of food and clothing was not guaranteed. It is one thing to condemn the rich man for pursuing more wealth than he could ever use while not being rich toward God. It is quite another to tell a poor man to pursue the Kingdom instead of worrying about his next meal, when the source of that next meal may not be obvious. This amounts to a clear and uncompromising call to generosity. No matter how poor or wealthy, we need to cling to the basic values of mercy, justice, and love (in contrast to the Pharisees and the rich farmer). In doing so, we will be “seeking His Kingdom.”

God is pleased to grant us His Kingdom, but this means that we must live by the norms of His Kingdom, in dependence upon Him and not on ourselves. We gain treasure in heaven when we give away our earthly treasures; and our heart will follow. Instead of a heart that clings to earthly things, we will have a heart that clings to heaven.

*12:35-59 – Be ready for His coming*

35-40: We don’t know when He will come, so we must be always prepared for action.   
41-48: Jesus gives each of us a mission; we must faithfully execute that mission at all times. Doing so will yield a reward; failure will result in punishment. In vs 41, Peter asks "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" Jesus doesn’t actually answer, but we can be sure that the parable applies to us as well.  
49-53: Jesus has come to bring division, not peace. Not because He is not the peace-giver, but because He demands that all make a choice; and some will chose for Him, while others choose against Him. There is no peace between His Kingdom and this world.  
54-59: Pay attention to the time. It is time to be reconciled with our accuser. In this case, the accuser is anyone who can bring a charge against us of being unmerciful, unjust, or unloving. God will not take it kindly.