

PERFECT IN MANLINESS

The Gospel of Luke

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Studies in the Four Gospels," by G. Campbell Morgan
- "What the Bible Teaches, Luke," by N. Crawford
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

LUKE 1:1-23

MOST SURELY BELIEVED

In this dispensation, the grace of God is more openly displayed and written of than in any other period of God's dealing with mankind. The book of the Gospel according to Luke's writing has had far-reaching effects on people of many cultures. He was a Greek physician by training and gave this teaching to a Roman named Theophilus ("one who loves God") which certainly is for all of us who "love the Lord in sincerity and in truth." The reliability of the message is that it has come to us by the Holy Spirit through Luke and was testified to by eyewitnesses of the events recorded. Luke knew these were facts because he got them from those who were there. We don't have to have doubts about these written accounts even though some are given in this book that are not in the other Gospels. Luke was receptive to the message because there were those who ministered the word and those who saw what happened. Theophilus was responsive to this testimony of Christ as the Perfect Man and would have passed it on to others as the Spirit of God intended.

The believing saints of those times as well as today can understand the things Luke wrote in the written form and apply them to ourselves in a personal way. Probably by his training and work as a physician Luke was precise and accurate in the way he wrote of those events. The humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ is taught in almost every recorded event, teaching and parable in the book. He made them understandable by making each subject very readable. In this way things are able to be reviewed until they are truly learned. He was committed to writing of them in a very positive way so they would be known of a "certainty."

The response to what Luke heard was evident in the historical account of "a certain priest" and his wife who are introduced to us at the very beginning of the book. The time is precise, "in the days of Herod;" the account is accurate in that he was a Levite (priests were of that tribe) and his wife, Elizabeth, was also a Levite ("of the daughters of Aaron"). The carefulness of the very first account in the book sets the tone of the whole Gospel of Luke. Zacharias is identified as not only a man of position, a priest, but an honorable man who with his wife was committed to live a righteous life before God. He was not one of the priests who only went through the forms of public worship, but he practiced what he taught. Both he and his wife feared and respected God, without relying on their pedigree as of the Aaronic priesthood to make them acceptable. These two were united in their devotion to God and in their walk before the Lord. God had been watching them and was able to use them to bring the prophetic fulfillment of the forerunner to pass. These two people were consistent in following God and His laws. They backed up their outward holiness of life with inward obedience. God could trust them with the important task of guiding their miracle son, John, to prepare the way of the Lord and to open the door of history to be changed. God used them and guided them. Even though there was doubt on Zacharias' part at first, he was able to accomplish his responsibility.

It is of interest to see the multitude of people praying appropriately while Zacharias was inside the temple tending to the priestly duties in the appointed way and time. God makes Himself known through messengers He chooses. In this case it was Gabriel, an angel who stood in the presence of God and was sent by God to give this good news. The preciseness of Luke's writing sets the on-going tone of the book. Zacharias was God's man, doing God's work, in God's way, in God's time. We need to be reminded that what we pray for is not forgotten. God remembered Zacharias' past prayers and used him to be the answer to his own prayers. This is not uncommon with God today in His dealing with us. "Impossible situations" are not actually impossible. God works in His own time and way through us as He did with that couple.

That "certain priest" had a specific prayer he had been making and God knew what it was and how and when He would answer it. He, his wife and others were looking for the "Dayspring on High" to come to God's people. A person who is faithful in service for God, who is committed to living righteously as God intends and carries out what God has already instructed is one God can entrust with other responsibilities. This "certain priest" and his wife were given the privilege of being the channel through which prophetic scriptures were fulfilled. The son, John, was to be the "prophet of the Highest." To serve God and His people in any way is a great privilege. To be specifically chosen to do a work designated by Him is one of life's highest

honors. To see others blessed by God through the efforts we have made overshadows any difficulties our labor may have imposed on us. To see believers, we have nurtured and prayed for, go forward in effective service for God is a great delight and is a reason to be thankful for and praise God for. How wonderful God is to allow us to play a small part of what He is doing in the world today.

LUKE 1:3. *“It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,”*

IT SEEMED GOOD TO ME.

There are some people who are able to say,
The things to be said in just the right way.
The Spirit of God could use Dr. Luke;
He was the kind of man who never took
Credit to himself for whatever he wrote;
But at the same time recognized the need of a book
That would clearly lay out to those who would read,
Jesus is the Perfect Man, to Him they must heed.

From the little we know about this special man,
He was willing to help Paul, as part of his band.
He wrote down in order some special insights;
That we would never have if he was not willing to write.
He unfolded in words many things as they were;
The Spirit was there to make sure no error
Was made in the text, as He guided along
The doctor to tell many things that were done.

Many of the incidents in the work of the Lord
When He was here, Luke was thus to record;
That are not found elsewhere in the scriptures of truth.
God used the skill and the eye of observant Dr. Luke,
Who was seeing the work and the things Jesus said,
With a critical eye as a medical man would.
He makes note of the physical, like hands and feet.
He also notes Jesus' human-touch, when men He did meet.

The beauty of the writing of the Gospel of Luke;
Is known world over for the care that he took,
To make understandable what he did know,
And pass on to others that they too would show;
The work and the words from the day of His birth;
To the death of the Savior, who lived on this earth.
Luke's Gospel writings and the book of the Acts,
God used to give clear light on unique, special facts.

“I am thankful Father, that you gave some people the “pen of a ready writer”, otherwise we would be always wondering about how things were and what they should be like now. Luke must have been special to You, because he was used to give so many unique stories and illustrations that give great light. I would like to be able in some way, to be used to pass on truths to my generation, in order for them to be more able to live and testify to Your grace and power.” In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 1: 3b-4. *“Most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”*

THEOPHILUS.

THE MAN: For a man to be called “most excellent” would mean several important things.

First, he was a man who probably filled a high position in either the government or in business. He would have to be trustworthy to attain that role. His reputation would be intact in more than one situation in life.

Second, he had done a good job at whatever calling he was in or he could not have maintained that position. To be consistent in an occupation over an extended period of time is a good estimation of a man's character and proficiency.

Third, he was willing to learn and keep on learning. He had been instructed and apparently had some questions regarding the circumstances around the life and teaching of the Lord. He wanted his facts to

be absolutely right. In both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of the Acts, the “things wherein thou hast been instructed,” and the “things most surely believed among us,” were important to him.

THE MESSAGE: The uniqueness of the Gospel of Luke with the emphasis on the perfect manliness of the Lord Jesus Christ would certainly appeal to a Greek.

There are many mentions in both books written by Luke to Theophilus on human life situations. The circumstances surrounding the birth of Christ are cases in point. The thoughts and words of Zacharias and Elizabeth are significant and very identifiable to every couple.

The thoughts and prayer of Mary are so important to consider. Even though they seem profound at first, it is obvious in reading what Luke wrote that she had considered the impact of the birth of Christ

All through Luke right up to the last chapter, there are human-interest stories. Two people walking along a road, downcast in spirit, confused and wondering what was going to happen next, and then joined by the Lord Jesus as Luke says, “Jesus drew near and went with them,” gives great power to the whole resurrection story.

THE METHOD: The facts were written down by Luke (no doubt a methodical man who as a physician would be careful in getting things right) and were transmitted in the best possible way – the written word. To a Greek, accuracy and a way to study the subject thoroughly would be important. After scrutiny and careful consideration, Theophilus would be able to pass on all that he read with confidence that it was correct in every sense. He in turn would make sure copies, accurately transcribed, would be passed on to other believers and the “scriptures of truth” would be used over and over to feed, assure and instruct the people of God.

“O God and Father of truth and righteousness: it is always a reason for confidence and comfort to realize that Thy word has been accurately passed on to us without any further need of authentication. The ones Thou hast used in the past to transcribe Thy truth and pass it on, were reliable people. That is a characteristic I covet to have and maintain. By Thy divine means, please use this person to transmit Thy truth in a trustworthy and accurate manner. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 1:6. *“And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”*

A PRIEST AND HIS WIFE.

This priest and his wife are examples to us:
Both to God and men their life's there to be seen.
To the commandments of God their motive is clean;
And to the things seen by men, they are verily blameless -
“Walking before the Lord.”

News that is given when standing before God;
Is so hard to believe, that serious doubts have arisen.
Silence, no words from the priest can be spoken,
Until proof is there written, “He shall be called John.”
“Fear not, thy prayer is heard.”

His wife filled with joy and assurance within;
Was able to know all that God promised was true.
Her God of the impossible was able to do
What without Him, could never be accomplished by man.
“She was filled with the Holy Ghost.”

The time finally arrived when the promise came true.
A son promised by God, was born unto them.
As soon as the priest wrote, “His name is John.”
His mouth was opened and his tongue was then loosed.
“He spake and praised God.”

Zacharias too, like Elizabeth before,
Was filled with the Spirit to openly bless God.
Promises made long since in the written Word,
Have now come to pass, for God's promises are sure.
“The Lord God hath visited His people.”

With words full of joy, he spoke of the Highest:
And the prophet, his son, who would show the way back.
The people in darkness, whose Light they all lacked;

By the God who still loved them, now have been blessed.
"Guide our feet into the way of peace."

"I am able to learn by reading of others before me, Father, of what really is important to You. The things unseen by men: motives, desires, reasons for acting the way we do, are all like an open book before Your knowledge. It is with gratitude and humility that I read of this man and his wife who spent their life together serving You and Your people while missing out on what they personally wanted. What special people! What a great and gracious God! What wonderful blessings God promises are! Amen."

LUKE 1:13-14. *"But the angel said unto him, Fear not Zechariah: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth."*

THY PRAYER IS HEARD.

Not everyone can make the same claim
To have God Himself give our child his name.
But John was identified with a name just like God,
For he was to step out in his generation and speak for the Lord.

He may not have known all the effects of his ministry.
But the scriptures unfold on their pages of history
That the Holy Spirit used him in remarkable ways
And the results still go on to this very day.

The hearts of many fathers got a new sense
Of their impression made on the children by this man God sent.
Disobedient people changed and became wise and just;
As they listened to John who spoke to them - and also to us.

So, the result of one man who was willing to do
Just exactly what God said and wanted him to;
Affected people then and perhaps here we can show,
The God John served then is the God I serve now.

"I know Father God, that this man preached in power and the Holy Spirit used him mightily to change a nation and ready it to respond the Lord Jesus. I would like to be able to do the same here in this large city at this time - even if it is only a small start. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 1:23-80

RELIABILITY, RESPONSE, RECOGNITION, RESULTS

To be able to see the signs of the times and be willing to faithfully do our work for the Lord in difficult times, is a positive testimony to those around us. In spite of a brief period of doubt on the part of Zacharias, he and Elizabeth still testify to the faithfulness of this spiritually united couple. When Gabriel told Zacharias the child's name would be "John" (the Lord is gracious), he didn't try to change that to his own name as was expected. The special work John would do was described in advance to be that of a consecrated Nazarite. The Holy Spirit is mentioned first in Luke in relation to John being filled with the Spirit before he was born. Personhood is clearly taught as being real before birth. Later we read of John's reaction in the womb when Mary came to visit. This special son was the bringer of joy, gladness and rejoicing to many people. He was great in the Lord's sight and was separated to God to bring blessing to the nation of Israel.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned more times in Luke than in the other Gospel accounts. John needed the Holy Spirit to fill Him for the work ahead of him. We need the same Holy Spirit to empower us for the work God has for us to do in our day. The work of the Holy Spirit is often made quite evident to us. He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgment. He reveals Christ to us. He gives us information about things yet to come. He leads and guides us in our service for the Lord. In that way we are separated from the world to God. The warnings and instructions John gave to the people of that day are part of our responsibility to the people around us. It is entirely unfair for us to know the consequences of sin and not seek in some Spirit guided way to make them known to others.

The promises of God made then and now, are reliable. They will be kept at the appointed time of God's choosing. As that responsive couple learned to trust God and their faith was placed in Him, so ours should be as well today. The recognition of what God was doing then is a lesson for us. We all need to know God's will even though it may be outside the area of anything we have previously experienced. We need to remember God uses people who are clean vessels before Him and the world. Ease is not promised if we live

godly. Persecution is promised. Reproach and righteousness go together. To doubt God is a result of "the sin that doth so easily beset us" - unbelief. The promises of God can always be counted on. Faith and full surrender to God's will go together even if we don't understand the circumstances surrounding the events going on.

God knows when we need encouragement and He is able to strengthen us in our faith in ways that are most unusual. Gabriel appeared to Mary a little later than he did to Zacharias with a message of similar impact. Any message from God is important. This time, in a very clear way, Gabriel told Mary she had found favor with God and was going to be used in a unique way by God. Mary was young, a female and perhaps poor, but was surrendered and available to God for a special work for Him. It is wrong for us to limit God. Our inability does not make us unusable. Mary would be ridiculed, Joseph was close to leaving her, but in her innate humility she was able to be used as a surrendered person whose words of worship of the Lord have been read by millions of people. Submission may bring sorrow and difficulty but as long as we know it is in God's plan, it is right. Who would ever have conceived of using a virgin birth as a means of blessing except God Himself. He is the only One who could bring this about.

Luke, the beloved physician would know the normal course of life from birth to death. He would know this was not some fictional account but was a divine intervention in the course of natural life to bring about blessing to us all. He was used to record these miraculous events in a way that convinces us of their reality. The sinless Son of God was born holy and as such could become our Sinless Substitute. He was free from a sinful nature passed on through two human parents. He was born without any kind or trace of sin. As the only One of hypostatic union with a human and divine nature, He has power to deliver us from sin, even though He understands our humanity. He has experienced human life in its physical sense including the limitations of daily living that affect us.

The submission of Mary to willingly obey God, her response to the Lord's demands, indicates a real servanthood that God desires in His people. Sharing the experience with Elizabeth seemed to be the right thing to do. In doing so, she produced the spirit and words of worship that have been read for 2000 years. One woman experiencing miraculous child-birth after child-bearing age, and another experiencing motherhood as a virgin seem way beyond our natural ability to believe. Yet it came to pass as God intended and has established an affirmation of our confidence in God today.

The Sovereign God brought things to pass just as He promised. Elizabeth and Zacharias had a son named John. God was working through frail mortal people to bring about the greatest of all blessings to us. God can use who He chooses, to do what He wants. We need to commit ourselves to be faithful to Him in everything we do today.

The human experience cannot always be explained
In ways that are common to all.
In spite of the unusual, our faith is maintained
Because we trust God on whom we call.
Doubts may be a problem from time to time
Because of things unknown to us.
Like Zacharias, we need to keep in mind
The nature of the One we trust.

How would I handle the very strange news;
So far removed from my reality -
That God in His will would this weak person choose
To bring blessing to others through me.
Elizabeth knew God well enough to know
What He said would come to pass.
The events promised would happen because God said so
There was no reason to doubt or to ask.

Not much more than a child but one God favored
Mary was God's chosen vessel to use.
The moment of visitation would be one she savored
But not the ones of coming suffering she would choose.
A "vessel unto honor" needs to always remember
There is a purpose behind God's every act.
The ultimate goal we are called to consider
Before it's done, to God is an accomplished fact.

John probably didn't know what at first moved him
To respond before birth to Mary's visit that day.

But the two women shared the news between them
Some unusual sons were coming that way.
Both John and Jesus in the same place -
Both unseen there at the same time -
Were evidence that God in great acts of grace,
Was working out salvation's plan sublime.

We have come into the good of what happened then,
The messenger and the Message have come.
One came as a prophet to give warning to men,
The Message-Redeemer who came was God's Son.
Those parents were people the same as we are
Living a life that was normal to them.
Through them we are motivated by faith-living to aspire
To be a channel of blessing for Him.

"I thank Thee, Father, for those who in their own time, place and way were vessels ready to be filled for Thy use. May this servant be always ready in whatever task I am called, to act in faith without hesitation or needing a whole lot of explanation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 1:76-79. *"And thou child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercies of our God; whereby the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."*

HIS NAME IS JOHN.

What expectations! What demands! What a world view of things! - from a child.
To look ahead and see - see with clarity and with understanding - the way of the Lord.
To be born out of season, supernatural, by promise, with a known purpose - God arranged it.
To know and worship, to be filled with the Spirit before even being born - a real person.
To be linked with Elijah, to have the same work, to have the same impact - a prophet.
To be the chosen one to go ahead, the opening event after hundreds of years - the forerunner.
To be the point-man of a new day, to read the signs and know the reasons - the guide.
To smooth the path, thirty years of hardy self-discipline under the camel-skin coat - the desert-dweller.
To live simply; basic needs met in basic ways, bugs and honey for sustenance - the Essene.
Who is this? His name is John.

What a work! What a generation! What a great national need! - from the heat of the desert.
It was promised - he would go before the face of the Lord - the priest's son.
It was purposed - he would prepare the ways of the Lord - his own relative.
It was proclaimed - he was to give knowledge of salvation - to a lost generation.
It was practical - remission of sins was essential, there was no other way - for a nation.
It was poignant - through the tender (bowels of) mercies from the highest Source - our God.
It was plain - from heaven is coming Light that will expose all - the Day Spring from on high.
It had potential - his message would give light in darkness and death's shadow - the Light comes on.
It was personal - he would know and show where the feet should go - he was the guide.
Who does this? His name is John.

What a kind of a man is this? What is he like? How can he do this work? Who is he?
He grows - in his physic, in his spirit, in his coping abilities, in his strength - the child.
He lives - in the deserts, in privacy, in the learning mode, in practical righteousness - the learner.
He leaves - the time has come, the word of the Lord calls him to move out, time to go - the traveler.
He preaches - repentance, turning from sin, flee from the wrath to come - the preacher.
He predicts - the Lord is coming, get ready, prepare for what is ahead - the prophet.
He challenges - make the necessary changes now, let's see reality, salvation now - the soul-winner.
He baptizes - really mean what you say, make evident to others your honesty - the Baptist.
He identifies - the Lamb of God, the Sin-bearer, the Savior, the Messiah - the voice.
He warns - that is sin Herod, God condemns what you are doing, repent - the martyr.
His work is done! His name is John.

“Father, I believe a life lived with the confidence that this is what God has called me to do, is probably one of the greatest causes of peace in the soul there could ever be. No matter what arises, to be able to say, ‘I know this is the right way,’ is a blessed way to live, work and die. Thank You giving me this assurance too. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 2:1-20

IT CAME TO PASS

After two thirds of human history had passed, the promised "seed of the woman" came into the world. World events had been directed by God so that at just the right time, Roman authority arranged a movement of people all across the empire to be taxed. The Greeks had their day and now had faded into an intellectual but powerless way of living. Rome with military dominance made things happen by force when necessary. The taxing that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem was out of the ordinary as far as normal taxing procedure in the world was concerned. We know it was ordained of God to bring prophetic promises to pass. The towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth would have had little reason to make any connection apart from the fact that the One born in Bethlehem would be called a Nazarene who was called out of Egypt.

We may be inclined to think things that happen to us are merely coincidental until we can see things through God's eyes, or look back and see "the way that God led me." God has perfect timing and a perfect plan for us similar to the way He sent His Son into the world. Our problems in life are often brought about by our resistance to God's plan and the substitution of our own. In God's timing of things and places He is able to bring to accomplishment what He has given us to do. Problems in discerning God's will often comes when there is opposition, discomfort and inconvenience. If we are not careful in reading the scriptures, we could think that a smooth road and ease of labor in our occupation is evidence of God's will for us. The inconvenience and uncomfortable journey of a very pregnant young woman and her caring husband would have turned them aside from God's guidance had they acted willfully. God doesn't make mistakes.

The dirty and smelly accommodations of a manger where animals fed is not what we would consider a suitable place for a baby to be delivered. In God's sovereign plan, the surroundings in no way limited His intentions. The world we live in isn't going to get better until Christ reigns. We need to face that fact. Moral and spiritual darkness will continue to increase. The atmosphere of where we live will continue to be more anti-God, anti-Bible, anti-Christ and anti-Christian as time passes. In the descriptions given of the "last days," we can see a rapid deterioration of righteousness, integrity, dignity, honor and respect in this day. We do not have the mandate to "change the world" but to "be not conformed to this world" and to "preach the Gospel," "make disciples" in all nations. To substitute our own ambitions and vision for what God has given is futile, a waste of effort and is not of faith. When we acknowledge "Jesus Christ is Lord," then we will act according to His will and His Word. He can produce what He will in His way and through the persons of His choosing. We should never underestimate Him and His power and authority. He has committed Himself to those who respond to His mandate.

The birth of Christ in one way was very humbling, and yet to the shepherds who heard the announcement from the angel of the Lord, here was terrifying fear. When they got the whole message, that fear was turned to joy, praise and testimony. When we are first confronted with the message of God, there is fear. Sin has found us out. Our guilt makes us want to hide. Then we hear the message of the Gospel as it unfolds to us that the Spirit of God has come to us in conviction of sin and revelation of Christ. Christ become personal to us and by God's grace through faith, we recognize and accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Ordinary people in ordinary walks of life don't need extraordinary qualifications for Him to accept us. He receives sinners.

In one night, the whole course of the world changed. The majority then didn't know anything special had happened, but because of the simple words of happy shepherds, an awakening began. We don't know the impact of each event or situation we are in. But with faith in God that we have been guided to this place we can move forward day by day in confidence in spite of what might happen around us or to us. To glorify God and to praise Him in times of darkness, make the light that comes from God much more impacting than if it was done in the day.

With a deep sense of the importance of the shepherds' visit, the announcement of the angel and the miracle of Jesus' birth. Mary grew deeper and more thoughtful regarding her Son and what the future was going to hold for her, her family and the nation. The actions of God may not be understood at the moment, but His plans will work out as He will them to. It is enough that we testify, glorify and praise God for what He is doing and going to do, even though we do not know all the details.

What is so important about one birth, it's happening all the time.
Usually the only question asked, "Is the mother and the baby fine?"
There was only one birth that was different, it has never happened before or since.
That was when through the virgin Mary, the Father to earth the Son sent.

That night is well remembered because of the gifts we may exchange.
But the importance behind the event was the reason why Jesus came.
He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
And the blessings from that work He did is the message to the world we tell.

The shepherds were the first to tell about the Savior they had seen.
From there the news spread as to what such a birth might mean.
Has God really come to earth as the prophets had foretold?
Is God really wanting people to come as sheep into His fold?

Is there hope in this hopeless world where things keep getting more wrong?
Is it possible there is a spiritual healing so the dead live and the weak become strong?
Is there really light in the darkness that won't fail no matter what men do?
Is there a message from God that fails not because in every way it is true?

It all started in one night, but the impact is still being felt.
Light in the soul gives new life, those in darkness can be helped.
There is a future ahead for the One who was born that night
Has power on earth now to forgive sin, and some day will make all things right.

The peace that was promised began when the Prince of Peace came to earth.
And that peace is passed on to believers when they experience the power of new birth.
Even though all around is turmoil, there is peace in the soul of each one
Who has come to God in faith and has been accepted in His Beloved Son.

"Father, even though most people only give the birth of Christ a passing thought once a year, I thank Thee that the Holy Spirit brought me this way today to read and think of the incarnation of Christ. May I be able to pass on to others at this conference the on-going value of the new birth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 2:16. *"And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger."*

A CARPENTER AND HIS VIRGIN WIFE.

From eternity past came the plans of God to be unfolded, revealed, fulfilled.
From the time of the first parents came the promise of God, precise, unusual.
From the source of divine love, the heart of God, came the assurance - real.
The seed of the woman would come: the carpenter's virgin wife's Son - mankind delivered.

From the calendar of history not yet enacted, the place of divine design.
From the table where the plans of redemptive grace were laid out before earth came.
From the carefully carried out events of a tiny nation that became a world power.
The throne of David would be filled forever: the heritage of the carpenter and his virgin wife.

To a despised community looked down on because of poverty and position.
To a laborer's shop where daily toil was needed to provide basic necessities.
To a young woman not long removed from childhood and insignificance.
The messenger came with heavenly news: to the carpenter and his espoused virgin wife.

To the soul of a young virgin longing for a life of meaning and purpose.
To the mind of the carpenter in a dream, hoping for a life of happiness with his wife.
To the two of them from high in heaven above, each separately, not yet one.
The Son of God, call His name Jesus: coming from God to the carpenter and his virgin wife.

From Nazareth they went, to Judea as prophesied, to Bethlehem, to be taxed.
From inn to inn, from house to house, no place could be found - to rest, to stay.
From the place of men to the place of animals, from shelter to a manger.
Alone, with God and the heavenly host: the carpenter and his virgin wife, and the Babe.

From the throne of God to the shepherds in the field with their flocks.
From the Word of God in a far and distant place, to searchers who had long looked.

From the angel and the heavenly host who hastened to obey and rejoiced.
Comes the glad announcement, "He's here, born of a virgin": watched by the carpenter and his virgin wife.

"What a glorious moment it was, O Holy God, when into this world was born Thy only begotten Son. It may have seemed obscure then, but it certainly is not now. Many will not believe on Him but by Thy grace, I have been brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as my Savior. I thank Thee, praise Thee and worship Thee here. Amen."

LUKE 2:21-39

WAITING - LOOKING

God has His people, unknown to most and overlooked by many as unimportant, who are waiting for God to fulfill His promises. Simeon and Anna, along with others were waiting for the promised Messiah to come and deliver Israel. Redemption was on their mind and the "Consolation of Israel" was their hope. They were well acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies. Likely they were thinking the coming Christ would be only for Israel. Joseph and Mary were amazed when Simeon identified the Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah not only to the Jews but that He would also be a light to the whole world. From Simeon's words they learned that some would fall and others would rise in Israel because of Him. Some would accept Him and others would reject Him. Mary herself would have sorrow because of Him being rejected by many.

We do not know what may take place between now and the end of the age. But we do know the promises of God will be kept. And we know that God is working out plans and purposes that may seem like set-backs, or even defeats now but are part of God's divine will. Even as people in that day never lost hope and did not doubt God, so we in this day must not lose sight of the fact that what God says, He will do. There will be a fulfillment of His word. Sometimes as we get older our words may carry extra weight by those who live by faith. On the other hand, many young people will feel we are so disconnected from contemporary life, that what those who are older have to say, has no real value to them or on what is happening today.

Some young people want to know about the past but also want to know how we can learn today from the lessons and promises of the past. Waiting times for those of us who are older do not have to be wasted times. Orderly and sensible review of what we have learned and know by experience of the promises of God and His dealing with us, can be of real benefit to those who are coming up among us. Waiting is not always bad and we should not allow ourselves to be frustrated by these waiting times.

Looking ahead is not necessarily involved in anticipating what might happen, but can include acts of faith that are carried out based on the promises of God. When people are close to God and like Anna, are "looking for redemption," events may not surprise us. They may be causes for thanksgiving and praise to God. The twelve titles of the Lord in the first two chapters of Luke set the stage for the historical account Luke unfolds through the whole book.

As "The Son of the Highest" [1:32], we are taught of His nobility.

As "The Son of David" [1:32], we are reminded of His royalty.

"The Holy One" [1:35], tells us of His purity.

"The Son of God" [1:35] testifies to His deity.

"My Lord" [1:43] establishes His priority.

"The Horn of my Salvation" [1:69] - His omnipotency.

"The Dayspring" [1:78] - His refulgency.

"A Savior" [2:11], tells of His mercy.

"Christ the Lord" [2:11] points out His supremacy.

"The Consolation of Israel" [2:25] - His monarchy.

"A Light of the Gentiles" [2:32] teaches His universality.

"The Glory of Israel" [2:32] - His majesty.

Those who looked forward when they were waiting, saw the blessing that would come through this One unique Person. The One they had anticipated was here and they continued to speak of Him. It is our right and responsibility to do the same today so that the blessing of salvation from "God our Savior who would have all men to be saved..." would reach out to others who do not know Him.

Waiting is not easy when you know one is going to come.
There is a sense of relief when that waiting time is done.
Patience is needed even though the promise was made
And would be kept in an unknown time somewhere ahead.

When the Lord Jesus came there first time, some were waiting.
The day they saw Him there was none of them hesitating
To express their joy and thanks for the promise fulfilled.
Telling others of His coming was surely divinely compelled.

Looking for redemption was their hope for the nation.
The One they were waiting for was Israel's "Consolation."
Faith in God's promises was behind their anticipation.
Simeon's joy was great when he saw "God's Salvation."

We are waiting too, in this favored day of grace.
The promise of God is true, we are waiting to see His face.
When that advent comes, God's ways we them will trace
From the time we came in faith at the beginning of our race.

Now this race will soon be run, and what joy then to see,
The One who gave the promise I am able to claim personally.
All the saints will around Him gather, each one so glad to be
With all of those who can truthfully say, "I believe He died for me."

We wait and we look, neither of these is done in vain.
Each day that passes brings closer the promises believers claim.
The Savior is coming, our faith is in Him and the power of His name.
Our faith burns strong and sure in the promise, "I will come again."

"Those believers trusted Thy word Father, and so do I. In the same way they were all delighted to see the Lord when He came the first time, so I will be to see Him in the air. May our hands be full and our hearts praising Thee daily in anticipation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 2:38. *"And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of Him to all that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."*

ALL THEM THAT LOOKED.

SIMEON:

A man who was waiting; a man who was just; a man who kept close accounts with God – he knew who was coming. As the days passed and age crept up, anxious waiting continued. With strong commitment, he bowed his head and heart in deep and serious devotion to the God who had revealed and promised he would see the Messiah. Probably misunderstood by those who watched the aging process and heard his assurances of life to continue year after year, he came again and again into the house of God. He looked for "redemption in Israel." He knew his Bible; he knew his God. The Spirit had found a place to speak and work; in a man who believed what seemed impossible and a man who would go where and when the Spirit told him. "Go, into the temple; today; now; this is the time, go now!" And true to God's promise, the Messiah was revealed to him, seen by him, held by him.

His uplifted spirit and heart opened, and he blessed God. God's salvation was in his arms. His eyes meet the eyes of an infant and sees light and glory and a bright future, and now he is ready to die. But his words stirred the heart of the virgin mother and her carpenter husband, and he prophesied and blessed and gave insight that would be remembered by Messiah's mother. "Redemption in Israel has come."

ANNA:

She could see ahead with divinely given understanding and insight. She knew things ahead of time, before they were heard or thought of. Experience of age and trust enabled her to rise above the disappointments of a life lived mostly alone. The joy of a brief marriage in the prime of life was gone and her husband wasn't there when she needed the fellowship of aging together. Decades pass and she is still in the temple, a fixture in spite of the intrigue and unrest all around her. When others left, she was there – looking for "redemption in Israel."

Serving God by depriving herself, serving God by depriving her heart and mind of self-pity; she fills her days and nights with meaningful spiritual service for God alone – and He sees, hears and rewards her. At the precise moment, the time when Messiah is there among the throngs; she sees and hears the words of another "waiter" and is blessed with the insight of the "redemption" that was coming through this Christ-child. She serves further and tells all who had similar desires but lacked the commitment, that what they all were looking for had finally arrived.

He was really here. Two living witnesses as the law required, could attest to the fact that God has visited His people and the promise was right here among them. Those who looked and waited for "redemption", could go to sleep in the arms of the Lord and know that the movement of history – "His Story,"

was on, and though they wouldn't see the miracles, hear the messages, or watch the climactic events 33 years later, they knew God was on His throne and keeping all the promises that are "Yeah" and "Amen." They could die in peace.

"O Father: there are times when I am in danger of losing sight of the brightness of the future and it seems to fade in the dark clouds of the present. Some of us have spent a lifetime trying to promote the kingdom of God and have seen works start, build and grow. Now they seem to be shrinking, fading and finishing. I don't know what else to do, Father. If there is something that needs to be attended to that I am missing, please make clear to me what it is that I am to do. I am ready. I am weak, but ready and wanting to be a Spirit-guided servant until it is time to quit. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 2:40-52

FILLED WITH WISDOM

We may forget the years of childhood are the years of development in which along with the growth of the body, the soul and spirit also grow. The Lord Jesus Christ in His perfect humanity "grew" in the way that is common to humanity. It is evident the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was seen in that He didn't bypass the experiences that are common to man when "He was found in fashion as a man." He knew the interests of a child so that when the time came, He would "suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He had experienced the desire of a child to be with adults and hear them speaking together as well as being with children. Perhaps He had experienced what it was like to be ignored or overlooked because He was "only a child." The value of a person is not based on their age or experience but on their personhood. He increased in physical stature and awareness of why He was here. There was something in Him when He was young that appealed to people as well as to God His Father.

The years between 12 and 20 can be frustrating to those passing through that time of life as well as their family around them. It was apparent to those who were at the feast in Jerusalem when He was 12 years of age, that there was something special about Him. His increasing wisdom, no doubt well beyond what was expected in one His years, set Him apart as a special young person. Perhaps in previous years He may have been only considered a child in spite of His wisdom. Now with physical growth and near manhood, His strength of spirit and His awareness of His "Father's business" and the special work He was sent to do, His words would have been more easily accepted by those who heard Him speak. He wouldn't be looked upon as a precocious child. There was evident grace in Him that was now being expressed in the words He spoke. His strength of spirit was displayed in His knowledge of the scriptures and His thoughtful way of listening and then explaining the truth of the word of God. In His body He grew. In the strength of His spirit He grew. In wisdom the experiences of life never caught Him unprepared or unable to respond to life appropriately. His awareness of who He is and why He came to earth was evident.

In the Jewish culture of today when a boy reaches the age of 12 or 13 years, a "Bar Mitzvah" is held for him indicating his introduction into manhood. The gradual but continual growth of those new in faith, whether they are young in years or older, needs to be promoted and encouraged. We need to make opportunities for the young believers to get into places and situations where the word of God is taught and where mature saints can pass on to them truths that strengthen their spirit and enables them to apply what they know in real life situations. A person's spiritual strengths are often made evident when we are able to share spiritual truths we know with other people. To pass on what we have learned of God, and to receive what others have to give, adds to the strength of a person who is conscious of God with them.

Our commitment to God and His word may be misunderstood by those who are close to us. They may be faithful in their life and service for Him but because what we have been called to do is different from their calling, they will not think what we do is the way things should be done - especially if it is out of the ordinary routine of things. Mary had to learn to let Jesus go and be about His Father's business. She still looked on Him as a needy boy, but when she found Him in the temple hearing and asking questions, she had to realize He was no longer a child. It would be hard to let Him be what He was sent to be. Even though He remained in subjection to them as long as He was in His home, and honored His mother even to His death, she knew a change has come to their role in His life.

It is natural for parents to try to keep their children under their control as long as possible. Those years between 12 and 20 are years in which we have to let them practice what we taught and assist them in the transition from dependence upon their parents, to the responsible actions of an adult. We have to learn when to speak and when to be quiet; when to help and when to let young people take the consequences of their choices by themselves. This is not an easy time for parents or children. The increase of wisdom is on-going as experiences and responsibility in life expand. We don't want to despise our family responsibilities

nor our relationships with others. Jesus was not neglecting or rejecting obedience to His earthly parents even though he was about His Father's business. Though His parents knew He was God's Son, they didn't yet know all that His life on earth would entail. They knew all about His miraculous birth and could observe the uniqueness of His life, but they could not know all that was in His mind or what the future held.

The normal course of living would have placed Him in the work of a carpenter as the oldest son in the family working along with Joseph in the years of maturing and early manhood. He would know how people talked and thought, and could interact with them as a man as well as the omniscient God. The physical aspects of human life would have been experienced such as tiredness after a hard day's work, hunger, satisfaction in work well done and the physical labor needed to accomplish a task. Our lives are lived in a variety of areas - physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social. In each of these there is a fullness and yet, even as the Lord Jesus, we have room for expansion of our capacity in labor, our application of wisdom and our growth in grace as daily life opens more and more to our practical knowledge. Fellowship with God and man happens as we are conscious of both in our lives. The farther along one moves in the years between 12 and 30 years of age, the more that person is able to accomplish because of the natural progression of human life. In those strong years of life and change, the course for the rest of our life is being set - and we will live by that course we have chosen.

It is not easy to be understood when you are unable to express your thoughts.
Much of what we want to pass on to others is caught rather than taught.
As years pass, we become more able to express in words what we really mean.
The transition from childhood to adulthood is not easy when you are in your teens.

The best we can do in the path from birth until we are full-grown,
Is to keep our own spirit strong in the Lord and practice what we're shown.
The amount of wisdom we have each day, is enough for that specific time -
As we develop in the Lord, further wisdom given will make understanding shine.

Grace in His life and from the words of His lips was a characteristic of the Lord.
Acts of benevolence and gracious words spoken are not easily ignored.
Both God and people watch each day and can see our way of life.
One who lives by faith, old or young, is one who can to others give light.

We don't reach a place in life where there is nothing more to learn.
Honor and respect from other people can't be demanded, it is earned
By those who are strong in spirit and in whom the grace of God is seen.
One doesn't have to wait until they are old, this is developed in our teens.

Occasions will arise when in deed or in a conversation -
One is able to express their thoughts and there is evidence of consecration
That one does not have to promote; it comes out from what we take in -
And that in turn gives authority and value when adult life begins.

The Lord is a good example of what a young person's life should be.
Things learned from parents and our limited experience is what others see.
He took His place in His Father's work long before in the public's face.
In youth there is opportunity to show faith and our appreciation of God's grace.

"Father, remember I pray, those young believers I have been speaking to in these last few days - that they may step out in public to testify by life and word their commitment to Thee and Thy truth. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 2:47. *"And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers."*

THE CHILD.

Why is this ancient woman coming with a beautiful smile on her face?
What made Simeon come into the temple at such a rapid pace?
A man, his wife and a child whose long journey we can trace -
The child came from heaven to reveal to us God's grace!

What is it as they journey long from Egypt to Nazareth -
That is so significant to us in that child of holy birth?
What is in His spirit and wisdom that makes Him of unique worth?
That child is the Eternal God who created heaven and earth!

What is it make the doctors stop and to that young boy take heed?

For the most part these are men who are motivated by power and greed.
What understanding and answers reveal to them their need?
That youth is about His Father's business and on the sacred Word does feed!

What is it in the character and life of this singular young Person;
That makes Him stand out from all others - tell me - what is the reason?
Fine in intellect and stature, yet for His parents, He wants to please them.
His favor with God and man indicates this is a divine visitation.

“What a glorious coming was the birth of Thy Son, Father. I know to those who were not looking for Him they missed the glory surrounding His birth. But I was thinking of how it must have pleased Thee when Simeon and Anna finally saw the Savior for the first time and were filled with joy. I pray I will have joy at every evidence of divine revelation Thou dost give me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 3:1-20

THE WORD OF GOD CAME

As I follow the pen of the "ready writer," Luke, the historical account of the place and time of events is very carefully explained. He mentions the name of seven leaders, four of them political leaders and two religious leaders. The evil and ungodly men stand out even in the secular history of those times. Two high priests at the same time was not according to the Jewish law. The Roman authorities had picked Caiaphas as their choice. When the laws of men are allowed to control the minds of men and override the will of God, a nation is near the place of disintegration. God does allow what He does not condone or want, to bring about a higher purpose. It was into this ungodly and confusing time "the word of God came to John." 18 years had passed since Jesus was in the temple hearing the doctors and asking them questions. Now both John and Jesus would be "about 30 years of age." John was probably in the wilderness for 10 years having gone there to prepare for his prophetic work instead of preparing for a priestly ministry as was usual for one of a priest's family when he reached the age of 20. John stepped into the public area around the age of 30 as guided by the "word of God," and began preaching the message of repentance to a nation gone far astray.

The ministry of a servant of God is never something to be taken lightly. The times and events surrounding one's ministry makes it the responsibility of the servant to address those issues in a biblical way. We live in a day of great departure when the word of God is being ignored and belittled. It is not right for us to leave unaddressed the biblical teaching regarding the events and responsibilities of our times. The needed change across the nation begins with individuals who are awakened by the Spirit of God to their own need first. When they have come in "repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," then they have an impact on others. If all true Christians would identify themselves by holiness of life and word, their righteousness would have a great effect on those around them. That is the practice the word of God brought to John, he lived what he preached, and that is the principle we must act on if we are going to make any difference in our nation in this generation.

John was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He came preaching his prophetic message of the coming of the Lord. The "voice" was that of one who was an authentic prophet. There hadn't been a prophetic voice for over 400 years, but when his voice was heard telling of the coming Lord, the need of sins to be remitted, and preaching genuine repentance for sins, the people knew this man was a real prophet. He did not just speak in a general way and make casual suggestions as to what could be done - he loudly proclaimed what must be done. The consequences of sins were not contained in words easy to take. He warned of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. Not only was the message authentic - the man was authentic as well. There were no "seeker friendly" ties that bound him.

The message of repentance has two parts to it. Not only does one turn away from sin, but one must turn to God. Those who make a profession of faith in Christ but there is no turning away from sin, are not Christians. Those who change their lifestyle and way of living but do not bother to do what God wants are not Christians. True repentance involves turning from "darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God." Reality follows true repentance. We can't say we are believers and just live any way we choose, nor does a child of God simply live a moral life and not love God and not want to serve Him. A relationship with God results in appreciating and experiencing the forgiveness of sins and responding to that openly.

In John's day, ritualistic religion was all that they were used to. Now not only the Jews, but to all mankind God's salvation would be seen. Jews thought as long as they were Abraham's descendants they were in God's favor. Under John's preaching all of the people regardless of what occupation they were, had to repent and the inward reality was testified to by baptism. There were the false and the true then the same as there is today. John challenged them to bring forth fruits that proved what they professed was real. It is

reasonable to expect that real repentance will bring reality in the public's response to the preaching of the word of God. Love will be seen. Good works will result. There will be a change in one's life as well as in one's mind. Repentance and a change from our old nature to a "new creation in Christ Jesus," go together.

It is reasonable to expect that following a work of God in the soul there will be a desire to share with others what we have. Our work will reflect our changed nature as we do our work well and are fair. A contentment with what we have will give us joy in what we are privileged to do for God. The message of John resonated with the poor, those who knew they were dishonest, the discontented and the hated. The impact of the message of repentance will be evident when the "chaff" of falseness is blown away and when adversity or temptation come. The real "wheat" will remain after the great mound of falsehood is blown away by the winds of life, materialism and self-centeredness. A few genuine believers who remain when the big storms of life remove the counterfeit, are enough to bring glory to God. It is only reasonable to expect the preaching of repentance will not make people feel comfortable. We dare not deceive people by not telling them of, the eternal consequences of sin in hell and the lake of fire. Repentance precedes the call of faith in the Lord that brings redemption and forgiveness.

Its source is the highest authority, the word we have is from God.
The reason is of the highest priority, to every individual in the crowd.
The response is by the lowest minority, it is only in those who repent.
The result is in the truest reality when believed by those to whom the message was sent.

The voice was that of a strange man, obviously sent to the nation from God.
The words were convicting as they can, when coming from God's holy word.
The tone was loud and urgent, no careless or casual message was this.
The warnings were very stringent to men, eternal damnation or bliss.

The man was thought to be strange, that's true of every prophet. .
The message was to bring change, from which they would spiritually profit.
The means was to challenge by preaching what people need to hear.
The reality was in reaching the conscience of those who fear.

When given the responsibility to tell others of God's salvation,
We must give warnings of hell, and then tell how to be forgiven.
Where others may preach a smooth message, we must warn of sin.
What is the real truth of a passage in the word is where we must begin.

"Opening and alleging" is not new, others did that before.
Appealing" and "teaching" what is true is what we "beseech" and "implore."
It is not our message but God's, it is in His name we are to speak.
It is repentance and faith in the Lord, those who hear us are to seek.

It would be wrong for us to cover some sins people don't think are bad.
If for some reason a conviction I smother, just to make someone feel glad,
I then am a false teacher, with a lost soul's blood on my head,
Unworthy to be a preacher, because someone in the wrong way I led.

The word of God is sure, and we never go wrong when we preach it.
The word of God is pure, and can bring light when we appropriately teach it.
The word of God is our source of truth and information to pass on.
The word of God brings faith when true repentance is done.

"Father, I pray what has been preached in this last week; has had beneficial results on all who heard it. I pray what will be spoken in the week ahead will bring glory to Thee and blessing to those who will hear it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 3:21-22. *"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, that heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, 'Thou art my beloved son; in thee I am well pleased.'"*

THE TRINITY.

The earthly ministry has started as the Son of man is identified.
He associates with the nation as He Himself is baptized.
Not as one who has wandered, but as the One who does His Father's will.
And now before the eyes of the people the Word of God is fulfilled.

He prays and the heaven was
opened as the Holy Spirit came,

And identified the Lord visibly while the Father declared publicly His name.
The Beloved Son of the Father, had come with earthly people to live.
The whole of the Godhead in unity, join together lost souls to save.

The Holy Three still unite to carry out their purpose together.
The Spirit brings conviction of sin; our prayers ascend to the Father.
The efficacious work of the Savior has lost none of its value today.
The salvation they have provided for us is eternal, with us they are committed to stay.

Now we are allowed to assist in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.
We have received the power the Spirit uses to give people light.
It is my prayer that I might be found doing what God wants me to do.
The Holy Trinity together works to give us a part in a work that is true.

An ungrieved and unquenched Holy Spirit helps us to preach the Word.
The Father answers our prayers and gives far more than we ever deserved.
The Lord Jesus abides with us daily and is the theme of the Gospel we preach.
They all let us work together that lost souls we are able to reach.

“Father, I am grateful to be assured Thou didst not leave us to do this work on our own. I am thankful for the privilege of sharing Thy Gospel with others. I pray that tonight we may see some soul coming to Christ by faith and receiving Him as personal Savior. I ask in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 3:21-38

BAPTIZED AND PRAYING

John in his preaching, made it clear that those he baptized were to express outwardly that which was true of them inwardly. Baptism has no meaning if there is not the reality of repentance. When Jesus came to be baptized by John, it was not because He had anything to repent of. He was always "holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners." Both John and Lord Jesus were identified with the righteous believers living then who waiting for the Messiah to come. The Lord had been seen by Simeon and Anna in His infancy. There were others who were waiting for Him to come and now in this act of baptism, Jesus was beginning a whole new phase of His life as He stepped into the public view of the nation of Israel. That was when "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

Luke, the writer, along with the other Gospel accounts, gives an overview of the life of the Lord's first 30 years on earth. The newborn baby fulfilled the scriptures in the place of His birth and in the prophecy that He would be called out of Egypt. This pleased the Father in heaven. He was a Nazarene and as a child not only was the demands of the law fulfilled, but He was subject unto His parents and grew in favor toward God and men. This pleased the Father in heaven. As a boy of 12 years of age He testified of His interest and knowledge in the things of God when He was about the "Father's business" among the doctors in the temple. This pleased the Father in heaven. He was known as the carpenter's son and then as "the carpenter" as He labored among the people. This pleased the Father in heaven. Advancing in wisdom and stature was another way He pleased the Father in heaven. Now in publicly identifying Himself with those who were godly, again He pleased the Father. The public teaching ministry that was beginning as He stepped out to preach the Gospel, was pleasing to the Father in heaven. His attitude of prayer at this juncture in His life on earth testified to His fellowship and obedience to the Father who sent Him. The Holy Spirit also testified as to who He was among all the people. The Divine Trinity was united publicly at the very beginning of the ministry of the Lord Jesus.

Seven times in Luke's account of the perfect manliness of Christ we find Him praying. This act of fellowship in prayer indicates His adoration of God, His worship of God, His submission to God's will and His dependence on God. All of these elements are involved in genuine prayer. So, when the Father spoke from heaven, declaring His pleasure in the Lord Jesus Christ as His well-beloved Son, the whole life of the Lord Jesus, the present attitude of the Lord Jesus and the public beginning of the ministry before Him, brought delight to the Father.

Every aspect of our lives is under God's scrutiny. The way we act as young children, the attitude we have towards our parents and family, our willingness to advance in a godly way in life is known by our heavenly Father. Our obedience to His will and submission of mind to the guidance of the Holy Spirit is important to our fellowship with God. The prayers of a believer are evidence of the way we consciously respond to our Father. It is true God is our Father, but we still need to be aware of the fact that He is the Eternal, Almighty, All-knowing God. That will keep us from being light-hearted and casual in His presence. He is holy and we need to maintain a dignity with respect and reverence when we speak to Him.

It is hard to imagine the One who created the world and all the universe with a word from His mouth, being a carpenter and forming hand-made things out of the material He made. Yet, we know that is what happened that He might draw near to us as one of us and meet our deep need out of the riches of His grace. Every person on the list of names Luke records in the genealogy that goes back to Adam was known by the Son of God. He gave them life and yet from that historical line of failing, mortal men - He was "found in fashion as a man." The carefulness of Luke to go over those names bears witness to the work of the Holy Spirit through the writer. The humanity and perfect manliness of Christ was declared throughout this book. The angel said His name is Jesus. Joseph and Mary called Him Jesus. The child Jesus, grew. At 12 years of age He was the boy Jesus. Jesus grew in the sense of advancing in wisdom through the years to maturity. Jesus was named at His baptism. Now Jesus Himself about 30 years old steps out in perfect manliness to serve God in public ministry. There is a progression in the lives of God's people as well that leads to the final approbation of "Well done" in a future day.

LUKE 3:23. *"And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli,"*

THE LIST.

The names are there imposed upon the pages Spirit-inspired, yet mysterious;
Why are they there, what possible depth of teaching, learning can we get from them?
These names without faces on the accounts of a nation long undone; its history
Linked to the present and the future; promises given to us, though long ago - these men?

Their claim to fame begins in ancient past with Adam and extends to promised future
king;

All in between the stories told and untold, point to Someone who would fulfill
The plan divine of a Savior-Son who's able to redeem and to deliver by His "Being."
The list of those who in the narrowing distance from the past till now, His history would
tell.

From the garden place, in beauty unmatched, unmarked by sin's dark stain as yet,
Is named the man who God ordained to start the chain that led to mankind's highest
height.

Through generations, of those who walked in faith and some without; we get
The sense that all was done according to a plan, careful and precise, to bring men light.

Of interest real, the branch that led to virgin mother and the other, to the man to be her
spouse;
Is that from which the one line, two became; the king's two sons, the one who knew God's
heart.

The kingly, line which followed hard upon the track of those who reign, is Joseph;
Though not genetically, yet historically able to trace the path of kings to its start.

The other branch, which passes kings and national interests to the Source alone;
Comes through the line of son insignificant, passed over by his famous brother:
Back through the generations to the beginning of all the purposes of God - His holy throne.
Then forward through the times of darkness and departure, to the chosen one - the virgin
mother.

Thus, we can learn that though our life may seem to be mundane and insignificant;
The story is not all written yet upon the pages of time and deeds undone and battles yet to
fight.

It is not with demands to greatness that I live; just to be here and to be a participant
Is enough for me: for God, for righteousness, for truth and grace - to be reflected light.

"O God of the ages: I understand vaguely the importance of just being here because life comes from Thee. Sometimes I wonder at the seeming waste of days and the fact of an empty history. Then, unbidden, comes understanding that there is no insignificance with Thee. Who was Er or Jose or Cosam - I don't know, but they were there, in their generation, living their life and through them came the Lord Jesus; Amazing! I worship at the view of planned predestination, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

LUKE 4:1. *"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,"*

JESUS WAS LED.

What and amazing scene is this -

The One being led is the very Christ -
Not holding back from the trial ahead.
But willing into this testing time to be led,
That those of us now who read this portion,
Will know the perfection of the God of our salvation.

When He was tested there was never a question,
As to if He would fail or not leave us the lesson
That the scriptures of truth are given for a reason -
And that Satan's temptations are only for a season.
If we take care to apply the scriptures to them
We will learn to do now what our Lord did back then.

“Enlighten us Father, as to how best to respond to every and all temptations when it arises. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 4:1-13

LED OF THE SPIRIT

This is a wonderful account of equals working in fellowship in this account of the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was full of the Spirit; perfect harmony and union were between these equal Persons. He was "led of the Spirit," willing to be directed by One who was His equal in an area of life He knew was going to be difficult. It is always right to listen to and be willing to follow the leading of those we trust and know have the same objectives as we do. Each of us has a role to fill and each one is able to learn from another, and adapt to another, whose work is quite different.

The leading of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee we will avoid the deep waters of difficulty. Nor does it mean we will not have to endure pain and suffering. It may actually take us into those places we had hoped to escape from. Still, it may mean we will be privileged to walk beside the still waters and feed from green pastures. In public participation in meetings, the leading of the Holy Spirit simply means we are guided to do and say what is appropriate for the situation and the moment. A brother may be led to rise and audibly pray at the same time a sister may be moved in silent prayer to add other thoughts to what he said out loud.

In the four places the leading of the Holy Spirit is mentioned in scripture, two have to do with the Lord Jesus being led of the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days of fasting. In Galatians and Romans where the leading of the Spirit has to do with believers, we are instructed to not act in the interests of the flesh but under the control of the Spirit. Trials may be brought on us by our own fleshly acts and wrong choices. On the other hand, it may be testing times through which the Spirit guides us. When these times of uncertainty come, the Word of God given by the Holy Spirit will enable us to make the right choices for the right reasons.

Forty days of fasting before public preaching was a time of holy fellowship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Satan's attack at the end of the testing time covers every area of appeal to a human being. "The lust of the flesh" was appealed to at the testing of the first Adam when he saw the "tree was good for food." To the second Adam, Christ, the appeal was made when He was hungry and He could easily have made the stones bread but that test found no response in Him. He answered with the Word of God. The trials of life are often the circumstances around our temptation or testing time. A bread-winner wants to have plenty for those he is responsible for. In those circumstances one can easily rationalize a change in what seemed to be the place God wanted us.

"The lust of the eyes" made the beautiful fruit "pleasant to the eyes" to the first Adam. When the devil showed the Lord Jesus all the kingdoms of earth, he hoped to succeed in diverting the second Adam from His mission and get His worship. This was not an argument about who owns the world but a challenge to human ambition. The Lord Jesus Christ had come to earth to undo the failing of the first Adam and never gave any quarter at all to the testing of Satan. Again, the answer given is a quotation from the scripture.

The final test Satan used was a challenge to the Person and power of the Lord. The "pride of life" is a subtle temptation in people as it leads us to a foolish or sensational display of one's self. The first Adam saw the fruit as "desirable to make one wise." He reached for, and took, that which was forbidden. There was no humility on his part as he yielded to the attraction of self-exaltation. Satan's misinterpretation of scripture had no appeal to the Lord Jesus, the second Adam. Again, quoting scriptures accurately and appropriately in contrast to the devil's misapplication of scripture, the Lord silenced the attempt of Satan to usurp authority. The answers the Lord Jesus gave from Deuteronomy 6 and 8 met each kind of temptation.

God allows tests for reasons known to Him in our lives today. These tests of the Lord Jesus Christ were so we know the value and perfections of the Person we have trusted for the salvation of our souls. We may be tempted through our strengths as much or more than through our weaknesses. Pride and self-reliance may keep us from trusting God and that is when Satan can successfully trap us. The guidance of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God is the way our heavenly Father has provided for us to avoid these attempts of our enemy to bring us down in defeat. The Lord defeated Satan by accurate and appropriate application of the scripture. The Holy Spirit can direct us also through the Word of God to those instructions that most suit the present need we have. We will be tempted and tested through our life here. With every temptation God has "provided a way of escape." It is our responsibility to apply that to whatever situation we are in. We are to commit ourselves to God alone to worship, serve and follow in every part of our life no matter how appealing the tempting offer seems.

It comes even when our fellowship with God is at its best.
And we have found some time and place for quiet rest.
From the most unexpected source it moves intrusively into our view,
And we stop and consider what in normal times we would eschew.
But at our leisure or even when found lying on a bed of pain
That evil one comes as an angel of light seeking victory to gain
Over a consecrated life that has as its objective, God's own glory.
Then that power of dark temptation comes to change that life-story.

In ourselves we can't avoid the temptations that come from time to time.
The temptation itself is not sin as long as I don't yield to it and make it mine.
But it can get into the darkest recesses of the mind and take control,
As Satan starts his subtle advances in the battle for "Man's-soul."
He doesn't usually cease the attack at the end of the very first attempt.
Temptation continues until his last sharp fiery dart has been spent.
There is no final recourse open to us except, "Resist the devil and he will flee."
Then we must in haste "Draw nigh to God," and He in turn draws nigh to me.

"Father, I am aware of the attraction of flattery and adulation. Even though I am an older man, there still is the subtle appeal when well-meaning people say kind and generous words. May I have the spiritual wisdom and common sense to give Thee all the glory for anything that is accomplished and is of value. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 4:14-30

AS HIS CUSTOM WAS

Why would the One who had spoken the first words heard on earth, "Let there be light," and maintains all things by the word of His power, attend a synagogue and listen to what men had to say about God? What human principle was the Son of Man adapting to in going regularly "as His custom was" to participate in the gathering of people and listen to what He already knew? As the perfect man in His perfect manliness He knew the need of fellowship with other people in spiritual things. That is a fundamental need of humanity. We need to be able to share those hidden things with others and draw on their spiritual experiences in order to have a balance in our lives. It is true our limitations in expression, knowledge and understanding keep us from comprehending much of what God has said in His Word. Drawing from the thoughts of others opens new areas of thought in us that ultimately leads to "worship in Spirit and in truth."

There must have been something about the Man, Christ Jesus that made people recognize a Person of unusual ability and intelligence was among them. It had been His custom to "not forsake the assembling of yourselves together." The consistency of Jesus in His attendance at the synagogue would have given Him the right to participate publicly. We may not gather a lot of new information each time we meet with God's people. We may not even realize the value of getting "here a little, there a little," but the very fact of being with the people of God, and part of the spiritual activity of the assembly, does us more good than we think. The objective of the gathering together is the growth and full maturity of the saints.

Israel had not yet come into the fulfillment of the prophecies regarding their nation. They had been freed from Babylonian bondage but were still a conquered nation under the iron shoe of Rome. The proclamation of the Lord Jesus that the time of liberation had come was misunderstood. This public declaration of Himself as the Messiah was not taken well by His own people. "He came unto His own, but His own received Him not." His explanation of the passage in Isaiah 61 when all debts would be cancelled and those in bondage were freed, was not grasped by those who knew Him best.

The preservation of the truth of God, whether it be a Gospel message or the unfolding of doctrinal truth, is

often resented by those who know us well. Family members are often resentful of those who preach God's truth thinking there is some kind of self-exaltation in doing this. It would be wrong to abandon the custom of attending the place we know God's Word is respected, taught and carried out. People around may know us well including our mistakes in the past and our quirks in life that may bother them. Still we must continue as is our custom to present God's Word, pray together, study the scriptures together and patiently wait for the Lord to do His work in us and through us.

The people of Nazareth were very angry when the Lord Jesus spoke about God accepting Gentiles by His grace and Israelis who would not obey the Lord and give Him the place of authority, were rejected. At times there still is the attitude that God is favoring us over the "heathen, pagan people in other parts of the world." Heathenism and paganism are as prevalent here as in many other places. When people turn away from God, His word and His will, heathenism is the result. The paganistic practices of worshipping "other gods" goes on here every day. Materialism, pleasure, money, fame and many other pursuits now have taken the place of the worship of God and the custom of meeting together to hear the Word of God explained and share in common our life in Christ with other people. When that happens, other places and people will experience the blessings of a divine "day of visitation" from God. God is in control and is going to complete His Church through those He calls from all parts of the earth.

There is a custom that seems to be fading away,
That gave strength to God's people in the past.
The gathering of saints to read the Bible and pray,
Had an impact on people that would last.
To sing together and hear God's Word preached
Gave strength and power to those who came
To the gathering center where each one reached
And clasped hands in fellowship in Jesus' name.

Not everything we repeatedly do
Has a consequence on us for our good.
But the custom of coming to hear what is true
Really in essence is our spiritual food.
In those places and at those times
There is a visible display of grace.
When the light of God on the pages of truth shines
The result is the strengthening of faith.

The custom of gathering in Jesus' name
Should never be abandoned nor forsaken.
There are those times when anxious spirits are tamed
And we can truly say, "I my cross have taken."
The final outcome of such a gathering
Is God's people go home, greatly uplifted.
We have been blessed even when there is sifting,
By those who through the Holy Spirit are gifted.

"This custom of gathering together with Thy people, Father, has been ingrained in me. I know even some in my family think I am extreme in this but I figure if the Lord Jesus met with people He knew inside out, then I should be able to be blessed by people who are just like me. I thank Thee for Thy people and their faithfulness. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 4:22. *"And all bear Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?'"*

GRACIOUS WORDS.

Words have power way beyond the length and depth of our understanding.
With words of God the world was made and then maintained.
What gain or loss has come to men when words they spoke were then unbending,
And the blessing or the curse that followed, was uncontained.

The words of grace that sounded on the mountain, in the city, on the lake;
Came carefully expressed from the mouth of Him who holds the world.
To hear His voice and know the truth of all the kingdom yet to come of which He spake,
You would think would make each listener humble down before the Lord.

But there is something here that's hard for godless minds to really understand.
Miraculous acts of grace, they seemed to take so easily in their stride.

The words were something else, because the truths, both simple and profound
Left no place for the inner man to hide, nor was there room for human pride.

The One who spoke for God and made so clear His truth, spoke words with power.
There was no room to argue logic, or impose one's own philosophy.
The messages He gave the children understood; the weak, the sinners made to cower
Under the weight of truth, came loud and clear, the sounds of grace and mercy.

Those who knew Jesus as Bar-Joseph, compared His words with those of His guardian.
His use of scriptures they had known for ages, now to tingling ears did reach.
Interpretation covered, misused and misapplied words polluted by proud men;
Now brought conviction, upon the hearts and minds when truly preached.

Whatever words may bring when brought to bear upon the consciences long seared;
It is a word of grace, that brings to mind solutions from pages wrote by God.
The acts and words of kindness from those who speak for God, when by men are heard,
Brings from the storehouse of divine provision; answers understood by the Word.

“When I speak for Thee, O God of the Word; give me the ability to speak with grace and truth combined. May each subject addressed be appropriate to those who listen. May my voice and ways of expression transmit a sense of love and compassion. May the expressions used, be understandable. May the illustrations given be relevant. May the logic used be reasonable. May the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ be honored. May His gracious words and ways be declared in a way that exalts Him, Amen.”

LUKE 4:31-44

TEACH WITH AUTHORITY

The Lord Jesus Christ moved into Capernaum from Nazareth where there was a headquarters for the Roman soldiers, as well as a thriving business community. The Romans could maintain their authority by a force of arms and intimidation by fear. In contrast to this, the Lord Jesus began teaching there in the synagogue and there was such power in His words the people were amazed. This was not the ordinary, weary repetitious, hair-splitting, frivolous teaching they were used to. Preaching with authority is reasonable and practical. It is heart-searching and authoritative.

There is lasting value in presenting truth in doctrinal purity with authority. Vague speculation and casual suggestions are not ways to get important matters across to those who listen. When we deliver the message the Holy Spirit gives us, it does not help them to generalize those things we know are clearly taught in the Word of God. People need to be assured of the authority behind our teaching. There is also a way to present the truth verbally that makes it relevant, understandable and real. There is a certain value in ardor when one is speaking. The careful but zealous use of words in a respectful earnest way has the tendency to claim the attention of those who listen.

Demons made claims to know the Lord but He refused their deceptive homage. He never showed love to the powers of darkness. The evil spirits knew who He was but didn't really know Him. They were hoping to maintain their claim on a possessed-man by identifying the Lord Jesus as to who He truly was, but there is no fellowship between light and darkness or good and evil in any way. The demons could not hurt the man when he was under the authority of the Lord and in His presence. His authority was over evil forces as well as in the words He spoke. Even though we may not see visible signs of demonic activity very often, there is no question that the moral and spiritual darkness all over the world is coming from powers greater than that of mere men. We are wrestling against principalities and powers - against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Disease and sickness, has come on all humanity because of human sin. The power of sin can bring the strongest man down under its authority. Sin when it is finished brings death. Peter's mother-in-law was under the authority of a great fever. When the Lord Jesus came and stood over her and rebuked the fever by His authority, the fever immediately left. This was not a gradual recovery of health but an instantaneous restoration to health and strength.

The authority of the Lord Jesus Christ is greater than that of any residual effects of sin. His power leaves no area of sin unconquered. His authority goes beyond the results of human sin to forgiveness of sin and cleansing from sin by the blood of Christ. That opens the way to all the blessings of God He desires to give us for our good. The authority of the Lord was not limited to one moment of time or one event. His power was felt by people with all kinds of problems. In any time of difficulty, the healing touch and kindness of the

Lord comes through to us by the touch of a sympathetic brother or sister. A simple caring gesture means a lot to one who is suffering. Human touch can often do what human words cannot do.

When the demons spoke and identified the Lord as the Son of God, He rebuked them to show His authority over them; to show those who were watching He was the Christ because of His words and works, not the testimony of demons; and to maintain the order of His work on earth according to the divine timetable of events that had to be fulfilled - not by Satan's aggressive effort to thwart His plans.

There are times in our lives, the same as in the Lord's life, when we need to be by ourselves for prayer and refreshment. He needed quiet with His Father the same as we do. His interest was that the kingdom of God would be declared in other places to bring freedom from sin. The authority of the Lord Jesus Christ would through the Gospel message be demonstrated. The ultimate authority of the Lord over all the earth will be on display in the coming reign of Christ as King.

To love our enemies takes a conscious effort and needs actions to really be seen.
Positive acts of grace and kindness takes away all bitterness that before had been
A hindrance to the authority of the Gospel in people who viewed negatively
The right of the Lord Jesus to control dark powers seeking to claim authority.

We must show our love to those in their sins so they can see the love of God.
Many have never stopped to think of the supreme authority of the Lord.
His word is true in all ways and substance, for in Him is no darkness at all.
As sons of our Father, like our Lord Jesus Christ, we are under authority when to sinners we call.

A critical spirit, a self-centered mind is foreign to what our God intends.
He had forgiven us by His grace, and with authority He then does send
Us into this world with a message to tell so sinners around won't be lost.
We can tell people with biblical authority; the Savior has paid sin's full cost.

Sincerity of heart on our part is needed so people will know what we say
When speaking for God it is with authority, teaching that there's no other way
For sinners to ever be accepted by God unless they obey His voice.
Urgency in delivering the truth is needed if we expect people to make the right choice.

Our faith is based on the firm foundation of truth that cannot change.
We live confident lives without having some unusual spiritual experience that is strange.
God is the same today and forever, His authority is firmly in place.
To speak for God, we need the confidence of faith, and in ourselves display His grace.

"Father, I pray that I will be speaking Thy truth tonight in a faithful way with grace from my lips. May those who come to hear, realize there is authority in the Word of God and we are not left to our own opinions or speculation when it come to Thy will, Thy work and Thy control over us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 5:1-11

AT THY WORD

The public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ often involved both speaking and doing. The explanations of Bible truth and messages from God are not limited to particular times or places. As the Lord was standing by the edge of the water, there were those who wanted to hear Him speak of things in the word of God that they could understand and would relate to themselves. His spoken word created such interest in the listeners that others would draw near to hear what was being said. Whenever we speak of things that pertain to the spiritual life and needs of people, we will often find one of the best ways to create and maintain interest is to use our surroundings to illustrate biblical truth. This method was to be used by the Israelites in the Old Testament as they taught their children. They were to pass on their faith to the next generation when they were sitting in the house, walking in the way, going to bed at night or getting up in the morning. When they were doing business, making plans or involved in family matters, the Word of God was to be there to guide and instruct them. It is well for us to remember and carry on the same practice as those ancient people and as the Lord did in His time on earth.

Pressures of people against Him did not stop His discourse, it just changed the venue. From the boat a short distance from land He continued to present the truth of God in relevant terms. His first command to Peter was "thrust out from land," He needed that little space of separation from the people to be better heard by them and to speak to them rather than hold a dialogue with them. The space between those who speak and those who listen is an important part of public ministry. One standing in the middle of a crowd, will be just

one of the crowd, and others will speak too. A small distance between the speaker and hearers makes the demographics of a situation change to one who takes the place of authority and others take the place of learners. It is not always necessary to make that difference but often in the on-going conversation it is time to take a casual conversation and make it into a formal one to get some major points across to those who need to learn.

Then the whole scene changed when the Lord told Simon to "Launch out into the deep." The time of day and the place was not only unusual, but would have been considered foolish and a waste of time by experienced fishermen. When there is real faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will find ourselves doing unusual things at unusual times and in unusual places. Even though Peter verbalized his doubts, he did not refuse to do what he was told, because he had placed his faith in the Person who gave the order. The Lord wasn't using His power to pay rent for the use of the boat as a preaching place - He was giving them another lesson in the authority He had as Creator, and the power of His word. There was not a suggestion of a "maybe" in the Lord's directive. When he made that statement, the event was as good as done. It is never right to hold back from doing what God's Word says. There are reasons for everything He instructs us to do even if we might not understand it all at the time.

Simon Peter's acknowledgement of doubt was the words of an honest man who knew he could not hide anything from the Lord. His confession of sin is an instruction to us to not allow time to pass before we face up to our own guilt, and without excuse, come immediately to the Lord in faith in Him to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

The call of God was no longer up for discussion or explanation. Decision time had come at the word of the Lord. In compassion knowing the fear and uncertainty of a major life-changing event, the Lord kindly and firmly told them what He expected and what would be the result of their obedience. Those times that arise in our lives in which we know God intends us to change directions, can be fearful, and if we trust in our feelings, uncertain. But when we are willing to act in faith at the command of the Lord, even though there is a measure of fear at launching out, there is joy in knowing we are doing what God wants and has instructed us to do now. To put off divine directives is a form of unbelief. "The sin which doth so easily beset us" can stop our fruitfulness and spiritual growth very quickly. When we know a thing is right and has divine sanction behind it, we should not linger, but act in glad and positive response.

There is a time when the wisest course is to rest awhile and wait.
To push ahead in fleshly energy will find a tightly closed gate.
When that is the situation, the best thing is to wait, to watch and to pray.
Then we will learn of God and His will when we are willing right here to stay.

Then comes the time when His word is plain, "Launch out, and move ahead."
It is then without hesitation we can go forward knowing we are led.
Not always will we be positive just where the road will end.
The only thing that is important then is it was the Lord who us did send.

When we are involved in the work of the Lord, we have His word to guide.
He is the One True Vine, and as branches, we in Him do abide.
In order to be at the right place and be doing for Him the right thing,
When He calls us to follow His command, rich fruit to Him we can bring.

The call of the Lord to thrust out a little way is a kind of preparation
For a larger work that is yet to come which requires our full dedication.
In order that there be no question in our minds we listen for a specific word.
"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets," is a definite command of the Lord.

Words of truth from the Bible each day gives a basis for faith to work.
A definite scripture applied in the right way guides us when all else is dark.
And act of confidence in the word of the Lord opens the way for Him to work through us.
Obedience to Him and action without delay is the reason a work to us He will trust.

"Father, today we are going to another place with another work to do. May Thy servants be kept safely on the road there and may this weekend of teaching, fellowship and Gospel preaching be guided by the Holy Spirit in ways that will glorify Thee. Give to Thy servant wisdom to speak the truth in love with grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

LUKE 5:3. *"And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people out of the ship."*

HEAR THE WORD OF GOD.

"Let down your nets," [V.4] it seems so plain and simple;
And yet to those who toiled and came up empty; the words seem hard to take.
But the key is "who", He that makes the devils tremble;
He sent us out to fish for men, so out we go again and preach for Jesus' sake.

"Fear not... thou shalt catch men," [V.10] it gives to life a meaning
That goes so far beyond what we would think is normal according to most men.
That word though, comes from Him who gives to us our being;
He allows us here to seek for men, and share the joy and glory then with Him.

"I will: be thou clean," [V.13] and changes come that affect us then and now.
The despair that sin and death's dark sorrow, combine to impose upon the life and soul;
Is lifted when He speaks His will, and with the touch of hand upon the one so bowed,
The weight is gone, relief has come, the filthiness of sin's deep stain removed - made
whole.

"Thy sins are forgiven," [V.20] its paralyzing power that kept one bound;
Sins tentacles are reaching and overpowering, finally leaving the victim lost, undone.
There in the place of hopelessness, the glimmering light of faith is found;
And words from Him alone who has the right, forgiveness real comes from God alone.

"Follow Me," [V.27] and leaving his place of business moves a man to act;
His steps now move with measured pace behind the Savior of the world who came
To bring to light a way of life far better, and more satisfying than the past.
Levi now knows David's greater Son has come, the Messiah, Jesus is His name.

"I came ... to call the sinners," [V.31] the ones who need Him most;
He does not avoid, but joins the meal of those, who men with highest prejudice,
Despise, look down upon with eyes of disdain upon the lost.
But He who looks upon the heart, speaks His truth, and with action shows His grace.

**"Divine Source of every truth, my God: the teaching from His lips of gracious words,
have reached all the way to this distant island. There is evidence that the things He
said on that ancient lake, have left their mark on people here. Forgiveness, soul-
winning and commitment are old yet ever new. I teach them in Thy name, Amen."**

LUKE 5:12-16

"IF THOU WILT"

The words of Peter who had been "astonished" to the extent of not even moving, is the confession of a sinner who sees himself as he really is perhaps for the first time. But the words of the Lord Jesus. "Fear not," is like the consolation of saints when confronted with something far beyond our comprehension. The Lord Jesus Christ followed this comment with the commission to the soul-winner, that men were now the prize of his calling, not fish.

As Luke unfolds the Person and work of the Perfect Man, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he tells what catching men means. Beginning with the well-known problem of leprosy and the physical and social ramifications of the disease at that time and place. The new follower-learners were introduced to what catching men really means. They are not to remain aloof from those whose need is the greatest. To God every person is precious in His sight. The leper had no doubt as to the Lord's ability to heal him. His question was as to the Lord's willingness to heal him. He was an outcast whose leprosy had passed the contagious stage to where he was "full of leprosy." The mercy of a sovereign God extends to "whosoever will may come." This man knew his own condition. He knew the power and authority of the Lord. From his prostrate position he admitted his only hope was in the Lord.

When carrying out the commission of the Lord to catch men, every true disciple has to look for evidence of reality in those who come for salvation. "A broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou will not despise." Words alone can sometimes deceive us but there is a certain attitude that accompanies faith that cannot be hidden. In the eyes of a seeker there is an awareness of doubt or faith that is usually evident. In the tone of voice there is sincerity or deception. In body language there is an expectation or a holding back. This leper, "seeing Jesus," "fell on his face" and "besought Him." There was no skepticism on his part, no insincerity, no misunderstanding in relation to his heart-felt need and desire.

The words of consolation from the Lord, "I will, be thou clean," and the simultaneous touch of His hand and

His words was the divine response to the leper's faith. When the Lord Jesus knew the reality of a person's words, and the innermost desire of their heart, He did not delay in meeting the need as He saw fit. The same holds true for those who are seeking salvation today. Gradual results that people think are the process of being saved, really is the awakening of conscience that leads one, first to repentance toward God, and then faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a process. Saving faith is a whole-hearted trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. When that faith is placed in Him and Him alone, a seeking sinner is saved. It is the responsibility of those who are sent to "catch men" to make sure the work of grace is not short-circuited by putting words in the seeker's mouth nor by-passing the work of the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. When the honest seeker has understood his need and what he is before God, then the entrance of God's Word gives light.

The application of the scriptures of truth to the need of the individual is what will bring the light of God's truth to the darkened soul and dead spirit of sinners. To read the Word of God for themselves will help them to realize it is God who they are dealing with and it is God who has the solution to their sin problem.

It is always an important part of the lives of those who are sent to catch men, that they take the necessary time to withdraw themselves to pray and connect meaningfully with God. The Lord's time in the wilderness was a time of communion and worship of divine Persons. That time spent with His Father would have been most welcome to both of them. Any time spent in communion with God has very positive benefits as we review the past work we have been involved in with the Lord. Thankfulness and fellowship are part of communion and worship. The time spent in prayer also enables us to get God's perspective on the work ahead of us. It is much easier to move ahead in faith when our communion with God has given us confidence that His will is being done and He is in control of any enterprise He sends us to engage in whether it be difficult or enjoyable.

There are those things in life that in themselves bring fear.
And we wonder if we are able until we remember God is near.
He does not change us with a work beyond our ability to do.
His presence and His power are what bring us safely through.

Sometimes what is before us is way outside our comfort zone.
And when we look for help, we find we are left alone
To make a decision and act on what others may think is wrong.
Then when we act in faith, in our weakness we find God is strong.

I may never have to heal a leper, actually none have I ever seen.
But that doesn't mean I won't have to go and do a work where I have never been.
The willingness of the Lord to come alongside and meet every need,
Is full and sufficient assurance to me, so to His bidding I will take heed.

Grace and faith go together when we follow the Lord to catch men.
In faith we step into the unknown, and God's grace is sufficient when
He leads me to people and places His service for Him to fulfill.
And when the difficulties seem great, God's grace is greater still.

Whether we are called to serve in public or some private ministry given,
It is important for me to remember the commission came from the God of heaven.
There may be those who don't agree and the work just don't understand.
So, I will have to quietly move ahead in spite of the opinions of men.

Those are the times when communion is needed so I can again in the Lord be refreshed.
Thankfulness, praise and worship of God are when I am so greatly blessed.
To review what God has done and then to prepare for what lies before,
Is to confidently trust Him to bring the best result out of that which is in store.

"Father, how grateful I am for the way Thou hast guided us in these past days. To be able to minister to the needs of many at once or one or two at a time has brought great blessing to me. May all of these efforts have brought glory and honor to Thee, and may it continue to do so. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 5:17-26

FRIENDS, FAITH, FORGIVENESS

Four hundred years of man-made tradition had made the Pharisees and teachers of the law quite comfortable with things the way they were as far as the worship and service of the children of Israel. Now into their country had come One who was so different from them, they felt threatened. The "fame" that went out about the Lord Jesus Christ at first and then became a rumor or a disturbance causing the traditionalists

concern, was now a "report" that people were understanding and being drawn to. The Pharisees and teachers gathered together from many parts of the country to observe first hand what they had heard about. When God begins to work in "a time of visitation" the pattern is the same and people finally have to come and see for themselves what others are talking about. A work of God is not easily understood by those who are comfortable in the status quo. Fear of disruption, of the unknown and of the consequences is not uncommon when God begins to break up the fallow ground of the hardened hearts of men. The sincerity and honesty of those who have become comfortable in the way they are, is challenged - and distrust, anxiety and opposition come from those who feel threatened.

When God is working in out-of- the ordinary ways, things begin to happen. The uniting of five men in faith, leads four to carry the fifth one who is suffering and shaking uncontrollably to the Person who is the Object of their faith. Friends are united by common bonds of interest. True friends trust each other and want the best for each other. They also make known to the others what is important to them and what their plans are. Those who followed their Lord Jesus were at first called servants, but the time came when He called them friends.

The one being carried by the four had confidence in the Lord to heal him. The four carrying him had faith in the Lord's ability and willingness to heal if they persevered and got the man with palsy into the presence of the Healer. We are able to depend on the word of the Lord who said, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." This encourages us to continue to bring the good news of salvation from sin and for heaven, to those who are unsaved. Our confidence in God and the desire of the seeking sinner for salvation, leads us to come to the Savior in faith and trust Him to do as He promised.

The urgency of the need led all five, not only to the house in Capernaum where Jesus was, but to not allow any obstacles of men to stop their quest. The dust and dirt of the tiles being moved from the roof announced the exercise of faith that brought a man right into the presence of the Lord. He is not unmindful of an act of faith whether is in one person or the united efforts of five - or more. How essential it is that we never seek to limit God to working in ways that we understand with such finite minds as we have. Reality of repentance and true faith is easily discerned by the Lord.

The phrase, "Man, thy sins are forgiven thee," was a plain declaration to those critical Pharisees and teachers that Jesus, the Perfect Man, was the Son of God. They knew it is only God who can forgive sins and here was One, "in fashion as a man," who was doing what only God can do. So now the challenge was out in the open. If He was only a teacher, they had to arrest Him for blasphemy. If He was the one with authority to forgive sins, then they should believe on Him. The proof they needed was then given to them when He told the paralytic man to "Arise, and take up thy bed and go into thine house," and the healed man did just that. How great is the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ! He has power on earth to forgive sins, and He has the authority to heal the body of the helpless. To Him, both healing and forgiveness were under His moral authority. The amazement of all who were there gripped every person. This was a true paradox. Two things that seemed contradictory, palsy and sin - were dealt with by healing and forgiveness. No wonder they were filled with awe. No wonder when a soul is saved, we are filled with awe and thankfulness.

It isn't mere supposition; the evidence is real.
He who forgives our sins has the power to heal
Body and soul alike that all who watch may know,
The inner forgiveness of our sins, outwardly does show.

God alone can see the heart; He knows what's false or true.
Men form uncertain opinions based only on what we do.
Who knows who is forgiven, how can that truth be seen?
Evidence begins to show itself when a dirty life is clean.

When we see one who was sad, now meeting us with a smile,
Or watch one who avoided us, now go the extra mile -
Then we can make a judgment, something real has taken place.
That is not only evident in actions, but can be seen in a peaceful face.

Others who know what one is like, take up the task at hand,
And in true friendship do what is needed to get him to the Perfect Man.
Faith on the part of those who know and the one with the greatest need -
Bring all together before the Lord when the urging of faith they heed.

It really is to be expected that when one comes unto the Lord -

They will hear Him speaking truth when listening to His word.
Whether words of forgiveness, or healing words are given -
The healed one walks away most blessed and his many sins forgiven.

Friends are important to us all even when we need correction.
They help us when we are out of the way and need a new direction.
The wounds they give may hurt us, but they aren't deceitful kisses.
And the words of counsel are given in such a way the point of them never misses.

Faith on the part of true friends together has an impact very great.
When united in faith in the Lord, we jointly our journey make,
Until we are where the Savior meets us and responds to our request.
There we will leave the matter in confidence; He will do what He knows is best.

"Father, the forgiveness of sins and its impact on my whole outlook on life defies any definition I can give. But Thou dost know my grateful heart rejoices daily in the fact I am forgiven. My faith is strengthened as I join the ranks of the forgiven and as friends together and friends of the Bridegroom, we worship before Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 5:27-39

THE CALL TO SINNERS

The Lord Jesus Christ moved out from Capernaum to meet those He knew were in their sins and had need of Him even if they didn't realize their need at the first. Publicans were despised by most people because they were making personal gain at the expense of others while being under the guise of authority from the rulers. Some people know they are sinners and live with a sense of guilt without hearing a message of conviction from one who preaches the Gospel. Levi (Matthew) was one such person. He did not have to have a long period of time to repent and respond to the call of the Lord to follow Him. He was already a convicted sinner. There are those in the world around us who are ready for the saving message of the Gospel even though they don't know it. The Holy Spirit has brought conviction of sin, righteousness and judgment in ways that are most suited to the need of their soul. That is a great encouragement to soul-winners to keep reaching out. In the case of Levi, he immediately left everything behind. It didn't take him long to leave all and follow the Lord.

The great feast he made was not to honor himself and draw attention to the sacrifice he made in giving up the lucrative position he had. This feast was to bring honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. The people who came were those like himself who had the same background, the same issues in their lives to deal with in their lives, and could identify with him. We may not go to a celebration with those who are ungodly but when the Lord is there and the reason is right, then we are right to be there with the life-changing power of the Gospel. Often when a person is first saved that is the best opportunity to reach their old friends and fellow-workers. That opportunity soon passes and the old acquaintances soon drop off from one who chooses to follow the Lord.

When criticized at that time by those religious people who felt they were all right the way there were, the Lord used that opening to tell why He came into the world. He was here to reach those the religious people overlooked and wanted nothing to do with. The rejoicing of those at the feast seemed inappropriate to the self-righteous people who were attracted to the long-faced approach to spiritual things. Joy and happiness seemed to them to not go along with the law of the traditional Jews.

There are many who trust in their religion with its ordinances and demands they seek to keep. They would like salvation to go along with what they already have in case there are one or two areas of their life they are convicted about. They wouldn't consider their sins too serious, but in case God thinks they are, they will confess them and ask for forgiveness from Him. The Lord Jesus Christ made it clear that was not His purpose in coming to earth. Repentance is not just acknowledging a need. It involves the admission of personal guilt and wrong thinking, action and living. It is calling a halt in life, turning from sin and turning to Christ alone for salvation. Much preaching today, even among evangelical churches leaves out the need of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Instead they appeal to a casual admittance of need by asking a few questions that are easily answered without conviction of sin, and then put words into people's mouths in the form of a prayer asking "Jesus into their heart."

Salvation is not patching up an "old garment" that will tear at the first temptation. It is not putting a new work of God into an old accepted "wineskin." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation). Old things are passed away, Behold, all things are become new." Any sinner who comes to Christ for salvation and receives Him has come from the condition of being "dead in trespasses and sins," and has come to the

Savior by putting their faith in Him alone. It is not adding to a perceived acceptance by God based on one's life, religion, sincerity and good works. The Holy Spirit does not only bring true conviction of sin, He also reveals Christ to the lost soul and brings about regeneration and that brings new life focused on the Lord, not on one's own self.

They are coming from all over the world
Wherever the banner of the Gospel is unfurled.
The truth of the Gospel brings sinners to face
Their own guilt of sin and their deep need of grace
To meet their awareness of sin and of guilt
Previously covered but under preaching is felt
Within the soul that has grown used to sin,
But under the Holy Spirit's power conviction begins.

When Christ is preached and the work of the cross upheld,
Conviction makes one aware of the dangers of hell.
The need of repentance follows as the Gospel reveals
Sin's awful consequences, that no good works can heal.
The one who has faced up to what he truly is,
Finds God has a message for a sinner like this.
There is light in the darkness and hope for the lost
When they finally admit to their sins' awful cost.

Following repentance spiritual healing can come.
People are ready to respond to what Jesus has done
When on the cross He the full price has paid -
And satisfied God when on Him our sins were laid.
Sinners can identify themselves as those who need to be healed -
The Spirit of God to those guilty ones reveals
They are the sick who need the healing of the Physician -
And they pay attention to the Gospel when they listen.

Self-righteous people want to patch their old clothes.
Foolishly they think it is up to them to choose
What they want to believe and what they are willing to reject -
So to the conviction of sin and to grace, harden their neck.
Adding to their old wineskin, they accept or spurn
Those things that please them and refuse to learn
What God intends for them to understand and know.
The results point to the futility of life without faith that shows.

"Father in heaven, I thank Thee for the grace that Thou hast shown to self-centered, self-righteous people who have heard the Gospel and still have rejected Christ. May there still be a move of repentance and faith in this place where the Gospel has been preached so long. Use Thy servant to speak for Thee as the way opens up for conversation with those around. In a special way please add Thy blessing to the word to be spoken at the funeral of our brother. May those in his family be caused to seek for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 5:31-32. *"And Jesus answering said unto them, they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*

THE CALL.

The first time he heard Jesus it reached to his heart
Levi knew the time for change had come.
There was not time to waste; he made a new start -
He was willing to take Jesus to his home.

Then they all learned who gathered at his house
The reason the Savior was here.
The needy ones understood and made the right choice
While the religious made their complaint there.

So it is with me, I cannot ignore the fact -
The spiritually sick people need to hear
The way of salvation and perhaps they will act
As I with them the Gospel do share.

It would be seriously unwise if I gave the wrong message -
Salvation means each one makes a new start.
The new creation is not just a rite of passage -
It begins with God's work in the heart.

When we declare the Gospel message, take care
To make sure the lost know their need.
And God will make new a reality there
That assures us to God's Word they give heed.

"Keep me Father God, from carelessly presenting the Gospel lest some lost soul misunderstand their need of salvation. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 6:1-11

THE FACE OF HOSTILITY

The actions of the disciples as they followed Jesus was observed by the Pharisees in some way. Perhaps they were following Him at a distance to find some way to accuse Him. This brought about an occasion to condemn Him based on the traditions they held and thought were as important as the Word of God. By substituting their opinions for the written law, the challenge as to who men should obey was brought out into the open. The law of Moses made provision for the travelers to get food to eat on their journey. Mercy and grace supersede the rules of men. The action of David and his men in eating the show-bread (Bread of Presence) was used by the Lord as an illustration that doing anything necessary to sustain life does not violate the purpose of the law. The hostility of the Pharisees was against the Person of Christ because they saw their position of authority and its benefits were threatened. He made it plain to them what His authority was when He stated, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Those who opposed Him knew He was identifying Himself as deity.

Hostility against the plain truth of God that is taught in the scriptures is still an issue today among many. Some seek to fulfill the law they say, by the prohibitions they impose on themselves and others. Rather than recognizing the moral nature of the law, they are concerned mainly with the letter of the law. Other people go to the other extreme and ignore the fact that the Sabbath rest of God at the time of creation was man's first day of life. Man rested first and then went to work. The sign to the nation of Israel was to work and then to rest. After the resurrection of Christ, we who have believed on Him have entered into rest already and so apply ourselves to our calling as a result of our rest provided by the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The first day of the week is "the Lord's Day." Our rest in Him is permanent. We honor Him in the things we do on the first day of the week.

Not satisfied with the teaching of the Lord, those scribes and Pharisees went into the synagogue with the malicious intent to find some way to legally accuse the Lord and bring condemnation against Him. Their hostility increased even when He was bringing blessing to the needy. A man with his right hand withered into uselessness was in that synagogue where the Lord Jesus Christ taught. Enforcing His previous teaching about the Sabbath, the Lord Jesus told the man to stand up in the middle of the congregation. While he was standing there, instead of healing the shriveled hand right away, He posed a question to those whose tradition only allowed extreme measures to save a life on the Sabbath day. The question was not only about doing good, but also about not doing good. Is it right to not do good when you can? You either save or destroy. You either bring recovery or perpetuate misery. The Pharisees might have been thinking, "Why not wait until another day to heal the man's hand?"

It is our obligation to do good when we can. It is wrong when we can do good and not do it. If we do not, we are harming a person. Traditions are of no value when they ignore the necessity of human need. In the first incident, the need of the disciples was food - they needed sustenance. In the second incident in the synagogue the need was to relieve suffering. Anything that relieves and blesses does not violate the divine intention of the law. It is the point of the law to make needs known and then lead one to the solution of the problem. When the Lord looked at each person there, His intention was clear. Do not leave undone that which provides sustenance for the hungry or relief for the suffering ones.

We must never let anything we can do to show grace, love and compassion, go unattended to those in need. The hostility of those against God, against the Gospel and against the teaching of scripture should not stop us from doing what we must, to reveal Christ to the needy. If one is hungry, we are to feed him. If thirsty, we are to give him a drink. Not everyone will agree with what we do, so we must act in the fear of God without fearing the hostility of those who disagree with our actions. There always has been opposition to the plain teaching of the law of God, but it still remains that we are to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."

What is it those people need most?
Is it not for one who cares?
How can we stop to add up the cost?
When can we alleviate their fears?
The laws and traditions of men can miss
What needs to be done for them.
When it is within our ability to bless -
Then meet the needs of our fellow men.

There are hungry people who need more than food -
To relieve the pain of sin within.
They are standing where once I stood
Convicted by the guilt of sin.
When one came to meet my need I was ready
To listen to his explanation.
With understanding and a voice so steady -
From the Bible he explained God's salvation.

Brothers and sister often for unknown reasons
Have to go through suffering and pain.
God allows things to come for a season
That we some understanding might gain.
We may never know what is behind some thing,
There are reasons unknown to us.
But God has a purpose that some suffering brings
Lasting benefit when in Him we trust.

There will be those who with hostile intent -
Hope to bring a believer down.
In some way a rumor is sent
That reaches to those in this town,
So, they will look on with view askance
To make people think we are wrong.
But I know nothing happens by chance -
God allows it to make us more strong.

When hostility arise, I must simply stay -
And do what I know is right.
Often the best is only to watch and pray -
Not to take up the sword and fight.
God knows each action and the reason behind
The challenges that we have to face.
When walking by faith this I will find -
When I am weak, He will give me more grace.

"Father of all grace: in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I pray that I will never yield to the tendency or pressure to retaliate against those who are opposed to what Thou hast called me to do. Give me I pray, the grace needed to act in a Christ-like way in every time of tension. Amen."

LUKE 6:12-16

ON THE MOUNTAIN

That crowd of men going up that mountain; what is happening and why are they going up there? Disciples are "learners" who are following the Master-Teacher. They know they belong where their Teacher is. As the sun goes down, the disciples search for a place to rest and settle down for a night's sleep. But one solitary Person goes to a special place to pray. Hostility and popularity often go together as people are divided by the Person and teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. Fellowship with God is always important to maintain when either hostility or popularity influences us. In perfect fellowship with the Father, Divine Persons come together and look ahead to all that is to follow in the future. A foundation is about to be laid. On this foundation a great world-wide building will rise composed of "living stones" built on the foundation of "the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone." Apostles are those who were with the Lord Jesus "from the beginning" - the baptism of John, were witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, and were sent by the Lord personally to take the Gospel to the Jews. Twelve men were selected after that night of prayer.

Many prayers are made at night when the distractions of daylight activities have ceased and there is nothing to see in the darkness. Faith then has a clean slate to work on as the soul and spirit are lifted unhindered to God in prayer. Communion with God in the silence of night becomes more real and more intimate. There is an undeniable focus on God Himself as the silent pray-er says, "My Father in heaven..." Words are expressed and then the thoughts of the heart begin to rush forward to the throne of grace faster than the words can be spoken. The urgency of each matter is taken up by the intercessory work of the Holy Spirit who separates each area of concern and makes them acceptable to a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. There is also the dignified Mediator who by virtue of His Person and work, speaks for the one praying in the darkness, and makes that case His own. Even the "accuser" has to go away as "Jesus Christ, the Righteous" takes up His work on behalf of the petitioner.

On the mountain that night, names were mentioned. On that mountain when our Lord prayed, the personalities, abilities and the possibilities of apostleship were probably discussed by Holy Persons who in communion, identified those who would be apostles to the Jews. These were ordinary men from Galilee (except for Judas Iscariot) who would become extraordinary in their service for the Master who chose them "to be with Him, and He would send them forth to preach." Each of those men was unique. They came from different walks of life and had very different personalities. None was a "rubber-stamp" of the others. The divergence of personalities, background and temperament made each one useful in the purposes of God.

When the night of communion had passed and daylight began to shed light on the scene, the voice of the Master called all of those disciples together and out of their number, twelve were identified as apostles. They didn't know at the time what that designation would involve, but they did know that to be called an apostle meant a new occupation lay before them. Fishing, tax collecting or whatever they had done before was now a thing of the past. Their Master-Teacher did not intend for them to return to their former occupation. When the Spirit of God raises up a person to do a special work for God, it is no light matter. Those who lead the people of God in assemblies, those who are called to be evangelists, pastors and teachers, dare not treat that calling as something taken or left at one's own will. The "gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

That morning may have started out as a normal morning to those twelve men, but when they were designated by name to the calling of apostleship, everything was changed. The training time began as they learned who their fellow apostles were. Their divergent personalities and ambitions had to be altered in order for them to work together. They had to realize ultimately that each one had a unique role to fill, and yet when they all filled that role, the coordinated effort was a successful work for God. No one has all the gifts and no one has reason to be proud of what God has equipped them to do. When God places a work in our hand, it is a time for humility and yielding to His will. We must trust Him to guide us in the work to which He has identified for us. It is His divine appointment we are obligated to fulfill. It is His work we are called to labor in. Anything of value that will come from any effort we might make, is reason to give God all the glory and honor. We humbly acknowledge the privilege we have had to be able to participate with Him in such a holy work.

Far be it for me to look with pride on a work God allows me to do.
It is God working through clay vessels like me who is glorified when it is through.
He is the One who called in the first place, He gave the gifts to fulfill
The work He wanted to be started - when and where - and He is working still.

God makes no mistakes in gifting and calling, He has a work to complete.
Each different person and each different work are to fulfill something - not to compete.
Even though we are different, He works on each stone to make it fit with others around.
When it is placed where it should be, the purpose for it then can be found.

The apostles were different, each one unique, trained and sent forth to preach.
There are no apostles now, the foundation is laid, gifts given are that we might reach
The people of our day wherever they are found, who have a ear to hear God's Word.
Our responsibility now is to speak and introduce them to Jesus as Lord.

The Lord who called apostles and prophets is the same Lord who calls out to me,
That I might use the gifts He has given to further His work wherever it be.
One does one thing, another does another; each when and where they are united as one.
The results will be what God intends when the building of the Church is done.

I don't know when that time will be, all I know is that here and now
God is doing His work of grace and my work will fit in it somehow.
So it is up to me to do what I can and make sure that fits in His perfect plan.

The final result will testify to His "exceeding riches of grace" far beyond the labor of man.

Twelve ordinary men were the foundation upon which the building is laid.
New stones are being added day by day to which attention is paid,
So, they fit and fill a place in the design that will bring glory to God in view.
When we look back in a coming day, we will be glad for what God allowed us to do.

"Father, there is no doubt the building is still growing. Please help those in India, Nepal, North, South and Central America - and everywhere the work is going on - to realize, how important the work is, in which they are engaged. And please bless them all in it - and us here too, as we seek to fill the role, we have given by Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 6:22. *"Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake."*

THE SON OF MAN.

He went through the fields on the Sabbath day, to find what He did need;
Not only for Himself to eat, but that His own might feed.
There was nearby food to eat, that He could get that day;
And here and now, there is for us today;
Needs to be met, we must face in our own way.

To many men, even way back then, they criticized His ways.
And even now there're those around, who like to criticize.
People may think we don't trust, when we don't work the way they say.
But as for me, I'll do my work, like the Savior in His day.

Opportunities came to Him while here, to teach God's word to them.
He knew their thoughts and what to say to reach the hearts of men.
And now to me, in my time and place, I think I'll do things when,
I believe it's right, by day or night, and trust God to bless it then.

He chose twelve men to learn from Him, and then sent them out to preach.
From the Son of Man, they knew the plan, through them He would others reach.
Now in my sphere, young men are near, that I think have the gift to speak.
So, I think I will, continue on until, each one has his choice to make.

The Son of Man saw those following Him, and spoke all the beatitudes.
If they followed the way He taught that day, they would have the right attitude.
And for me and my own; those I influence at home; we give God our gratitude.
To our Lord and our God, we will loyalty pledge; all glory to Him we allude.

"O God and Father; the blessings that have come to us because Thy unique Son became the Son of Man, one of our own kind, never cease to flow from the great storehouse of blessing to us. For all these I give thanks. And for the blessing of His holy example I give thanks. To know how He lived among give us a template to act on by the divine nature which Thou hast given. I need spiritual power to use what I know and have properly. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 6:17-49

LOOKING AT HIS DISCIPLES

When the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples came down from the mountain to a level plain, there was a great number of people waiting for Him to heal them. Some were those who had come to learn from Him, and others considered Him to be a magician who did spectacular things. The virtue of His Person was not diminished in any way because of the blessing His healing power had toward those needy people. He is God and was not controlled by people in any way, so in this time and place He healed them all. Other times He withheld that blessing "because of their unbelief."

The disciples, including more than the twelve He has just appointed as apostles, were the focus of His message this time, even though the message was similar to what He had spoken another time on the mountain. Kingdom principles are not limited to one group of people even though they have a special application when first given. When teaching is repeated, it means these instructions are very important and those who hear them need to take them personally. These blessings describe the standards of conduct expected by disciples who are learners and followers of the Lord. To follow "in His steps" is expected of those who "name the name of Christ." Christian principles are not only for a few in the place of

leadership among God's people. When the Lord repeated this teaching, it made the fact clear that these were to be applied to more than the Jews. There is no particular virtue in being rich or in being deliberately poor. The poverty that has value in a learner who has the "yoke" of Christ upon him or her is that of true modesty, humility and meekness that endears one who speaks for God to the heart of a genuine seeker after salvation. To hunger for righteousness indicates a passionate desire for Christ-likeness in the life of one learning from, and following Him. The holy laughter of one who has found their joy in the Lord follows the relief of God working for them in difficult times in life. Some things have to be expected in this world, and one is that darkness and light do not mix. Those who "love darkness rather than light" will not love those who "to shine as lights in the world." There are certain characteristics that are unmistakable when one follows the Lord, and are seen and recognized for their value all down through the ages.

The contrast to the blessings were the woes the Lord rightly pronounced on those who were looking on and hearing what He said to His disciples. The rich, well-fed, popular and well-thought of people needed to consider the end of the matter rather than the feeling that contentment, popularity and flattery brings. There is an increasing indifference toward Christianity that is real as people seek for the feeling of "comfort" in spiritual things and the "seeker-friendly" approach to the Gospel. The world does not want the followers of Christ to sound warnings, separate from the "acceptable" sins or to be significantly different from those who are around us. False prophets seek the praise of men rather than God's "well done."

Kingdom principles don't only affect me personally, but there are public evidences that reveal the law of life God expects. His plan is evidence of love operating in full view as opposed to the practice of hatred that is prevalent. We are to love, to do good, to bless and pray for our enemies. To many people this attitude seems to be totally unrealistic and impractical. To those who learn of Him and follow Him, this is expected of us and He gives us the power to obey His commands. Grace ("what thank") has the power to overcome and out-perform justice and equality. When one is in fellowship with our heavenly Father, there is the assurance He is able to give us what is needed to demonstrate His mercy.

Such principles applied personally and publicly will enable one to rightly help another who has a problem to deal with and guide them to be able to know what is right. If these kingdom principles are not followed, we have no right or ability to say or do anything until we remove the huge log that is blinding us to our own failures. A blind guide cannot safely lead blind people. One who has not learned cannot teach others. A tree with no principle of good fruit in it cannot bear good fruit. It needs good life in it in order to bear good fruit. A bad tree can only bear bad fruit. Only a good tree with the kind of life God has given to it to bear good fruit can be of any assistance to those who have need of its blessing. We need to look for, and follow, those who know more about faith than we do, and listen to their guidance. We may fail in our attempts to fulfill our duty but that does not make us a hypocrite. Religious behavior to gain attention and a following is hypocrisy. What we say and do reveals who we really are.

"Come," "hear" and "do" are words that should go together. To say, "Lord, Lord," and deny that in reality has eternal consequences that can never be changed. To want salvation and so "come" is not all that is involved. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." But one can want what is right, and know what is right, but to do what is right is another matter. To "not do" and put into practice the truth of what we know is true, is to lose one's soul forever. To some people the outward form is enough they think. When the crisis times of life and death come, they are hopelessly lost. The foundation of God's Word is not just for our information but is what our faith in Christ is built upon, and truth never fails.

What value has instructions when they are not obeyed.
What is the real worth of teaching;
If one is not going to listen with faith to what is said?
Or if it is considered only meddling preaching?
When the learner is in training, he needs to trust his Master
Who knows every turn in life's way.
To ignore what He teaches leads to certain disaster,
Pay attention to every word He does say.

God begins by reaching to our mind and heart,
And from there we begin to grow.
We can't jump to the end without faith at the start,
As growth progresses then it starts to show.
Into the public eye the learner then steps,
And soon it is easy to see
Who his Teacher is as each event, then gets
Him closer to what God intends him to be.

Line upon line, and precept upon precept,
His life then his Master reveals.
Development in grace is what we expect
To give understanding to what was concealed.
Even though the learner is not like those around,
Some things stand out in him.
Whatever he says and wherever he is found,
There is no desire on his part to commit sin.

He calls Jesus, "Lord," but in public his words -
Can be trusted because appropriately,
He walks humbly before men, obeying his Lord,
Speaking careful words, and circumspectly
He moves through life leaving behind evidence of faith -
Even though to some it seems he is wasting his time.
Ultimately the strength of his character and his grace
Shows the foundation on which he has built is just fine.

"As a learner Father, I want to continually grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is my desire that in some way today I can show saints or sinners - or both, the value of having put into practice the principles of Thy kingdom so people will be attracted to the Savior. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 6:27-28. *"But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you."*

KINGDOM PRINCIPLES.

Do I really want to live and act this way?
Am I really willing the price of this life to pay?
Would I be willing to be deliberately poor that others may be blessed?
Am I willing to commit myself wholly to a life of righteousness?

If someone chose one day to hit me in the face -
Would I turn the other cheek or put him in his place?
When someone would curse me, would I really that person bless?
Or would I pass on to someone else the tale to cause him some stress?

When the poor around me are looking for someone to help their need -
Would I really be willing to give, or would I be noted for my greed?
If someone asks me for some of life's goods, would I give it to him with grace?
Or would I say something different to others than what I said to his face?

I am convicted that kingdom principles seem to set the standard high.
And I am tempted to lower them for me, making it easier to get by.
There is a part of me that says, this is for another day -
While my conscience says God intends for me to live life this way.

Lord, I'll need a lot of help to make all this a reality.
I am so prone to want everything to come here to me.
I am asking for grace to not avoid what You have a right to expect.
Because it may be soon, I'll be the one looking for others' help next.

"Father, I do want to be a disciple that practices what Thou hast taught me. I know these principles are right and others have practiced them before me. So I am asking for whatever You know I need to carry out Thy expectations from Thy servant. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 6:36. *"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."*

MERCY.

Example is always an effective teacher. When you have an example that cannot in any way, ever be faulted, then that Person is the best Teacher of all. Many children follow the example of their fathers, some for good and some for bad. When it comes to finding an example for the greatly needed characteristic of mercy, there is none who can compare with my heavenly Father. "His mercy endureth forever." There is no attraction on His part to be antagonistic, petty, or unfair for any reason. "His mercy endureth forever." His mercy isn't limited to a favored few, but is directed to every person that needs it. In acts of forgiveness and grace, there has never been nor ever shall be a person who hasn't experience God's mercy. In all places, for all

generations, for each situation where it is needed, "His mercy endureth forever." My problem then is to apply that example of His mercy to my own life. Am I willing to show mercy whenever it is needed? Is there any situation when I would like to avoid showing mercy? Am I willing to show mercy even when it is not appreciated nor asked for? May I get another clear look at His mercy to me and in turn, be prepared to show it whenever it is in my power to do so.

"Father of mercy; even this title of Thine impresses me with how little mercy I show. I need Thy mind to show mercy to any and all who need it. If sinned against - let mercy be shown from my heart. If mercy is requested - keep me from making unfair demands. If mercy is never asked for - give me the grace to show mercy in spite of how I might feel. Amen."

LUKE 7:1-17

GOD HONORS FAITH

The conclusion of the Lord's teaching which was heard by all those gathered, though it was directed to the disciples, marked a turning point in the account of Jesus' ministry. He included the Gentiles in His public ministry when He responded to the need of a centurion's servant. The servant was a very important person to the Roman centurion who was a man of integrity in his words and benevolent deeds. The Jewish elders considered him a worthy man because he had endeared himself to them by building them a synagogue. His opinion of himself was that he was neither competent, sufficient nor worthy of the Lord's presence at his home or for him to come into the Lord's presence. "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Whatever was in the man's background, he had true faith in the Person and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord could see beyond the words and opinions of the elders of the Jews, and could see beyond the words of the friends of the centurion who were close to him. "Man, looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." The Lord Jesus' opinion of the man was that he had remarkable faith that surpassed those who should have believed on Him. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is not only saving faith, but it puts the true believer in a place where the on-going blessing of God can be shown. When our faith in God is real, God is pleased to act on our behalf as He sees fit and we will be content to leave the outcome to His sovereign will.

One who is in authority is one who is under authority. To submit to rule and to be accountable to one higher, allows one the right to exercise authority. The life of the Lord Jesus was always one that "pleased the Father." There is evidence of order, submission and accountability when one with poise, dignity and respect for others and one's own self, is intact in the life they live. The station in the social life of the Lord Jesus Christ wasn't what moved the centurion to request help of the Savior. The authority he could demand of his soldiers did not stir him to call for help. It was the assurance that the Lord could do what he asked if He was willing to. The Lord was willing to go at the request of the elders of the Jews. At the confession of the centurion through the words of his friends, the Lord was willing to act immediately and heal the servant. He did not need to say a word to the men or go any farther with them. With "all power in heaven and earth" His own, the Lord acted with the authority of His omnipotence. He marveled at the evidence of true belief in this centurion. He marveled at the unbelief of others in another situation. There is a certain kind of honor and glory when faith in Christ is evident. That faith is often first seen when a lost soul comes to Christ for salvation. Then it is further seen when believers without hesitation act at the directives of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

In this display of faith, we learn the Lord Jesus goes beyond the barriers people raise up for one reason or another, and acts in blessing to "all that call upon Him out of a pure heart." "In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted by Him." We too should not allow man-made divisions to hinder the work of faith to which we have been called. In faith we trust God to do His will through us as it pleases Him.

At another place some distance away, and another time, the Lord again shows the power and authority that is His. Only this time it wasn't over the daunting enemy of disease, but the last great enemy of death. Two groups of people near Nain came together, one coming to the city and the other coming out of the city and they meet together. One group has the gladness of being with the Lord, and the other with the sadness of death on their faces. When the Lord saw the widowed mother weeping, He immediately went to her even though He knew what He would do for her. He has compassion for the living who sorrow and gave her the opportunity to respond in faith to His words, "Weep not." The words that promote faith came first, then the action bringing blessing, followed.

In stopping that funeral procession, the Lord took authority over the most fearful area of life for most people. How can one control the power of death? It is impossible unless One who holds the key of life and death

chooses to use that key. The Lord did not have to shout to reach the place where the soul and spirit was of the young man who had lived in that body. The authority of His dominion extends beyond the power of death to where the departed ones are. The Lord has the authority to command the spirits of men wherever they are, to obey His voice. In tender compassion He spoke appropriate words when he said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." By designating that one person, only the one addressed came again into the body in which he had previously lived. This was not the call to resurrection that will empty the graves of all believing saints at His coming. This was an act of testimony to indicate the value of faith in Christ to all those who lived there. When He kindly and graciously took that young man back to his mother and "delivered him" to her, it was proof that "God hath visited His people."

The "rumor" was really a report of all that "Jesus began to do and teach" while He was ministering to the people during those years of public observation. As a result of those things He did there grew an understanding of who He is that led people to either put their faith in Him, or seek to avoid, ignore or get rid of Him. There is conviction that follows that follows evidence of God working. Then one must come to the decision to either place full trust in Him or denying Him. There is no place for middle ground when it comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is obvious even today, that when a work of grace takes place in a person, there is the challenge to accept this as a work of God, or coincidence sometimes called "luck." People who are awakened and honest, have to admit that God is at work in the lives of people. That deserves our praise, honor and thanksgiving to bring glory to God.

These are not coincidental matters, there is evidence to see -
God has been working His will and would have us all to be
People who put our faith in the One who never fails,
And commit ourselves to walk in light with all that act entails.

It means that I trust Him to do whatever He thinks is right.
It means that I commit to serve Him even in what is hidden from sight.
There can be no half-measures when putting faith in Him.
It means I confidently do His will, because what is not of faith is sin.

I don't know what may come next in the service I'm called to do.
I may never know the outcome until after my life is through.
But when by faith I live and follow where He does lead -
I am sure that God is glorified when to His will I heed.

Some things go together like faith and works which blend.
Grace and mercy too have the glory of God as their final end.
When these were seen in Jesus, during His ministry on earth -
It gave to the testimony of His words, support of greatest worth.

The same holds true today when I am called to speak for God.
He hasn't given me miracles to perform, but in the attitude I hold -
There is from within my heart and soul evidence that can be seen.
That in turn gives authority to my words and what they mean.

It is something to be highly prized when I am confident
That in what I say and do, consistency is evident.
To have one's word to be trusted, and motives without guile -
Has far more value than skillful words or a face with a broad smile.

Constant and righteous living that cannot be ignored -
Has a value that remains, when dramatic living is abhorred.
A light that can't be hidden has a value all its own.
We may not realize it now, but will when we get home.

"Gracious Father, please accept my thanks for letting me get in a few words of faith and testimony in the conversation this morning. May we all be conscious of Thy presence with us, and not be divisive people. How pleasant it is to be able to share in common our faith in Christ. May it have value to those who look on. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 7:6. *"Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, 'Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof:'"*

I AM NOT WORTHY.

"I am not worthy," the words are but four

Sometimes fewer words are much better than more
To really consider that God knew me before -
Makes these four words stand out.

"I am not worthy," of the salvation God gave
He made me a son when Him I gladly received
It comes more real to me the more truth I believe -
Those four words make me very grateful.

"I am not worthy," so much God still does give
It is in Him I move and breathe, in Him I live
Yet all He has given me, still it is all His -
Those four words still resonate within.

"I am not worthy," to speak publicly for God
The only way I can is to pass on to others His Word
It only has a lasting effect if I truly own Jesus as Lord -
Those four words humble my pride.

"I am not worthy," of the fact that some day I will see
The One who suffered and died on the cross for me
The life I have now from Him, I will have eternally -
Those four words will stay with me then.

"I am humbled Father, that I should have received all these blessings from Thee. Life, health, Linda, the Bible, the Holy Spirit - all these and more remind me I have been blessed by Thee and I want to give Thee thanks in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 7:16. *And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and that God hath visited His people."*

THE VISIT.

Some places are especially favored: a favored location; a favored occupation; a favored past; a favored people; a favored country; a favored nation. "To whom much is given, much is required."

Favored people: every person is loved by God. Every Christian, whether extremely wicked in the past or conventionally good, has been rescued by the Lord Jesus Christ.

CENTURION [v.1-10]: his prayer was answered.

Clearly respectful, this man was not looking for a last resort or a magic charm. He didn't consider himself worthy of anything from the Lord Jesus or to even be in the presence of the Lord. He had no doubts about Jesus and his ability to heal. He knew that the Lord Jesus Christ had come from God.

WIDOW'S SON [v.11-15]: His life was restored.

Totally needful, he could do nothing to help himself. He couldn't even ask for help. God, in compassion, sent Jesus to give life to those who are dead. We cannot earn a second chance at life. We do not earn a new life in Christ. We can accept what God gives; praise Him for it and use our lives for Him.

JOHN [v.19-23]: his doubts removed.

Naturally doubtful, there is nothing wrong with honest questions. God can handle our doubts. We must admit them to ourselves and to God; face them and look for answers. God understands us. We need to know what He can, and is, doing.

PEOPLE/PUBLICANS [v.29]: their acceptance was assured.

Justifiably thankful: people are often easily swayed. The publicans were considered evil, but when they heard the message clearly presented; they repented publicly and responded thankfully.

PHARISEES/LAWYERS [v.30]: their rejection was acknowledged.

Religiously skeptical, their hypocrisy led to fault-finding. They criticized John for fasting and Jesus for eating. They were like children playing the game of funeral and wedding.

WOMAN [v.37-50]: her sins were forgiven.

Personally sinful, she knew her guilt; she felt her need; she demonstrated her repentance; she expressed her appreciation; she showed her faith; she overflowed with love. The Lord Jesus Christ, by God's grace, forgave her sins; honored her faith and gave her peace.

SIMON [v.39-46]: his criticism was condemned.

Understandably resentful, because of his position; because of his social standing; because of his religion; because of his preconceived ideas, he didn't know what the relief of faith is really like.

“O God of all understanding: how it must grieve Thee when people who can act sensibly in so many ways; are insensible and insensitive when it comes to the Lord Jesus. Some who are overlooked have real faith. Others are not only ignorant, but they are downright rude. Yet He loved, and visited and forgave. How great is Thy grace! Amen”

LUKE 7:17-35

A LIVING HOPE

Sometimes in our lives we need to have events and teaching clarified because things have not, nor are not, what we expected. John did not doubt who Jesus was but his disciples needed some understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ he could not give them. He was not in a state of depression as to what he preached and practiced. He wasn't thinking what he had prophesied was wrong. But he was somewhat puzzled because the Lord had not taken the redemption of the nation farther. Perhaps he thought the Lord Jesus would have taken the nation back from the Romans by now. So, John's followers would not be left in doubt, the Lord continued His visible public ministry right before their eyes. After those disciples of John had seen what He was doing in and for the people of the nation, He then responded to the questions they asked.

It is not unusual for us to have doubts about why things are the way they are, or why events have not unfolded according to our preconceived expectations. It is a valuable exercise on our part to review what the scriptures teach and also go over again what we have observed God is doing or already has done. The work of the Lord is not some commercial enterprise that can be measured by how many people have professed to be saved and are baptized. The number of people attending the gatherings of the local church is not only the way to determine success. God is doing His work on His own way. There are "times of visitation" when the numbers being added to the kingdom of God seems to assure us of God's favor. Then there are times when a few of God's people who gather to pray for souls to be saved and saints to be built up in the faith, is the greatest possible work for God they can do.

In an ascending scale of value, the Lord Jesus described His work to the followers of John who had been eye-witnesses to the blessings He brought to the people. There was no armed rebellion, no trampling down of the Roman army by divine intervention and authority. That is how men expect things to be done because that is in the realm of their ability to win battles they think. He begins by describing things only God can do. Blind eyes now see the colors of creation, faces they have never seen, and evidence of God wherever they work. Cripples are leaping and walking because of the instantaneous healing power of the Lord. Strength and gladness have replaced weakness, pain and helplessness. Lepers who were shut out from society because of an incurable disease that afflicted them, are now cleansed and restored to their families and a place in the community. People who lived in a silent world without the sound of a bird, a child's cry, words of love and compassion or a song that was sung, are now listening and communicating without the need of years of therapy to enable them to enter fully into normal living. Even dead people were raised to life rather than enemies being put to death under the sword of righteous judgment those seeking a restored kingdom had expected. What John's disciples saw was above and beyond what they had expected of the coming Messiah. Death itself, the last great enemy of men, was subdued under the power of the One John had been the forerunner of. Then greater than all they had actually seen, was the Gospel being preached that changes the heart of people and turns the "from darkness to light, and the power of Satan unto God." A new nature and a new creation accompany those who respond to the preaching of the King.

The Lord's reply to John wasn't in the form of a rebuke but a clear explanation relating to the timing of the coming kingdom. There is a greater need to be met than a vindication of a promise to Israel, and that was that people should be fit subjects for that kingdom. John's baptism had that in view. John should not hesitate in his trust in the Lord and the work He was doing. It is perfectly sound reasoning to take time to consider what God is doing. Are people being changed within by what they hear preached? Are lives being changed outwardly? Is there reality being done by what is claimed as a work for God? How thankful we can be when we look back forty or fifty years to see what God has done, and see the reality in lives of people God changed by the power of the Gospel and guided in life by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Testimony as to John and his work as the forerunner, came from the Lord as He spoke of John not being a simpering hot-house plant blown about by winds of popularity, but as a prophet and forerunner of the King. He prophesied and saw evidence of the King's authority in his own lifetime. John was no less a person than

we are who look back on the accomplished work of redemption. But it is greater to see what has been already done and experience the blessing of that work, than to see the work as a blueprint and anticipate what it will be like in the future.

Those who criticize what others are doing for God are like little children who are never satisfied with the games they play. Sometimes they play happy games like weddings and other times they play sad games like funerals. There is no particular reason for that, only that they are never contented. The critics were like children who complained because John's disciples were sad, and now the disciples of Jesus were happy. Those who belong to Christ refuse to dance to the world's tune or to mourn at the world's disappointments. Wisdom from above is pure, peaceable and easy to be entreated of. When the voice of God is heard, wisdom obeys that command, whether to mourn over the unbelief of a nation or to refuse to be crushed by the pressure to conform. Wisdom also rejoices over seeing God work in dark times, no matter what others around us may do or say.

It is not uncommon to be criticized when doing a work for God.
It is important to realize, the value of what we know is good.
If doubts arise don't dwell on them, look for some answers of peace.
Doubts allowed to continue lead to sin, so instead see the evidence of grace.

When lives are changed and new life begins, there are things that are plain to see.
The worldly life-style quickly grows dim, and we can observe reality.
The outward changes are a reflection of life, that the Holy Spirit generates,
New life in Christ is one lived by faith, there is a new road that person takes.

Some people may come and question you, as to why things are different now.
By the words you say and the things you do, they learn you to a new King now bow.
Old things that once you did are past, and new things are in your life.
Trust in fleeting things don't last, now you live by faith not sight.

Our hope is in a living Person, not in some passing phase.
Hope that has a real reason, produces from within us true praise
To God who has given assurance, that everything is under control.
A living hope has as its essence, salvation that has redeemed the soul.

Then hope is not simply wishful thinking without any real proof.
Hope that makes us not ashamed is bringing to life words of truth.
We who believe have experienced it, we live in hope each day.
Accepted in Christ, in the heavenlies we sit in the new and living way.

We don't need to fear the future, no matter what it will bring.
It is part of the evidence of a divine nature, in hope we pray and sing
Of Him who loved us unto death, and now lives and is coming again.
In His hand is held our life and breath, now we are alive in Him.

"Father, for this beautiful day, for the blessings of health and strength in mind and body, for meeting all our present and daily needs, for the sure hope we have in Thy promises and mercies that are daily ours, I give Thee my grateful thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 7:36-50

LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

The invitation the Pharisee named Simon gave to the Lord wasn't one made from a desire for the fellowship of the Lord or appreciation for who He was and what He was doing to bring blessing to the people. If that were the case the normal courteousness of the time would have been given to the Lord when He came to that home. This was likely a plan to in some way to find fault with the Lord Jesus. The words spoken by the Lord just before this scene took place were "Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Those words along with the public prayer He prayed in Matthew 11 left no doubt as to who He claimed to be, the Son of God. Why would the Lord accept an invitation like this when He knew there was hostile content behind it? Compassion and love for sinners no matter who they are is a characteristic of the divine nature. He loved both Simon and the sinful woman. Love rises above obstacles, slights and unbecoming behavior, and puts attention on the value of a person. When one has come to the Savior, "We love Him, because He first loved us." In turn a result of divine love is being shown to undeserving sinners as we are: "we love the brethren," "we have love on to another."

The evidence of forgiveness in the woman who was one of the "heavy laden," was clearly seen when her

love for the Savior passed the social boundaries and restrictions imposed on those of a sinful life-style by those who put their own varying values on sin. The appreciation of one who has been forgiven finds a way to express itself. In the case of this woman there was no obstacle that hindered her from getting to the One who she had truly believed on and had received forgiveness from. The tears of joy and gladness had replaced the guilt of sin and remorse, and found their rightful place on the feet of the "Forgiver." The fruitful seed of the Gospel had found soil ready to receive it and now there is evidence of new life that is seen in the watered feet, the drying towel of her human hair and the scent of myrrh being poured out on the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How gracious is the love of God when it extends to sinners! Those who know the depths of sin and have experienced the forgiveness God grants, have "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts." At the first opportunity a forgiven sinner will express in some way their gratitude for the grace that saved them. The religious sinner who puts varying degrees of value on sin, often never sees their need of salvation because they compare themselves with people, they know who have gone farther in outward sins than they have. Many never come to realize the depravity of sin in their own self-righteous heart and soul. To them as long as they do not give vent to what is inside, they are safe from condemnation. Such people either forget or never understood that while "man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart." Simon was one of those kinds of people.

Turning to Simon, the Lord addresses him directly with a story of two people who each had a debt. One owed ten times more than the other, and both were forgiven the debt they owed. He knew Simon considered the woman a far greater debtor than himself. He also knew Simon did not take seriously his own sin but considered the sins of the woman a far greater wrong. So, when appreciation for forgiveness was described, Simon gave the right answer. Then looking at the woman and speaking over His shoulder to Simon, the Lord let Simon know He discerned the outward sins of the woman as a prophet would. He also let Simon know He knew what Simon was thinking inside himself. He knew all about them both.

There is nothing that is hidden from the One who knows "the thoughts and intents of the heart." When truth is presented in the Gospel, we don't know the need completely but God does. We may anxiously look for results but it is only God "who giveth the increase." The woman had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ before this event and had come to show her devotion and love to the Lord. As a forgiven sinner she brought evidence of her appreciation in her hand in the alabaster jar filled with perfume. Her tears of joy from within also gave evidence to her gratitude for forgiveness, and her unrestrained hair being used as a towel showed her spontaneous acts of devotion were her way of giving her all. The contrast was Simon's obvious ignoring of common courtesy to the Lord. Simon had a self-centered view of those around him as he judged their motives and actions. By speaking the truth to Simon and revealing his need in a way most needed and suitable, the love of Christ for the self-righteous sinner was expressed. The way God works with one person may be very different from the way the Gospel is extended to another. The Spirit of God can make the message perfectly appropriate to those He is seeking to convict and bring to repentance and new birth.

The Lord Jesus Christ does appreciate devotion. He knows when it is there, He knows when it is real, and He knows when it is missing. He knows when we neglect what we should do. He notices every act of devotion and every lack of appreciation we withhold. When one gives from the fullness of a redeemed heart, there is great value in that giving from the heart that brings the response of the Savior.

To have what is of value and keep it for one's self -
Is like having a cure for disease and storing it on a shelf.
There is need around us, that will still be there -
But when we give to the Savior, we show our love and care.

We who have been forgiven have a fellowship that is sweet.
There are expressions of thankfulness that grow larger when we meet.
The grace of God to us when He gave His only Son -
Stirs devoted hearts when we appreciate what He has done.

Not every redeemed person will express love like the others.
There is a variety of worship from the gathering of sisters and brothers.
Some devoted praise comes in holy silence from one's heart.
Audible expressions are shared when the first hymn begins to start.

We may not have an alabaster box of perfume that is very precious.
But each one who loves the Lord has devotional ways that express us
To the Object of our love, the Savior, who above all is so great -

And in our devotional acts and words, Him we appreciate.

There is no template to the heart, no special way to say
What we love and appreciate, but each and every day
There are ways that can come to us, usually extemporaneously,
That we can express what is inside to Him who died for me.

Part of what we do in reading and particularly in meditation -
We find arising worshipful thoughts that awaken our devotion.
In faith we give them to the Lord, in no way trying to prove
Ourselves of any special worth, we just want to express our love.

“Father, when we meet together this morning, may Thy Holy Spirit give us ways and words to express our devotion to the Lord. Whether those are audible or silent isn't all that important because Thou dost know our hearts. Just take glory to Thyself and Thy Son as we poor redeemed people seek to honor and remember our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 8:1-18

THE GREATEST EVANGELIST

Not just in Capernaum but now to every place where people were found, the Lord Jesus Christ, accompanied by His disciples and women who supported Him in His work, goes to bring the Gospel. The ones traveling with Him had been blessed by Him, He had given to them, and they were grateful to Him. Now graciously, He receives from them the blessings they had for Him. It is more blessed to give than receive. It is much harder to receive than to give. It takes grace to humbly accept what cost others time and labor. Our natural pride wants to be independent from others - to be able to stand alone without the support of others. But the Lord Jesus illustrated by His own example the need of fellowship in evangelizing the area of Galilee. His acceptance of the ministry of women is a lesson to us to never think for a moment their role is of little importance in the work of God. We learn from the Greatest Evangelist that there is a need of oneness and support among those who proclaim the message of salvation.

There is a certain impact when a group of people join together to further the work of God. The news of a company of people moving through the area preaching the Good News of salvation from sin creates interest and brings people together to hear what is being said. Presenting the Gospel with stories easily understood was the practice of the Lord and is an appropriate way for us to present the salvation message. Preaching involves getting the attention of people and keeping it long enough to get the point across. Teaching by parables was not to obscure the message but to reveal truth to those who wanted to know the truth being presented. Those who had only curiosity but no real interest in what was being taught, would ignore or resist the obvious meaning. By using the method of teaching with parables, "putting things side by side," spiritual truths were illustrated by everyday things of life.

It would not be hard to understand the fact that seed has life contained in itself, but does not produce life until it has been sowed in the right place. The Word of God sown by the Son of Man had everything in it that was needed to bring life and blessing. There is nothing we can or should change about the Gospel message. The area of concern in this parable is the condition of the soil. The sower has a work to do that calls for effort on his part. Not every place the seed falls will be fruitful. He does not deliberately waste the seed on unprepared ground. But there often are those who hear a bit of the Gospel message and in mockery or indifference, turn away unmoved and totally disinterested in what was preached. The devil has his way of negating what would have been a blessing to them by filling their minds with doubts and opposition to biblical truth by arguments, opposition by atheism, humanism and mockery. They have no intention of paying heed to what they hear.

Others when they first hear the Gospel, like what they hear and seem to respond positively to the Word of God until they realize what the truth of the message really is. They want the results of the Gospel without the God of the Gospel. In their opinion they consider themselves their own master. The existential view of mankind has claimed many souls as they deliberately turn away from the truth of salvation. Then there are those who would like to have the blessings of the Gospel to go along with the pleasures, ambition and lifestyle they already have. They want Christ and the world. They want both the broad and narrow way at the same time. This of course is impossible because when the fallow ground is broken up, rocks, weeds and other obstacles are exposed for what they are. The good ground produces a good harvest because it has been softened and is ready to receive the seed. The thorns and thistles have been killed by exposing their roots to the sun and the rocks have been turned up to be seen for what they really are without the camouflage of a light covering of soil. The light of the sun warming the good ground and the moisture in the

ground combine to produce the good fruit hidden in the life source of the seed.

So to those disciples He was instructing in the work of the Gospel, He urges them to proclaim the message of salvation in a public way. Do not hide it but let the light of truth be seen. He was there to make God's word known and they were to make it known as well. He was teaching by illustration how the message of the Gospel would be responded to by a diverse crowd of people. Sometimes our efforts may seem futile but we can be assured that when we speak God's truth in love, in faith and in hope, God can produce for Himself the life that the Word of God can bring.

What is the point in preaching, people say, no one is willing to listen?
The seed of the Word of God we share is wasted when the people we look for are missing.
Sometimes we need to be reminded again to sow the Gospel seed in faith.
When the dews of earth or rain of blessing comes, God again reveals His grace.

To plant the seed means we must sow in hope that God will do what is needed.
Our responsibility is the sowing part, we may never know when truth is heeded.
The soil needs preparation it's true, so the seed has a place to lie
Where the natural course of life begins, the results are seen by and by.

Who are the ones who get credit? The plowman, the waterer or the sower?
All are needed in the work; we must wait until the harvest is over.
The plowman may have labored hard to get the fallow ground broken up -
But he may leave the sowing to another, and the watering to one with a deep cup.

Those faithful women who water with prayer the seed that is in the soil -
Are as much a part of the work of God as the laborer's daily toil
To get the ground in shape to receive the seed of God's holy Word.
When each one has fulfilled the work they are called to, results are up to the Lord

No one can claim the credit for the size of the harvest that comes.
The Life-Source is in the seed that springs forth when each one's work is done.
So, the light God has given us to share, we must put it out where it is easily seen.
Then we can understand better, God uses His Word as seems best to Him.

"I thank Thee, Father, for allowing us to be able to plow some ground so that it is ready to receive the seed. May the Word of God that has already been sown produce some good results in salvation and in the lives of Thy people. When we water the seed, give us wisdom to rightly divide the word of truth to bring lasting fruit. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 8:1. *"And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him,"*

SHOWING THE GLAD TIDINGS.

The look of a seed, is small to the eye; it doesn't impress us so much.
However, we need what is inside the seed; and its' shell is quite hard to the touch.
What has to take place in the damp dark space, when that seed is placed in the ground;
Defies mans large claims, though he knows all the names of the parts of the seed he has sown.

It must have the touch of the One who it made; He alone can make come to pass,
What the seed is made for, by the great Creator; whether it's for food or for shelter or grass.

All we can do is plan and prepare, so the seed will soon spring into life.
To be careless in this is a mistake very big; so we need to do this job right.

The servant's work then, when the ground is prepared, is to sow the seed with his hand.
He cannot neglect or be careless in this, he takes time to ready his land.
When the seed's sown, in the right time and place, then he leaves the rest up to God.
The Creator who planned the way it can grow, said the seed is like His own Word.

The devil will come when the seed falls along the side of the path where we walk.
He makes you question the truth, gives doubts and fears, and uses lies in his talk.
Confusion and scam is part of his plan, to make people to ignore precious seed.
Just like the birds that eat up the seeds, he makes people forget all God's pleas.

The seed on the skim of the ground over rocks, can't find root after they germinate.

Emotions like this deceive some more, when with counterfeit words imitate.
Real conviction comes when the Spirit, the heart and the mind does enlight.
A thing may look good or even look real, but that does not make it right.

The world's appeal, like the thistles and thorns, subtly chokes out the truth.
Mockery and shame, and trying to blame, keeps the seed from sending down roots.
"Don't knock it, don't judge, don't worry too much," are those who call out to me.
So, the truth of God's Word, isn't producing good fruit, the way God intended to be.

Seed on good ground, broken up with the plow, and prepared by the plowman with care;
Will with life from within, break forth and begin, to produce as it's intended to bear.
The life-principle in the seed God did make, will break forth and then start to grow.
The results will be seen, when the glad tidings will bring; evidence of life will be shown.

"O Lord God of the field; may I always be ready to work in the field, whether it be to prepare the ground, plant the seed, or harvest the crop. I need the vision of a farmer to do what I can, and then leave the results to Thee. Amen."

LUKE 8:19-39

THE POWER OF HIS WORDS

The emphasis on the word of the Lord in the parable of the sower is illustrated in the events that are recorded in the rest of this chapter. The ministry of the Lord was to reveal who He was in view of the need of "seeking and saving the lost." When the plans and purpose of God is not fully understood, it is easy to find reason to question what the Lord said and did. His mother and brothers were probably trying to keep Him from the stress and consequences of the constant contact and demands made on Him by the multitudes of people wanting healing or who were criticizing. There was even a time when they thought he "was mad." It is a natural response of family members to rally to the need one of them has. It is well for us to learn and then remember the spiritual ties we have to the Lord Jesus Christ are stronger than any other bond we might have. The unity of body, soul and spirit with another person is a wonderful thing because we are joined for life. Our union with Christ is one we experience in life and will also extend through all eternity. By the words He spoke to those who informed Him of the concern of His earthly kin, we learn the importance of the lasting kinship we have with Him when we hear His word and do what He says. That is the value of our intimate family relationship with Him. It is permanent - that relationship lasts forever.

Wind and water stirred at the passing of the Lord Jesus even though He was asleep in the ship. He had plainly identified Himself with all those in the ship when He said, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." Even though we are sure of the outcome of our life's journey, the events that happen may cause us fear. In our efforts to control a situation in which we are found, we may fret and worry unnecessarily when we do not act in faith. It is not presumption to call upon the Lord to meet our need in the daily events of life. Some of them pose great danger to us if we do not "cast our care upon Him." When a ship is filling with water, even though we know "Christ is in the vessel" and we can "smile at the storm," it usually doesn't come to us to react in that way. Whether they made a mistake in waking Him or not isn't the main emphasis of this story. The point is that with His word He rebuked the wind (the devil), the raging opposition that causes fear; He rebuked the waves (the world), the elements of the world that threaten those who were on the journey of life that led them to pass that way.

With the power of His word the Lord Jesus Christ pronounced peace that came immediately. Two lessons can be learned from this. One is that when He says a thing, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake," it will be done. We can trust Him to make that happen when our faith in Him is based on His word. No matter what might happen between here and the goal, the outcome is sure. The other lesson is that even in our times of fear and unbelief, He is near and when we call upon His name, He saves us. Satanic opposition, the pressures and temptations of the world, and the fearful trepidation of the flesh can be quickly dealt with when we turn unto the Lord in faith.

The disciples in the boat with the Savior may have wondered if all that had been done in the three years they had been with Him was going to come to nothing if the boat sank. They may have thought the blessings of the kingdom would go down with the ship. We need to remember also that no matter how troublesome our times are, and no matter how far removed the word of God is being forgotten in churches, God is not finished with what He is doing in the world. It seems hopeless to us when we see the rejection of the Gospel, the dying of faithful saints and so few being saved to fill the empty ranks. The great crowds of people who come to hear the smooth words of a false Gospel make us wonder if the ship is sinking. But God is not finished His work in this day of grace yet.

There was a man living in a despised part of that country, living near the despised herd of pigs whose only purpose was to make money for people who did not pay any attention to what the word of God said. Even worse, he was controlled by demons under the power of the devil. We would say, "He is the worst of the worst." And yet in spite of all these negative things, the Lord wanted to reach him. By the power of His word, the demons (under the devil's control) that were in the possessed man, were cast out and went into the herd of pigs. The man who was completely out of self-control (the world) and even chains couldn't hold him, was delivered from that bondage. By the word of the Lord the demons came out of the man, he was in his right mind and he was commissioned to tell others what the Lord had done for him.

We may never know the outcome of the word of God when we present it to those we will never see again. But we know the most effective way we can deal with the needs of people around us is to give them the word of the Lord. Satan cannot defeat the power of God's truth. The world attempts to undermine, and do away with, the word of God. It will fail in that attempt. There is authority in the word of God that overrides every challenge made against it in God's time and way. Over the power of darkness and of the world's system, is the power of the word of the Lord. Our commitment is to that word and that divine authority no matter what others might say or do, or whatever befalls us. His word assures us of our eternal safety and certain hope that we can enjoy now.

Friends, foes and danger around me may crowd.
Some pressures are silent and some very loud.
Each one seeks to claim authority over me -
Manipulating circumstances only by what they can see.
But they don't understand that overriding it all -
Is the word of the Lord that answers when faith calls.
And from the place of authority when the Lord Jesus speaks -
Every opposing voice grows quiet and weak.

There is no claim over me the powers of darkness have.
Even though with loud voices they continue to rant and rave -
Their power was overcome when Christ I received -
And grace bestowed divine favor when on Him I believed.
His word of authority can take care of my fear.
When He speaks peace to my soul, I know He is here.
In the middle of tempest and turmoil each wanting to upset -
There is assurance to calm the inner man His word does beget.

Attacks by the flesh, the world and the devil -
Remind me I live in the presence of evil.
But that has no claim on me, for dwelling within
Is the Person of the Spirit who gives victory over sin.
Whether it is the loss of goods or of health, that doesn't change
The commitment of God's grace when to Jesus I came
And found in Him and His word all I need to be sure
That the promises of His word will forever endure.

"Father of all grace, the blessing of security in the stormy times we live in gives peace to my soul. Evil men and seducers are certainly increasing in number. I thank Thee for allowing us to still continue to proclaim Thy Word and I know its power and authority will never diminish. Give Thy servant the ability to faithfully proclaim Thy truth each time I speak. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 8:40-56

MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY - GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

The response of the people in Galilee was very different from that in the country of the Gadarenes. There He was rejected, His word was rejected even though the power of His word was easily seen and heard as the man, liberated from the power of demons continued to tell what "great things God had done unto him." We may not see any results ourselves for the effort put forth to further the Gospel, but a Sovereign God is not limited to us. He can use whoever He chooses to bring fruit from seed sown long after we are gone. The Galileans were waiting for His return and gladly received Him. Later in Jerusalem, "They that gladly received His word were baptized." To receive what He says in His word, is to receive Him. To reject His word is to reject Him.

Faith has more than one way of expressing itself. Jairus, the leader of the synagogue, certainly showed respect for the Lord Jesus Christ as he bowed to the ground before the Lord. For a leader of the people to show such reverence before the crowd of people would have indicated to the whole company of people this

leader believed in Jesus. It was no doubt the hopelessness of his personal situation with a dying, "only child" at home, that prompted this act of faith. In the sovereignty of God, He allows urgent events to come into our lives to bring out latent faith into the forefront of our lives. Jairus had his own preconceived idea as to how faith worked and so urged the Lord Jesus to come to his home to either touch his daughter or say something they could all hear.

The centurion who came to Jesus asked Him if He was willing to heal his servant. He knew the Lord could heal him, and he knew He could do it with His word. His faith was stronger in any than any in Israel. The power of a sovereign Lord was not lost in any way to the understanding of the centurion. However, regardless of how great or how little faith in Christ is, He responds to it. "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Whether one is anxious and concerned or one is able to confidently rest in God's sovereignty will does not hinder the operation of the grace of God.

Twelve years earlier a baby girl came into Jairus, the ruler's home, and probably brought joy and gratitude to that man and his wife. She was the only child they had and doubtless much of their life together, their decision making and activities as a family centered around that only child. Around that same time a woman had to leave the shelter of a normal life and for twelve years was ostracized because of serious health problem no one could help her with. She was outcast socially and religiously because of this problem. Her hemorrhaging sickness had impoverished her when she spent all her money on doctors who could not help her. Twelve years of joy in one case and twelve years of misery in the other. In a sovereign act of God these two cases of need, both now dying, one quickly and one slowly met together, though unknown to each other, at the feet of Jesus. A bleeding woman and a pleading man both needed the Savior, both had varying evidences of faith, and both acted in faith, though in different ways.

Secretly grasping a tassel on the garment of the Lord Jesus, a superstitious woman acted in desperate faith. Seeking to hurry the Lord along the road to his home to heal his daughter, Jairus acted in anxious faith. How gracious, kind and tender are the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when He responds to each one appropriately to the situation. When healing virtue had blessed the woman and healed her immediately, her public confession would assure all around who heard her words that she was no longer an outcast.

The Lord Jesus comforted her anxiety and for the first time in twelve years she could find relief and joy. His words to her after her healing gave her confidence she could live with. Confession with the mouth is important when one puts their faith in Christ for salvation. Verbal testimony has benefit to those around who may be skeptical of who Christ is and what He has done for us. Faith needs to be expressed. When the Lord raised the dead child to life, the positive comment to give her food to eat would have made the parents act in faith on her behalf. When the child resumed normal life again the Lord did not need to rely on the testimony of the parents to identify Him as the Sovereign Lord. For three years those living in that area had ample opportunity to act responsibly by putting their faith in Him. By now everyone in that area had come to a conclusion about the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a time for people to hear the word of the Lord and there is a time to act upon it. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Real faith doesn't need constant reaffirmation when it is placed in the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. There is a time to sow and a time to reap. Not only those in distant places like Gadara are Christ rejectors.

When the evidence is there for all to see and right words have already been spoken,
Any further sign is unnecessary, the works of Christ are not just a token
Of grace given that is obvious for all sincere people to see.
Faith is there waiting there to be used, not as a charm, but experientially.

The amount of faith isn't what's the key to grace, but who that faith is in.
To not believe in Christ who is the Object of faith, is for unbelievers a soul-damning sin.
The evidence of His Person, the knowledge of His work is on the pages of scripture to read.
When the truth of the scripture reveals Him to the seeker, He is all that person needs.

Without faith in the Lord, there is nothing anyone can do that ever can please our God.
Faith in Him comes when one is willing to believe what is written in His word.
The Holy Spirit reveals the Person and the saving work of the Savior.
True faith in Him is not hard to detect, there is a change in mind and behavior.

A man of old was out of his mind, controlled by the powers of darkness.
The demons that manipulate the spirit of a man are powerless when in faith one harkens.
When the voice of the Lord that is stronger than death sounds in the ears of a seeker.
Power over sin, the world, and devil is evident, and the nature of the man is meeker.

When one seems abandoned, alone and forsaken, faith still has a work to do. The hopelessness that had taken control, gives way when the Lord speaks to you. His words of comfort, of freedom and forgiveness changes everything in a moment of time.
Even though faith is only a small seed, it has power to completely change one's mind.

When that takes place there is reality that shows and God is truly pleased. One who has lived in doubt and sin, now the power of faith has seized. This results in blessings seen and unseen, the Sovereign God takes our case - And by reason of His love for the sinner, showers him with the blessings of grace.

“Gracious God, my Father, with a sense of anticipation as to what this day will bring, I place myself in faith upon Thee and Thy sovereign will. May any words spoken be with grace seasoned with salt. May any activities be done in faith knowing Thou knowest the end from the beginning. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 9:

THE MIGHTY POWER OF GOD:

There are many ways we can know and see the power of God: creation power, natural power of wind, waves and sun. But “all power” in heaven and in earth is given to the Lord Jesus Christ. This confirms His interest in the kingdom.

v.1-9. THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE: He called; He gave power and authority to His disciples; He sent them to preach; He said unto them – spoke and gave directions.

- v.1-2. The Lord does not ask us to do what we cannot do; He empowers us. They did what they saw Him do. He holds us accountable to obey Him – preach and heal.
- v.3. “Take nothing..” Depend on God alone.
- v.4-6. Stay there.. we leave impressions in many ways. We learn from Him what to do; how to act toward people; accountability to Him.
- v.7-9. Herod hears three opinions. His guilt is troublesome; he is fearful; he is a terror to himself because he has a guilty conscience.

v.10-17. HE CONFIRMS HIS DIVINE POWER: 5000+ people are fed.

- The disciples give a full report of what they did.
- There are times when we need breathing space.
- v.11. The people are drawn to Him. He kindly receives them. He instructs them. He heals and feeds them.
- v.12. The 12 are concerned for the people. They have great love but weak faith.
- When we are asked to do what we can't, it is to make us aware of our need of God and to learn to depend on Him.
- v.13. Simple fare is sufficient as to quality. The quantity goes beyond our comprehension.
- v.14-15. They obeyed His command to sit down orderly and in a way that expresses their expectation. This is hard to do when we don't see or understand what is going to happen.
- v.16-17. He gave thanks, showing an act of faith. He broke the bread rather than multiply the loaves. We can expect His blessings in distributing rather than reserving what we have. Scattering is the way to increase; liberality is the way to riches.
- He gave to the disciples so the people would learn that God uses people in doing His work.
- They were all filled, not just satisfied.
- It was a miracle that there was food; it was also a miracle that so much was left.

v.18-27. HE CONFIRMS HIS DIVINE AUTHORITY: The Confession.

- V.18. He is going to firmly establish in the mind of His own, who He is.
- V.19. There are many opinions about Christ.
- V.20. Peter speaks for them all. Even though He was veiled as a human, they knew Him to be truly the Christ of God.
- V.21-22. He lets them know what to expect as He prepares them ahead of time.
- V.23. He offers the choices of being a Christian: the terms are self-denial; suffering for the Gospel; serving in the Gospel; Christ must be supreme in our lives; cross-bearing is a daily occurrence; following Christ is not hit-and-miss; life is laid down for His service – fear and shame cause a holding back.

v.27-36. HE CONFIRMS HIS DIVINE NATURE: Transfiguration.

- The disciples saw evidence of His glory/majesty.
- Three witnesses were there to see as to what to expect in the future.
- They are going to be witnesses of His death and resurrection – here they witness His glory.

- Moses was the law-giver; Elias, the chief of the prophets.
 - This is a glimpse of heaven. God's testimony to men.
- v.37-45. HE CONFIRMS HIS SUPERIORITY: casting out unclean spirits.
- Satan delights to hurt the body.
 - Need will make a person humble and eloquent.
 - Do not take God's power for granted nor be careless about it.
 - He tells again of His approaching passion – more frequently.
- v.46-56. HE CONFIRMS HIS LEADERSHIP OVER MEN: leadership teaching...
- Who do I really care for?
 - What do others do that hurts my pride?
 - How do I handle rejection?
 - What makes me want to retaliate?
- v.57-62. HE CONFIRMS HIS LORDSHIP:
- Words are not all that is involved in commitment.
Lordship gives priority to the Lord in everything.

FOUR WAYS TO HINDER SERVICE: 28-48.

V.33. SPEECH WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE: be sure of what we say in relation to God's things. Peter was putting spiritual and heavenly things on a worldly, earthly level.

v.40. ACTION WITHOUT POWER: the disciples thought they could do God's work without God. If I don't know what is right, wait.

v.46. SELF-EXALTATION: we lose the spirit of love by a private sin.

v.49. A DIVISIVE SPIRIT: one who builds on opinions, will cause divisions.

LUKE 9:1-17

CALLED TO SERVE

Three years had passed since seventy messengers went out to tell the whole nation of Israel the kingdom of heaven was here. During those years the Lord Jesus Christ had served the people both spiritual and physically. Many who had been sick were healed and living healthy and normal lives. Many who had been separated from God because of the wages of sin were now living new lives by "faith in the Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Now the time was drawing near for the final climactic events of the Lord's ministry on earth. The disciples had been taught the principles of kingdom living. They had seen many times the evidence of the mighty power of the One they were following. They had learned to trust Him and His word. Now it was time for them to go out and serve Him. Now was the time for them to practice what they had been taught. The learning process takes time, but one has not learned a thing until they have put it into practice themselves and have seen results. The Gospel is something we know. It is the message of good news to those who are perishing in their sins. Our first responsibility is to go under the authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. Authority gives us the right to speak for God. Power is the capacity to speak for God. To preach the kingdom of God is the objective. Spiritual results are the purposes of going into a nation and presenting the people with the Person and work of Christ. The physical part of the work was to give authority to the truth being presented.

The ones who are heralds, representatives of the king, are to deliver the message they have been charged with, not to discuss the political or social difficulties going on in the nation. The ones charged with doing this work are not to draw attention to themselves as wealthy and successful preachers. They are to identify themselves with the people where they are. In this way they are emphasizing the worth of the One who sent them. The only things they had to offer the people was their message given by the authority and power to them by their Lord who sent them. They had nothing with them to make their journey and work comfortable and easy. Things that people normally have were all left behind as they went from place to place, depending on the people to whom they preached to show hospitality to them. Power and authority over demons and disease gave credibility to the message they preached. The work to which they were commissioned was to preach the kingdom of God and meet needs. Their needs were basic so there were no distractions such as come when preaching a "prosperity Gospel" or trying to recruit numbers for a church. Our work is to prepare the ground, sow the seed and water it. God gives life and increase.

Preaching the kingdom of God emphasizes two things: the fact that there is a kingdom, and the One who is in authority in that kingdom. A wrong emphasis in preaching the Gospel leads people to miss God's salvation and eternal life. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ who Thou hast sent." If people don't come to know Him personally by faith, they do not have the right of entrance into the kingdom of God.

Twelve men preaching every village and city as they go from place to place and give evidence of their authority by casting out demons and healing, did create a stir among the people and even Herod. This is not our call who preach the Gospel to a world of lost sinners. Healing was to give authority to those apostles to open the door to that nation who "require a sign." Yet there are principles of service given here from which we can learn. Some places have open doors to the Gospel and some doors are shut tight. There is not any reason to try to make something happen when God is not working there. People who reject the servants reject the Master. The servants of God did not broadcast the results but told the Lord "all they had done." Our responsibility is to do what He tells us. The results are for His glory. To advertise our needs or the results of our ministry is not something that has any biblical precedent for us to follow. Much dishonor has been done to God's work by self-exalting advertisements in spiritual things.

There will always be needs wherever we go. We can trust God to give us the needed strength and wisdom to meet the needs of people wherever we go. Some will be hungry; some needs are emotional and some are spiritual. The One we serve can guide us to do what needs to be done - whether feeding, preaching or laboring in His work. Much that could be accomplished is hindered by statistics that have been reported. We know five loaves and two fish met the needs of 5000 men. We know the nation of Israel heard the preaching of the kingdom of God. We know some believe and some don't believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. We know some will be saved and some will be lost. Our work is to do what He has instructed. His is to produce the results. His is to bless the people with full provision to meet their needs. Ours is to make sure we don't waste what He has given us to be a blessing to others.

To serve the Lord in any way is a privilege that's of highest worth.
Our Lord and Savior has sent us to preach the Gospel over all the earth.
In this work to which we're called we should do it with our might.
The results will be seen when He saves people turning their darkness into light.

The call to serve isn't complicated, it starts with "Follow Me."
By those simple words we know He sees what we can't see.
When following Him, the way soon opens and we know what to do.
He is with us in that work and will let us know when it's through.

The power to serve is not the skills learned from the worldly men.
There are things that are unfolded to us when we simply follow Him.
Usually they are made plain to us when we read His holy word.
Those words give spiritual guidance to accomplish what we should.

The authority to serve is not our own, it comes from a higher Source.
When the call comes to take action in faith, to go forward is our choice.
We won't know all the results, those we must leave to Him.
For me to claim some right to fame really is an act of sin.

The results of service we may never know, for that is not our claim.
We are given opportunity to serve that we might give honor to His name.
To speak for God in the world today is far higher than human office.
Our Lord knew what would be the results even before He chose us.

May I ever serve with the humility the One who in grace has saved me.
May I always use to best ability the gifts that He first gave me.
May there never be on my part the desire to claim results that glorify Him.
May my motives always be honor for God and blessings for fellow-men.

"Father in heaven, to be Thy servant is the highest honor I can have as I live in this world from day to day. I know the Lord Jesus called those early disciples, "friends" just before He died. To know Thee and be allowed to speak for Thee is such an honor and blessing to me. May what I do and say this day be an honor for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 9:18-36

IDENTITY

To know the true identity of a person as God sees them, there are certain ways we can apply. The first is to find out what God has to say about those who know and love Him and those who do not. The second is to ask questions of that person directly and come to a conclusion as to how and what their answers are. Third, when there is a precise statement made that separates that person from all others, we know their uniqueness. Luke followed this pattern in the book of Luke as those who followed the Son of Man learned more about Him by taking His "yoke" upon them. When the Lord was praying alone, the disciples were

nearby. Even though He did not pray with Him, they learned the value of prayer. His fellowship with the Father, His oneness with the Father prevented Him from participating in prayer with those who are able to come to God because of His mercy and compassion to those who are by nature sinful.

The Lord Jesus did not need a mediator because He is the one Mediator between God and men. He did not need the gracious pity of God. The Godhead is made up of equal Persons. The Lord Jesus' prayer life was a part of who He is. Even in His perfect manhood He valued the fellowship of His Father in everything. Luke mentions seven different times the Lord prayed: before His public ministry when He was baptized; when His name was growing well known; before He chose the twelve disciples; when they asked His disciples if they knew who He really was; when He was transfigured; before He taught His disciples to pray and in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The attitude and actions of prayer reveal through God's grace many of the things that we need to know about the Savior. That principle holds true also when we are concerned about the reality of a person, we do not know who comes among us. God looks on the heart of people. We can form opinions based on the outward view of a person and make a serious mistake as to one's intention and maybe even one's character. When we take a matter to God in prayer and when we make intercession on behalf of a person, we can trust God to reveal to us the intention of that person and what our attitude and approach to them should be.

When the Lord asked questions of the disciples at this time, in a way He was answering their questions about Him. After He had calmed the storm on the lake, they had asked themselves, "Who is this?" When the twelve had gone out preaching the kingdom of God to the nation of Israel, Herod asked, "Who then is this?" Now the Lord asked some questions of them to give them opportunity to rightly identify Him. "Whom do the people say that I am?" was a question that reveals the real object of His interest. He did not ask who the religious rulers, kings or authorities of government were saying. By asking the disciples what the people were saying He was teaching them who were the important people in the kingdom of God. The leaders have no purpose if the people do not accept their leadership. The value of a kingdom is in the value of the people in that kingdom. The disciples had to learn to look upon people as their Sovereign Lord saw them. Those who represent the kingdom of God must learn to keep connected with those around us and know what they are thinking and saying.

Even more important was the Lord's question, "But whom say ye that I am?" The answer Peter gave, "The Christ of God," revealed their hope for the nation of Israel lay in the Lord Jesus as the Messiah. The people thought another prophet had come to instruct the nation. These men were hoping this was the time "He would redeem Israel." They certainly knew who He really was. But there were things they yet had to learn about Him. He gave them strict instructions to not speak of His Messianic work as the Redeemer of Israel because the time was not yet come. They had to wait. They weren't ready because the Redeemer had the work of the cross ahead of Him to accomplish. They had to learn to know Him better. He told them specifically for the first time of the suffering of the cross that had to come before the glory of the kingdom.

The prayer opened the door to the identification of His Person. The questions clarified the supremacy of His Person. The revelation of redemption by the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord revealed the purpose of His Person. Then came the challenge to really identify those who would follow Him. Suffering comes before glory. Faithfulness comes before victory. There is a cost to being a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus Christ took three men a week later to that mountain where He prayed and they slept, He gave them an opportunity to see what glory that follows suffering is really like. The conversation between the Lord Jesus, Moses and Elijah was concerning the suffering and death that would happen to Him. But it also reveals some things of the state of those who have passed on before us. Their identity is known and they are truly living, thinking, communicating and aware of what is going on as well as what is ahead. They were not in fear of the Lord and could talk with Him even though He was in the brightest glory of His Person while He was here on earth. They could talk to each other and those who had never met before knew who they were by the names they had when they were on earth hundreds of years before.

Learning to know the Lord does take time. Our faith goes way beyond what others believe. We must have a personal faith in Christ and "know in whom we have believed." We do not know the calendar of events ahead of us, but we have learned to know who our Savior and Lord is. In faith we wait, and work - and maybe suffer a little before glory is revealed.

The One in whom we have believed is far beyond our ken
And yet in His own personhood has revealed Himself to men.

Even though His attributes remain inexplicable to most
The things we learn of Him each day open to our hearts a host
Of truths about Him that affects all we say and do.
His Word reveals that following Him means before this life is through
We will have experiences that make us ready for what is yet ahead -
And we can face the future with confidence instead of fearful dread.

What most people say is one thing, what we know is something else.
They are limited by what they see, we learn what the Spirit tells
In words written clear and plain in God's holy Word -
Each page telling of some aspect true of our gracious Lord.
So, by the words of truth we learn more of Him each day -
And what we learn affects our walk and what we do and say.
We are His representatives; our voices can speak truth for Him.
To take His yoke and learn of Him, is where future life begins.

There are no easy ways to tell people who God is from only human perspective.
Many only think of Him as a myth and use His name as an invective.
But when we were chosen by Him to follow daily and bear a cross -
Then our life and identity with Him, is again, not a wasted loss.
The more we walk with Him, the more our likeness to Him is reflected -
And without words we then can show evidence of the One they have neglected.
Our experiences with Him on the mountain, may be a witness to those in the valley below.
Spending time with the Christ were identified with, has a certain grace that to others
shows.

“Father, I thank Thee for answering my prayers yesterday and for giving opportunities to speak of meaningful things to those we were in contact with. I thank Thee for the refreshing results of some earnest labor and enjoyable fellowship with some of Thy people. May there have been in that day - and now in this one - ways that I might honor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 9:34-35. *“While He thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son: hear Him.”*

A CLOUD AND A VOICE.

There are many ways we can know and see the power of God. Creation, and power in nature; salvation, and power in the new birth; prayer, and the power that answers. All power is given unto the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven and earth. When the cloud came and then the voice came, the three disciples knew God was near, and they were afraid. Years later they still made reference to the impact of the events that took place on that mountain. They knew, better than before, who the Son of Man really was.

THE SON OF MAN – THE SENT ONE [v.20-22]

The *Person was sent*. God had planned this. The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. The *Purpose was stated* – to be the Savior; to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; to give life abundantly; to save His people from their sins. The *Power was seen*. Evidence was seen in healing miracles, control over the elements, authority over sin, power over death itself.

THE SON OF MAN – AND HIS SERVANTS [v.26-35]

The changed lives of believers, give evidence of who the Son of Man really is. The *disciple and his cross – identification*: The Son of Man has power to save and to keep those who belong to Him. They are identified with Him and likeness to Him, not with a badge or symbol. The *disciple and his life – satisfaction*: The Son of Man has power to satisfy and supply every spiritual need that arises. The *disciple and his future – participation*: The Son of Man gives power to sustain and serve acceptably.

THE SON OF MAN – AMONG SINFUL MEN [v.43-45]

The *things He did for them*: He healed them, fed them and raised the dead. He has power to bless. The *things He said to them*: He gave them warnings, instructions, exhortations, comfort and welcomed them. He has the power to forgive their sins. The *things He endured from them*: He was reproached, despised, delivered, and crucified. He had power under control (meekness).

THE SON OF MAN – THE GRACIOUS SAVIOR [v.51-56]

The Son of Man has *power to destroy, but He doesn't*.
The son of Man has *power to save, and He does*.

THE SON OF MAN – THE HOMELESS STRANGER [v.57-62]

The Son of Man made clear the principles of, and access to, the kingdom of God.

Sight of the kingdom: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Entrance into the kingdom: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter* the kingdom of God."

Message of the kingdom: "Repent ye and *believe* the Gospel."

Service in the kingdom: "Go ye therefore and *make disciples.*"

"God and Father of all that know Thee and the Lord Jesus Christ: I know the covering cloud allowed those men to hear Thy voice and yet not die at the glory of Thy presence. They never forgot what they had seen and heard on that mountain. I have had some experiences in my life that still remain fresh in my mind and heart. By Thy grace please never let the impact of those times ever leave my mind. Amen."

LUKE 9:35. "And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, this is my beloved Son: hear him."

UNFOLDING.

What moves the Son of Man to allow us thus to share
Kingdom work with future glory; and now a cross to bear?
He clearly stated in words, precisely the cost He would pay -
But He also told me what the world would give - lest I be cast away.

I may not see this side of heaven a view like His transfiguration.
But by what I learn and read of Christ, in me is produced transformation
That makes me aware the more I know of Him leads to further consecration
And that in turn brings out of me some acts of practical sanctification.

When God opens heaven to speak to me, I don't hear an audible voice.
But almost always there is some truth that sets before me a choice.
Am I going to use this day for myself or is there something in it for Him.
Through reading portions of the Bible like this, it helps me know where to begin.

My ears are open and I hope it is true, my understanding also waits.
To grasp some special meaning that will seriously motivate
Me to not allow these hours to pass unused and unproductive;
For my time and person are not my own; to Him all this I give.

"As a disciple learning of Thee, O God, I want the awakening of my soul to be such as to bring glory to Thee each day. If there is something to learn, may I have ears to hear, if there is something to do, may I do it as unto the Lord. If there is some where I must go, direct my steps. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

LUKE 9:37-62

IN THE VALLEY

We do not spend all of our time where there is the light of glory, the blessing of holy fellowship with the Lord, the joy of looking forward to the time when "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun, doth its successive journeys run." Most of the time our lives are lived where suffering and sin seems to be on every hand. When the Lord along with Peter, James and John descended from that place of revealed glory, they were immediately confronted with a distraught father whose only son was in desperate need. His body was bearing evidence of the terrible effects of sin that the power of darkness puts on those it seeks to claim. Often when observing the Lord, people wondered at Him. They wondered at "the gracious words" He spoke. Here they wondered at His words of authority and all the things He did when, with the mighty power of God, the evil spirit left the appealing man's only son.

The disciples were being taught how to trust the Lord, how to love others and how to put Christ first in everything. They had shown their lack of compassion when they wanted to send the hungry away. Peter, James and John were lacking in vigilance when they slept while the glory of the Lord appeared on the mountain of transfiguration. There was a lack of discernment until they heard the voice of God identifying the Lord Jesus as God's "Beloved Son" who they were to listen to. The nine other disciples lacked in power to heal even though they had experienced that power only a short time before. There was an obvious lack of humility as the disciples were trying to determine their positions in the coming kingdom in which they hoped to have a place. They also lacked tolerance when they rebuked one serving in a different way than they were. The bitterness of the disciples toward the Samaritans revealed their lack of grace. Three men who came to follow the Lord showed a real lack of commitment to the Lord and His authority.

There are many important lessons and Christ-like characteristics we don't learn for one reason or another until we have to take responsibility for what happens ourselves. Our concern for the welfare and well-being of others does not blossom until it is up to us to meet the needs people have. Our response to opposition doesn't really affect us much until others are looking to us as to how they should act towards the enemies of God and His Gospel. People from other denominations involved in religious activity for the Lord that differs from ours, may cause a critical or even resentful attitude in us until we have learned God is not depending on us alone to fulfill His work. Others may do things different but God is able to bring blessing and results in any way He chooses. When we know what God wants us to do, we need to do it and follow the course He has laid out before us in spite of the hazards we will have to pass through.

In our service for the Lord as those who are "learners," we need to "follow Him" even when we can't see Him or understand entirely why He has led us in this particular path. Faith in Him makes it possible for us to be faithful in our service, our walk, and our interaction with believers and unbelievers. When the Lord left Galilee for the last time in His public ministry and never returned until after His resurrection, that did not mean the work of the Galilean disciples was over. In equipping us to serve the Lord we are not limited to certain geographical areas. The Lord chose men to take the message of the Gospel to the Jews, many who were scattered to different countries. Paul was to take the Gospel to Gentiles, kings and rulers. Discipleship means we follow our Lord wherever He chooses and do whatever He directs us to in His own time and way. He "set His face to go to Jerusalem." There was a goal before Him. We need to keep before us the calling He has given us.

Three men illustrate what can keep us from fulfilling this call. One was a scribe who for whatever reason was attracted to Jesus, perhaps as the Messiah of Israel and wanted a place in the kingdom he hoped was coming. When he was told of the conditions he would face and the implied role he would fill as an itinerate servant, he was not heard of after. The second one was a man the Lord called to follow Him. He had good intentions, but as a disciple he had his priorities wrong. The third man was willing in word to follow the Lord, but he had his eye in the wrong direction. His first priority was to his family and then at his convenience to follow the Lord.

The lessons are plain. An interest in following the Lord is not enough. There has to be a whole-hearted dedication to the Lord and His service. I may not like all that will happen but my motivation is based on love for my Master. Any considerations that will hinder me from following the Savior must be abandoned so that God and His kingdom come first.

Thankful I am for the mountain top, but most live in the valley below.
In my service it is incumbent on me to go there that His grace I may show.
As long as I am called to remain in this world, there are needs I am called to meet.
The object of living still is that by the Gospel, sinners will bow at Christ's feet.

The enemy of souls wants to keep people bound, and under his evil control.
The Gospel we preach has a greater power and is able to deliver the soul.
When there is evidence of need, my responsibility is to tell of the Light of life.
And I must urge people to act in faith, telling of Him who does all things right.

I know many won't pay attention, and some will even oppose.
There is not much I can do to change their minds, but God knows every one of those
Who resist His grace so He will do whatever is His sovereign will.
Some He may save in remarkable ways, and others remain in darkness still.

In the kingdom of heaven those who belong will come in child-like faith.
The illustration of a child in the middle of the group showed the disciples who will be
great.
When we seek to do God's will in His way, we will not be uplifted in pride.
Those who are down need fear no fall, and in His grace alone will abide.

When called to follow the Lord we need to consider this a very great privilege.
To Him who called us we give ourselves and to Him only will give our homage.
He is the Lord, His claims are supreme, none other with Him can compare.
It goes way above any blessing we have when we are called in His life to share.

In faith and humility in this valley we can serve Him, with visits to the mountain top.
The privilege to serve in eternal things at the end of this life will not stop.
This is our training time, here we learn how to represent our Lord and Savior to men.
After this life is over, we will find the value of the lessons that here we did begin.

“I am thankful Father, for the fellowship with the saints and the communion we all shared with Thee. Even though we are all different we have our Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, in common with each other. May the blessings I have received all out in continual benefits to others in the days ahead as we interact with people saved and unsaved. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 10

THE EFFECT OF THE GOSPEL OF GOD.

Around the world there are approximately 60,000 North American missionaries. The Gospel is being sounded out; souls are being saved. Fear is a real problem to people all over the world. There are some steps we can take to deal with our problems: fix the ones you can fix and identify the ones you can live with. For “the Lord’s sake” help others fix theirs if you can. Don’t do drastic things. Encourage people to trust God and use every opportunity to present the Gospel.

v.1-8. THE HARVEST: **the offer of eternal life.** “I send you forth...I give you power...”

- He is the Lord of the harvest.
- He is the One who sends forth the laborers.
- There are few laborers – more are needed.
- We are to pray that He will send forth laborers.
- There are “wolves” who want to stop the Gospel.
- It is important that we trust God alone.
- Some will appreciate peace and others are enemies.
- Peace may be lost but it can be regained.
- The harvest is ready to gather.
- There are laborers ready to work.
- Babes are able to see what wise men don’t see.
- Believers are able to rejoice because we know the Lord of the harvest.

“I will send My Son...”

v.9-15. THE KINGDOM: **receive eternal life.** “I thank Thee, O Father...has revealed to babes... I will come again.”

- Those that are sick – sin from within.
- Those that are injured – sin from without.
- Those that receive Him – Martha.
- Those that appreciate Him – Mary.

He is building a kingdom.

v.12-16. THE JUDGMENT: **rejection of eternal life.** “I will repay.”

- Judgment on the morally unclean –Sodom.
- Judgment on spiritually ignorant – Sidon.
- Judgment on materially concerned – Tyre.
- Judgment on those who hear but don’t believe – Chorazin.
- Judgment on the home of many disciples – Bethsaida.
- Judgment on the earthly home of the Savior – Capernaum.

v.12-16. THE COMPARISON:

<p><u>Sodom: men of Sodom.</u> Wicked; given to lust. Vain imaginations. God gave them up to vile affections.</p>	<p><u>Capernaum: earthly home of Jesus.</u> An unspeakable privilege. An incomparable Person.</p>
<p><u>Sodom: woman of Sodom.</u> Heard a word of warning. Hand linked to heavenly messenger. Ran to escape – looked back.</p>	<p><u>Capernaum: mighty works.</u> Healing: Centurion’s servant. Peter’s mother-in-law. Palsied man borne of 4. Cast out devils. Healed all kinds of diseases. Raised Jairus’ daughter. Healed woman who touched Him.</p>
<p><u>Believer outside Sodom: Abraham.</u></p>	<p>Teaching:</p>

Prayed for the city, family, woman. "Sinners to repentance."
Prayed in the early morning. "Power on earth to forgive sins."
Knew the end – judgment. Attitudes:

John – he has a devil.
Jesus – He is a glutton, winebibber.

v. 17-20 THE 70 RETURN:

It is cause for joy when God is working, but nothing compares with the value of being saved 00 having your names written in heaven.

v.21-24. CHRIST REJOICES AND SHOWS THE PRIVILEGES OF THE GOSPEL:

Salvation is not by human wisdom but by revelation from the Father through the Son. Simple people can receive this.

The disciples were blessed because they, eyewitnesses, could see what kings and prophets could only foresee.

v.25-37. THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITIAN:

Samaria means, "watchtower." It was the capital of the northern kingdom [1Kg.16]. It was Israel's "crown of pride" [Is.28:1]. It was besieged twice by Benhadad [1Kg.20]. It was miraculously saved [2Kg.6].

Worshippers of Baal were destroyed here [2Kg.10]. It was threatened with divine judgment [Is.28; Amos 3]. When taken captive, it was repopulated with foreigners [2Kg.17]. Christ forbade his disciple to preach there [Mat.10:5]. The Gospel was preached there [Acts 1:8]. Churches were established there [Acts 9:31]. Paul preached there [Acts 15:3].

The Samaritans were a mixed race [2Kg.17]. Their help was rejected by Nehemiah [Neh.4]. Christ reached a woman of Samaria [Jn.4]; the story of the good Samaritan [Lu.10]; the beliefs of the Samaritans [Jn.4:25]; Samaritan converts [Acts 8].

Probably the most important question one can ask is, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

The lawyer knew the requirements.

Many know what is right but don't want to do it.

To the thieves the traveler was a victim to exploit: **the world.**

To the priest the traveler was a nuisance to avoid: **religion.**

To the Levite the traveler was a subject to discuss: **forms (religious).**

To the Samaritan the traveler was a neighbor to help: **the Lord Jesus Christ.**

To the innkeeper the traveler was a customer to serve: **the assembly.**

v.38-42. MARY AND MARTHA:

- Both loved the Lord.
- Both were serving Him in different ways.
- Martha's way was in physical service; Mary in spiritual ways.
- "One thing" is needful: fellowship with God.
- "Good part": lasting blessing.

LUKE 10:1-24

PRAY-ERS AND LABORERS

There were a number of areas the Lord Jesus Christ wanted to reach quickly and effectively. When the twelve were sent out, there was a real stir among the people that reached even to the king. When the seventy were sent two by two, again the message was the kingdom of God has come. The message was the important part of the work. The healing of the sick was to give emphasis to the message. They weren't told to cast out demons. The area beyond Jordan (Perea) had been neglected by the Jews as unimportant. Galilee and the Galileans had been held in contempt as a low-class place and the people there were looked down upon by the leadership of Israel. Samaria and Samaritans, a mixed race of people, were despised and hated. "The Jews have no dealing with the Samaritans." It was to these people in these areas the seventy were sent to take the message of the kingdom of God.

We may look down on cultures, countries and even classes of people, but they are important to God. Our prejudices have to be forsaken and our preconceived thoughts of people are places must be rejected in view of the commission we have been given. True, our commission is to the world, not just to those of a particular place and people, but the principle remains the same. Where people are in need of hearing the Gospel, we need to pray first, and then go to those people.

The work that lay before the seventy disciples was a planned work. There was nothing haphazard about it. Not only the twelve who were especially chosen to be with Him, but there were many more who were to be

involved in this work. Those who were learning from Him and were following Him were now sent out by Him to share in the work of the kingdom. They knew where they were to go and they knew they were not to go alone. By sending out two out together there would be support by each other, and encouragement when opposition came. They were going out "as lambs among wolves," so would need each other to keep their guard up and to maintain the guidelines the Lord had given. There is personal and moral safety when two are laboring together in the same work at the same place. This was a planned work no doubt and there was two parts to it. They were to pray for other laborers to go into the harvest and to go themselves in the way the Lord of the harvest chose to send them. We need to pray for laborers to go into the harvest in our day. It is important that we also continue to pray for those who are laboring in places all around this world. There was not to be the encumbrances of a long siege or journey. This was an urgent commission to be accomplished as quick as possible. The kingdom of God had come right to where the people were. There were to be no distractions by lengthy discussions along the way. The message was to be delivered and the proofs given to the message by the healing of sick people. Then they were to move on.

When the Gospel is preached today not everyone reacts the same to the truth of God. Some want to hear more; some reject it outright and others believe the message. It is true there is an urgency to what we do, but the practice of Gospel activity now is somewhat different than what was done at that time. Paul was in Corinth for at least a year and a half. In other places like Thessalonica, there was a quicker response. So, we can't make this a template for our practice. We can make sure the message we have been given to declare is delivered and the importance of acting upon the truth is made clear to those to whom we preach. There are many areas that are neglected, treated with contempt or hatred, but God intends us to go where He sends us.

The results of a work for God are not a reason for us to be proud. The seventy seemed to take a bit of pride in the fact that demons were subject to them. The Lord Jesus very plainly told them what had already happened to Satan and that the reason demons were subject to them was because of a greater power than theirs. We have to make sure our priorities are right. Any victories that might come are because of Him not us. Our cause for rejoicing is that our names are written in heaven and God allows us to represent Him here on earth is a wonder. Any accomplishments are to have all glory given to the Lord Jesus. Satan's downfall was pride and we are in danger of the same thing.

In His prayer of joy and thanksgiving the Lord expressed thanks that the things of God are not understood or appreciated only by the wise and educated few, but are available to all in spite of our lack of ability. Childlike trust and real faith make possible to every person who trusts Him, the capacity to fulfill every mission He gives us. Through the Lord Jesus Christ revealing the things of God to us, we can understand how to accomplish His work, carry out His principles in action, pass on teaching and reach other people with the message we have been entrusted with. Prophets and kings of the past could only vaguely see what we know personally and are able to pass on to others around us.

To speak for God is a responsibility and privilege of highest import.
This in ourselves is impossible to accomplish but done with divine support.
When asked by the Lord of the harvest to pray, that is where we begin.
After that we go to fulfill our mission telling people about Him.

The kingdom of God has come and is here, the Gospel message makes that plain.
Authority to speak and be effective in it, is by the power of Jesus' name.
Our role together as we move from place to place is to represent Him who is coming.
Those who give heed will be ready for Him, those who don't are given a warning.

Two going together is a practice passed on to us by Him who wisely sent us.
Safety is one reason for two, we are firmly supported by one we can trust.
In the "mouth of two or three" every word is established and paid attention to.
Those who respond will be ready for Him when Jesus of Nazareth passes through.

Our work is quite different from the seventy, the whole world is where we are called.
But the principles that guide us are very similar when biblical practices are followed.
Those who go forth need to take time to pray, and makes sure the message is clear.
Then we are told to speak out for the Lord and tell people salvation is near.

When the message is given in the way God wants, He adds His blessing to results that
come.
Our part is to pray for others and ourselves, then go to each place knowing there will be
some
Who pay heed, some who will reject and, by God's grace some will truly believe.
They are those who become God's children when by faith, they the Savior receive.

Praying and laboring go together in the work of the kingdom of God.
We do our part with enthusiasm and faith, then put our full trust in the Lord.
To bring to completion what He began when He sent us to tell others good news.
When we come back to give our report, we will be glad what He said we did not refuse.

“Gracious God my Father, with joy I hear from time to time what Thou art doing in other parts of the world. I praise and thank Thee for every faithful messenger who is telling others the good news of the kingdom of God. May much glory be brought to Thee by the efforts of Thy faithful servants - and even this unprofitable servant. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 10:21. *“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight.”*

EFFECTS.

Impact is being made by words and deeds - all over the world, for the Lord's sake.
Not drastic, offensive words that cut and burn and hurt and are slow to heal;
But words of truth with grace and acts to match the sounds of life.
A field has been planted; maturing is evident; the process works and the harvest is near.
The colors change as the fullness of the fruit becomes clear to all that look with clarity.
Eyes unjaundiced watch the days, the weather, the suitability, the evidence is there.
Harvest time - and gathering laborers come together ready to work - together.
The eyes that were blind see light. Babes see and understand a bit at a time.
Tools of the trade are set to the harvest with vigor and enthusiasm and the sound -
Yes, the sound of singing workers and of honest labor in the season and out.
The Lord of the harvest sends laborers and they press forward the work with joy.
The Son has come; the work goes on; the harvest comes into the storehouse.

A Voice of joy and thanksgiving is raised to heaven - eternal life in the words.
Those nearby, hear the Voice of the Son of Man, and those sick of sin within - healed.
The sound of that Voice is heard again, its effect is great - and those injured - healed.
Martha opens her door and prepares food for Him, her Lord - she receives Him.
Mary sits at His feet and hears His words; the effect - she appreciates Him.
He is building His kingdom one living stone at a time - the effect is sometimes missed.
The kingdom of God has come near and its effect is being seen a little at a time.
It is happening: the kingdom is being added to with each passing day - little noticed.
One or two here; a few there; in far and ancient cultures some are pressing in.
The effect is seen by those who watch from a distance and ask no questions.
Time passes and situations present themselves in many different ways - effect felt.
From distant shores and places with strange names - the Father reveals the Son - effect.

But some will back away, and others turn from Him who came to bless.
The effect of rejection has yet to be felt in full by those who such grace spurn.
Lessons can be learned by observation - look at Sodom; learn the effect of immorality.
Judgment falls so quickly, after long years of patient waiting and failing representation.
Sidon, without learning, study or motivation choosing to be spiritually ignorant is lost.
Money and wealth associated with material acquisition - like on Tyre, judgment falls.
Chorazin, with the benefit of the Son of Man in their midst, and still remains indifferent.
The effects of fear, rejection and immoral living, still are with us even here and now.
The place so blessed by those who followed Jesus, Bethsaida, will be judged the same.
The earthly home of Him who filled all heaven with glory, Capernaum, brought down
To hell: along with those who choose their ignorance, materialism and indifference.
Choose the effect of blessings brought to you from Him, or else be lost.

“O God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ: may I and all others like me who have experienced first-hand the grace of God; commit ourselves again to the kingdom work we have been called to. May our help be from the Lord and not self or others. May our vision be brightened again that we may see through the eyes of God. Amen.”

LUKE 10:25-42

LOVE SHOWS

Sometimes an illustration by telling a story or parable is the most effective way of teaching a fundamental lesson people will often choose to avoid. How can one know they have eternal life? What can a person do to get eternal life? Where does eternal life come from? These questions are in the minds of most people because there is something in every person that makes them conscious of eternity. The lawyer who asked Jesus this question asked a good question with a wrong intention. His objective was to find some reason to

condemn the Lord Jesus Christ. He was not a real seeker after eternal life. His preconceived idea was that eternal life could be obtained by works. The law was his area of expertise and his idea seemed to be he had it all figured out. To him Jesus was just a common man who really didn't know the law in the way he did.

Words and attitudes are sometimes very far apart. The lawyer's response to Jesus' question covered the whole design of the law. To love God supremely and one's neighbor in the same way do ourselves covers every demand of the law. Law-keepers often have high opinions of themselves and by that means, seek to prove that their actions will give them assurance they have earned eternal life. Giving money to the poor, keeping the Sabbath day, praying openly and going through prescribed forms has deceived many people into thinking they have fulfilled the demands of the law. Loving God is one thing because those looking on cannot determine the inward person and motives. Loving one's neighbor is both inward and outward. To truly love God will show evidence in attitude and actions toward those around us. How far does neighborliness extend?

It is a good way to impress truth on the minds of people when a real-life situation the hearer can identify with, is given. In the story Jesus told, all the areas of life where genuine love can be shown to a neighbor is described. To the thieves, the traveler was a victim to exploit. When we take from others what is not our right to have is certainly not loving our neighbor. This is not only done by force but in various ways of action. To overprice an article for sale; to urge something on a person to extort money or goods from them is definitely not the intention of the law or evidence of eternal life. To the priest who saw the man in need and passed by on the other side, the wounded victim was a nuisance to avoid. It is not uncommon for people to deliberately avoid a problem that would be an inconvenience to them.

The Levite whose role was to carry out the purpose of the law may have resonated more with the lawyer. The Levite was condemned even more than the priest because with curiosity he came closer and saw the injured man as no more than a subject to discuss. There are people who want to talk about what they consider spiritual things or moral issues and find a kind of enjoyment in arguing over fine points of a matter. They talk a lot without meeting the need or coming to an answer to a problem and taking steps to help the one in trouble. To the Samaritan who came there on purpose, not by chance like the priest and Levite, the injured man was a neighbor he could help, a person to love as himself. He had prepared before beginning the journey by having the material he needed to help others. His mind was thinking of others even as he placed the oil, wine and bandages forming the first-aid kit he carried to meet needs. Compassion includes comfort for the soul and healing for the body.

To the innkeeper the injured man was a customer to serve. The time will come when a needy person has been delivered to us to care for. When we serve people, we serve God. Whether it is a poor believer in need of our comfort and help, or one who does not know the Gospel at all, but we know their need better than they do. It is evidence of love for a neighbor when we extend the love shown by the "Samaritan" and give it ourselves.

Both Martha and Mary showed their love for the Lord Jesus in gladly showing Him hospitality in their home and in serving Him. That is one of the privileges we have in our Christian life. The blessings of giving and receiving are experienced when our homes are opened to the neighbors, the Lord's people and to strangers (who may be angels). In the account of the Lord at the home of Martha and Mary, both of these wonderful women are to be commended for showing hospitality. Mary "also" sat at the feet of the Lord as a learner. She wanted what He had to give her as well as giving to Him. Martha's service actually distracted her from what was most important - what the Lord could bless her with. What we take in is what strengthens our character. What we give out is limited to what is within. "Grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord" is needed for Christian maturity.

There is no testimony as to whether the lawyer ever went away and did what he was taught in the story of the Samaritan. We don't know what Martha did with the kind, gentle rebuke the Lord gave her. Mary did give a clear testimony of what she had learned from the Lord when she took the earnings of a year and used it ahead of time to anoint the Lord Jesus Christ with spikenard in view of His burial. She had listened when He spoke of His death, burial and resurrection. Perhaps she understood more than all the disciples what the meaning of His words really was. "One thing is needful" for all of us. That is to demonstrate our love for God by hearing and obeying His word, and by showing our love for God by loving our neighbor. "By this shall all men know ye are My disciples indeed, if ye have love one to another."

Much can be said about law and grace.
We can learn doctrine by careful study.
But love for God is demonstrated when faith

In the reality of living doesn't muddy
The waters of what we mean and say
By the actions of what we do.
The neighbors look on every day
To find out if what I say is true.

To want to have eternal life is wonderful -
And if seekers for it willingly come near -
Our role then is to make understandable
The truths God wants them to hear.
The means we can successfully use
Have been used by the Lord Jesus before.
When questions are answered they choose
To believe on Him - or His grace ignore.

Not everyone will respond to the truth alike.
Some obey it and others deliberately reject
The offer of mercy and turn away from the light -
Seeking more from the world to get.
We can't make people believe God's Word,
But we can show love in Jesus' name.
If they refuse to accept Jesus as Lord -
They have only themselves to blame.

Service for God should not take the place
Of bearing the yoke and learning of Him.
The blessings of giving because we appreciate grace
Can hinder us getting what we need within.
With genuine love for God and our neighbor
We give testimony that what we have is worthwhile.
When there is love that gives impact to our labor
That is usually evident by a genuine smile.

“O Father who has loved me when there is nothing loveable in me: I am asking of Thee for wisdom and understanding to add savor to love for Thee and others. To only say in words, we love another person may not be much more than a sound. But if grace and mercy accompany faith and works, it may be that reality will actually show. Help Thy servant to demonstrate love for Thee to the blessing of others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 11

PRAYER AND CONFLICTS.

11:1-13. THE FIFTH TIME PRAYER IS MENTIONED:

- 1-4, a model prayer: for God's children only; a teaching prayer.
- 5-8, encouragements to pray: attitude in prayer is important; keep praying.
- 9-10, certainty of answers to prayer: imperatives – ask, seek, knock.

11:14-54. CONFLICTS WITH THE PHARISEES:

- 14-16, The opponents claimed His power came from “the lord of the flies” and wanted a sign.
- 17-26, Jesus refuted their claims pointing out the evil of the demand for a sign [29-36].
 - Division brings weakness: Satan would never grant power to cast out demons because it would weaken his (evil) work.
 - Some followers of the Jews claimed they could cast out demons. When they judged Jesus, they judged their own people.
 - Finger of God: this is a small power for God.
 - Jesus is the Stronger One who overcame Satan, so chose if you are *for* or *against* Him.
 - To have known and done what is right and then turn back is more tragic than to have never known His grace.
- 27-28, It is better to do the work of God than to only feel good and talk about it.
- 29-30, Jesus' enemies demanded another sign because they did not believe in Him. The sign of Jonah was 3 days and 3 nights in the earth.
- 31-36, The Queen of Sheba didn't have the privilege of light. Those with a good eye can see Him clearly. Those with a bad eye remain in darkness. Truth rejected leaves only darkness.

- 37-44, The Pharisees were concerned about the *outward* matters but not *inward* holiness. Give from your heart. The Pharisees were concerned about the praise of people rather than the approval of God. The wrong example of the Pharisees led those who were unsuspecting into sin.
- 45-54, Lawyers were scribes who studied and interpreted the law. They made it burdensome to others but never kept it themselves. They made tombs for famous people of the past. Jesus says they are finishing the work of their fathers who killed the prophets. The wisdom of God would be prophecies. They were looking for ways to kill Him the same as they killed the old prophets. Abel (Genesis) to Zechariah (2nd Chronicles – the last book in the Jewish OT).

LUKE 11:1. *“And it came to pass. That, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”*

TEACH US TO PRAY.

To pray as John, it seems to me, would be much less than prayer should be.
 For John was looking for a man, to come and free the promised land.
 For those who walked with Jesus here, should understand their God was near;
 And when they learned to pray aright, they found the answer in their sight.

OUR FATHER: only those can make this claim, who have been born again and bear the name; of the Savior who to earth once came – and are children of God.

WHICH ART IN HEAVEN: there is no doubt to the reality; evidence is around for all to see; the One who hears, always was and will be – the Eternal God.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME: there is power in the name that is far above all; at the name of Jesus, every knee shall fall; so use reverence and respect when you on Him call – honor that Name.

THY KINGDOM COME: for it surely shall; there is none on earth can dissuade God’s will; those who are born of God are in it now – they are citizens.

THY WILL BE DONE: God has made His plans; nothing can change them, neither devil or man; we are called to do this now, and we can – by the Spirit.

AS IN HEAVEN, SO IN EARTH: though here it seems; men are not following God, but make their own schemes; they live without God and use their own themes – and ignore God’s grace.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD: seems little to us but where war has spread; they can pray this line and mean each word said – they’re without basic needs.

AND FORGIVE US OUR SINS: this we really need; to the Gospel message every one should heed; for me to ask this, I must be willing indeed – to forgive others.

FOR WE ALSO FORGIVE EVERY ONE THAT IS INDEBTED TO US: is this true or just so much dust; am I faking this out or is it truly a must – as Christ forgave me.

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION: Satan’s subtle wiles; are ever near with seductive smiles; God enables us even in life’s trials – to be victorious.

DELIVER US FROM EVIL: we need God’s power; to enable us each and every hour; to be conquerors, and never waver – we are His.

In chapter eleven of the Gospel of Luke; we see the impact, when the Savior spoke; on all those around, whether good or bad; the facts were there, and made folks mad or glad.
 Some blessed God with a loud clear voice; others made sin and darkness their choice;
 Without excuse, everyone in that land; could, if they would, receive the Son of Man.

“O God who hears every word we say: let us all remember that we have been asked to pray. We are not intruders. But we need to learn the value of precise expression. Help me not to be “wordy” when I pray. I want to pray with the remembrance of all the ways the Lord Jesus displayed His authority and dominion. I know that helps me to pray with confidence. Thanks for some good news about Victor. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 11:1-13

A PATTERN FOR PRAYER

Reverential, reasonable and responsible communication with God was the way the Lord Jesus Christ taught prayer to His disciples. Prayer to the Almighty Lord God of the universe is not some light-hearted chat. It is an honorable, dignified way we connect with Him from our side of the relationship. We come to ask for His will to be done here on earth and to identify our role in that revealed will. The Lord did not identify Himself with their need as a participant in prayer. He is God who answers prayer. He had already told the disciples how to pray. Now they were concerned with the holy, high ground of personal communion with God that makes our fellowship with Him of highest value. They realized, either by watching the Lord when He prayed or by overhearing what He said to the Father, His praying was very different from the public prayers of the Pharisees - or maybe even their own.

The attitude and nature of prayer is addressed here by the Lord Jesus. It is of interest to note the first part of prayer after a reverential fear of the Lord in approaching God, is prayer on behalf of God Himself. "Thy kingdom come." This is what is of great importance to God. God and His kingdom come first before all other considerations. The failures of lost men and women is not a major issue. The big concern in regard to our life on earth isn't really what we have lost, but who are lost. People are always more important than things. We need to remember this when we pray lest we emphasize what God does not. The order of prayer is God first, then prayer on behalf of people. As far as bread is concerned, the temporal things relating to survival, concern for each day at a time is enough. Eternal things have far greater value than temporal. At best, temporal things meet temporal needs. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." The lesson to learn here in addressing God, is not to be too concerned with what happens farther down the road of life. Live today in the consciousness of doing the will of God, and trust Him with full assurance of faith for what will come later.

In the original form of prayer, the petitioner has already forgiven the debts of those who owe him. Kingdom living presupposes we forgive without having to be told to do so. Unconditional forgiveness is expected by believers because of the love of God that dwells in us. There will often be those who oppose the Christian believer. In prayer to God we are to be able to honestly say we have forgiven those who sin against us. Even that charge is not qualified in any way.

Forgiveness seems to be the essential element in our relationship with God in prayer. There are no qualifications required of unbelievers who come in faith to Him for salvation. For believers, confession of sin is the expected act of one who has sinned. God promised forgiveness without our persistence in seeking forgiveness. He has promised to do that. We do not have to ask God to keep His promises. "He is faithful that promised."

Bold persistence though, does enable us to overcome our lack of sensitivity to God's willingness to answer prayer. In the parable the Lord told, He was not teaching God is like a sleepy man in bed who has to be begged under pressure to answer a need. He is teaching that unlike a mere, mortal, sleepy man who will rise out of bed and give his friend what he asks for, God is wide awake and ready to answer immediately. He is not waiting until our continual banging on His door irritates Him enough to answer. He does answer. The difference is that sometimes God's answer is "No" because what we ask for may not be good for us to have.

Those people before the Holy Spirit indwelt the Church at the day of Pentecost, could ask for the Holy Spirit to give power to their work and calling. David was conscious of this when he prayed, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." Persistence in the practice of prayer changes our minds and hearts toward God. We may not realize the urgency of our need the first time we pray about a matter. The more we pray about an issue, a work we are involved in or a work ahead we are anticipating, the more intense it becomes to us and the more we realize our need of God. Divine intervention keeps us from unbiblical practices, making foolish mistakes and taking for ourselves the credit for a work God does.

The higher ground of effective prayer is not how to do it. It is who we are in contact with and how we are able to get into the current of His thoughts and will. Once we find the fresh breezes of Beulah-land blowing across our hearts and minds, then we can start thinking like God, seeing things as He sees them and enjoying what He enjoys.

The truly bended knee in prayer reflects a bended heart.
Approach to God in reverent fear is audible at the start.
The tone of voice, the way words are said make an attitude very clear -
Prayer made from the humbled heart; the ear of God does hear.

This is no light-hearted chat with one we speak to as a contemporary.

Nor is it just a habit we form with weightless words that carry
No real meaning nor impact with God, often made to impress men.
High-ground praying is holy communion with the Lord of earth and heaven.

Respect and reverence have a meaning often missed by those who listen.
Those who have learned to pray similarly may have tears on a face that glistens.
When the heart of one who prays in faith is lifted to the throne of God -
Results will come from Him who is Almighty as He stoops to bless the world.

We don't need to shout or bang at His door to get God's attention.
He who never slumbers nor sleeps waits for our earnest supplication.
Our desires may not always be right, but His answers are always best.
When we ask in the Lord Jesus' name. we pray and then we rest.

The things we pray about may seem trivial, but He hears each word that's said.
And He knows even the thoughts and attitudes that fill our hearts with dread.
The things we could say to no other, we can confidently bring to Him.
Then we leave it there and rest in faith awaiting the outcome in His time.

Often my prayers are short, some things are not very complicated.
It may be one urgent matter, or some upset person who need to be placated.
I think it may be possible to be on much higher ground when we pray.
In these situations, with God, I find silences are important to what I say.

"My heavenly Father, here I am asking again, but before I do please accept my heartfelt, grateful thanks for giving Thy son for me, for loving me, for allowing me this personal fellowship with thee. Father, we are planning to have some of Thy people with us today. Give Thy servant suitable words of friendship and fellowship. Give me some meaningful thoughts to pass on to them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 11:14-52

DARKNESS AND LIGHT

When the Lord Jesus Christ was teaching about prayer, an illustration is given of His power in prayer contrasted by the power of darkness. He was always in communion and fellowship with God. Because of this state of looking to God, He drove the demons out of a speechless man by the finger of God - the Spirit of God. Divine power is not able to be confused with the power of darkness others attempted to use to overcome demons. There is no neutral ground when it comes to the conflict between God and the devil. The devil does not drive out his own demons. Any Pharisees who were attempting to cast out demons would also be under the power of Satan. The point of the illustration as it relates to prayer, is that one in fellowship with God is in position to do the work of the kingdom of God by the power of God. God's kingdom had come and the evidence was right before them in the overcoming control of the Lord Jesus over what Satan had controlled for years. Light had come into the world. The "Light of the world" now was evident and darkness had to go. Even today where the Gospel is preached and souls are saved, there is light shining in dark places from those who are called "the light of the world." The connection of those who represent God today is maintained by the fellowship of effective prayer.

The battle against the powers of darkness has already been won. When we are on God's side there is no neutral place. If a person is not for the Lord, they are against Him. There is a tendency on the part of many who profess faith in Christ to make attempts at reformation without turning from "darkness to light and the power of Satan unto God." It is not enough to turn from evil yourself without the Holy Spirit dwelling within. When a person becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, there is power to do what God intends us to accomplish. There is not an empty vacuum within that makes it easy for any unclean spirit or teaching to come in and turn one side from the truth of God. Fellowship with God in real prayer and the power of the Word of God working in one's life fills the lamp with the light that can easily be seen. The practice of prayer and the presence of God, enables those who hear the word of God to actually do what God intends and carry out those teachings. This is a far greater heritage than one based only on human relationships. The nurturing of our relationship with God is on the high ground of communion and obedience, and goes on daily as "we walk in the light as He is in the light."

Jonah was a historical sign of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. He would have evidence still on his body of having been in the place of death in the whale's belly for three days and three nights. The impact of the man and his words of warning awakened the city of Nineveh and brought repentance. The people of Israel had many miracles performed right in front of their eyes as the Lord Jesus ministered to them. The sign that was given through Jonah was that there would be blessing brought to the Gentiles through the

death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The queen of the south (Sheba) was also a Gentile who came to hear what Solomon had to say. She came a long way to hear what God had to say through His servant Solomon. Those people from afar believed what they heard. The Son of Man was right in the middle of His own people day after day teaching and preaching, "and His own received Him not." Jonah and Solomon had only a little bit of light and yet the Gentiles believed the words they spoke. Here the "Light of the world" was with them in Person and they neither respected Him or believed on Him. The Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Christ made the sign real to many of them. God gives the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the power of God at work in giving evidence as to who Christ is and as to what is truth. The relationships we have with God is through the work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals the light of truth to us.

An eye is not a light. An eye is a lamp through which light is revealed. Our whole body is directed by the lamp of our eyes. There is no ability for light to direct our body without our eyes. Our eyes are the lamp of our body. The Light that gives direction to the body is the Holy Spirit of God. A focused eye that is directed by the Light gives us the direction to go in life. It is important that we keep the "beam" out of our eye so it is directed by the Spirit to reveal, through our devotion to the Lord, the light of truth. A Pharisee illustrated this whole principle relating to light and darkness when he saw Jesus had not washed before eating. This "washing" was a ceremonial washing that was for priests but the law-keeping Pharisees had claimed it for themselves and sought to impose that act as a tradition on everyone.

Immediately the Lord used this evidence of hypocrisy and manipulation of truth as a terrible warning to those Pharisees who were concerned only with what shows outwardly toward men, and were not concerned with their inward condition before God. He pronounced woes on them for neglecting what they should pay attention to and were being picky over little things. He exposed their emphasis on the trivial while neglecting the essential things. Then He pointed out their self-centered motives that were evil in their intention, and pronounced a woe on them for that self-centeredness. He then went further in denouncing them for the influence they had over other people who they were leading astray.

Because of this righteous criticism of the Pharisees, a lawyer (who may have been a Pharisee) charged the Lord Jesus Christ with insulting the legal experts. The Lord quickly addressed them charging them with insincerity because they were adding burdens on others, they wouldn't carry themselves. He pronounced woe on them because they also built monuments to prophets and continued their own practice of killing prophets as he knew they intended to do to Him. That too is hypocrisy. The lawyers claimed to have the key to knowledge and used it in their own way. This hindered others from entering into the knowledge of God and His way. These same things are happening today and the results are the same now as then. People are being led by blind leaders away from The Door. The truth of God and the Lord Jesus Christ is being ignored by some and attacked by others. Religion and religious practices of our own making, misleads others so they no longer come to experience the love of God in forgiveness of sin, and the attitude of gratitude that follows. God's grace is of no effect in the lives of people who follow those man-made laws. When prayer is real, it is effective. When the effects of God's working are experienced, there will be opposition from humanists and existentialists. When opposition like that comes, people close their eyes to the light and will live and die in darkness.

To many it doesn't seem so bad, after all people need to feel comfortable.
If hearing preaching makes sinners glad, the position they're in is untenable.
Deception takes on many forms, but it usually isn't designed to condemn.
If there is no awakening of conscience, they will not be convicted of sin.

Then when sin doesn't seem so bad, people think there's nothing to worry about.
They want quiet and sweet platitudes; they don't like it when consciences shout.
So, we pass our laws to make easy, the practices and principles that are wrong.
When people finally get used to them, moral weakness takes the place of the strong.

The undermined foundation doesn't seem so bad, everyone agrees this way now seems much nicer.

Everyone can do what they want, and as for sin, no one is ever made the wiser.
Instead of death, "the wages of sin" is fun, for everyone to lust after and enjoy.
"No one should ever judge another," is a common phrase all hedonists employ.

Coming judgment doesn't seem so bad, "After all, the God I believe in is love."
"Surely He wouldn't turn anyone away, we all are going to the big house above."
The terrible deception has taken hold, and people think there is no cost to pay.
In the teaching they want to hear, they are taught God turns no one away.

The truth is, "whosoever will may come," and when a repentant sinner comes to Jesus,

That person will find from God's Word, the death of Christ alone from sin frees us.
The wicked have to turn from sin, and from the power of Satan to God.
When faith understands the work of grace, the lost soul acknowledges Jesus as Lord.

"Father in heaven, the Gospel is being preached in many places now and many are hearing the way of salvation. Please hinder the power of darkness so the Light of the world will be seen and believed on. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 12

PRESENTATION OF THE SON OF MAN.

Prepare for judgment; avoid hypocrisy...

v.1-3. Everything that is secret (sins) will be revealed.; the inward attitude of the Pharisees will be exposed.
Do not settle for appearances.

v.4-5. Fear can weaken our witness. Fear God who controls eternal consequences.

v.6-9. CONFESSION OF THE SON OF MAN: *"Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall also the Son of Man confess before the angels of God."* [v.8]. God has the proper evaluation of things and of you.
We deny (disown) Christ ...

- When we hope no one will know we are Christians.
- When we don't speak up for what is right.
- When we remain silent about our relationship with God.

We acknowledge Christ when...

- We live moral, upright, Christ-honoring lives.
- Look for opportunities to share our faith.
- Help others.
- Take a stand for what is right.
- Love others.
- Acknowledge our loyalty to Christ
- Use our lives for the things the Lord desires.

We need to be aware of...

- The persistence of false teaching.
- The presence of God.
- The power of God.
- The provision of God.

When a person is awakened from the sleep of sin and made aware of the Person of God revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ, then steps are made to move in repentance and faith to the Savior. Confession of need is made. Confession of sin is made. Confession of faith in Christ as Lord and Savior is made. [Rom.10:8-10]

v.10-12. THE CONDEMNATION OF THE SON OF MAN: *"Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven."* [v.10]. **Unforgiven sin:** attributing to the devil the work of the Holy Spirit does. Deliberate and ongoing rejection of His work and of God Himself: Such an one shuts themselves off from God completely and are not aware of sin.

- Denies Christ personally: "I will not have this Man to reign over me."
- Denies Christ publicly: "I do not know Him; I do not want Him; I will not have Him; I do not believe in Him." There are many ways we can deny Christ. To ignore Him is to deny Him. To delay believing in Him is to deny Him. To refuse to confess Him is to deny Him.
- Denies Christ permanently: angels know when a soul is saved and they will hear from the Son of Man Himself when a soul is lost.

v.11-12. The Holy Spirit will enable us to remain true, even when to more capable people we are not impressive. God will bring what we learn to mind when we need them and help us to present truth in an effective way.

v.13-21. The oldest brother got a double portion of the inheritance along with the responsibility of caring for the mother. The younger received a single portion [Gen.25:24-34]. The attitude toward money is the problem. The rich man died before he could use what he had stored up. Preparing for life before death is wise but neglecting life after death is foolish. This man assumed...

- Wealth is for hoarding [v.18].
- Wealth is for personal ease and pleasure [v.19].
- Wealth can satisfy the deeper needs [v.20-21].

v.22-23. How can we avoid the pointless effort of worry? God knows what we need. Seek His kingdom. He is Lord. He must control our work, play, plans and relationships. If money is keeping you from following

Christ – let it go. Material goods are for the furtherance of God’s kingdom. Your treasure is where your affections.

v.35-40. Christ’s return: the Jews looked for a restored kingdom; Greeks an idealized spiritual kingdom

Be ready like one prepared for physical activity: aware, ready, anticipating.

Be ready like one who is awake at night.

Be ready like a servant for his Master’s return. (1) not hypocritical but sincere (2)not fearful but ready to witness (3) not worried but trusting [25-26] (4) not greedy but generous [34] (5) not lazy but diligent [37].

v.40. COMING OF THE SON OF MAN: “*Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not.*” [v.40].

- The Fact of His Coming: He has promised to come again. The Lord Himself shall come. He shall descend from heaven.
- The Act of His Coming: in such and hour as ye think not; as a thief in the night. There will be no time to get ready then. Whatever we plan to do for God and His kingdom has to be done before. We are to be waiting for Him to come because it will be done quickly.
- The Impact of His Coming: separations will take place. Life as we know it not will be drastically changed. Believers will be instantly changed. We shall be like Christ. A chain of events predicted in prophecy will begin to unfold in rapid succession. All the warnings in relation to the tribulation and coming events will become realities. Ultimately, Christ will be visibly seen and enthroned upon David’s throne in Israel and peace will be established on earth.

v.41-48. All people: All Christians [42] in the future will be rewarded. Unfaithful stewards are treated like unbelievers. We are responsible according to the degree of our knowledge. Watchful, faithful leaders are given increased opportunities and responsibilities.

v.49-53. Fire on earth: conflict between good and evil; persecution or judgment.

v.54-59. They failed to understand the significance of His coming [54-56] and the urgency of choosing what is right [57-59].

LUKE 12:8. “*Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God:*”

PRESENTATION.

CONFESSION OF THE SON OF MAN [12:8]

A danger lurks in darkness; persistent and intense; looking good and breathing the breath of hell; looking for bodies and souls that are unaware of impending doom.

Permeating the air is the sense of the presence of God; angels watch and listen; voices are raised in testimony and praise in unexpected places; God’s power is seen in lives changed and molded differently; awareness of God’s provision is expressed from thankful hearts.

One is awakened from the sleep of sin and made aware of the Person of God; He is revealed to us in Christ; repentance and faith in Him follow; confession is made of faith publicly and privately; He is my Lord and Savior – and the Lord Jesus Christ tells the angels we are His own!

CONDEMNATION OF THE SON OF MAN [12:10]

Denial of Christ personally: “*I will not have this Man to reign over me.*”

Denial of Christ publicly: “*I do not know Him; I will not have Him; I do not believe in Him.*”

There are many ways of denial: to ignore Him is denial; to delay believing in Him is denial; to refuse to confess Him is denial

Denial of Christ permanently: “*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*”

Angels know when a soul is saved. There is an “innumerable company of angels.”

Angels know from the Son of Man, when a souls denies Him and when a soul is lost.

COMING OF THE SON OF MAN [12:40]

The Fact of His Coming: He has promised to come again. The Lord Himself shall come. He shall descend from heaven. There is no question as to the fact because His word is as good as His name.

The Act of His Coming: It is going to happen in such an hour as ye think not. He is coming as a thief in the night. There will be no opportunity to make changes of any kind. There will be no time to get ready then. Whatever we are going to do for God and the furtherance of His kingdom, has to be done now. We are to be waiting for Him to come because it will happen quickly.

The Impact of His Coming: separations will take place. Life as we know it now, will be drastically changed. Believers will be instantly changed to suit the state we will be in then. We shall be like Christ. A chain of events predicted in prophecy will begin to unfold in rapid succession. All warnings in relation to the tribulation

and coming events will become realities. Christ will be visibly seen and then sit upon David's throne in Israel. Peace on earth will be established!

“O God and Father: there was a presentation when He was here and some rejoiced. When He was presented to me in the Gospel, I too rejoiced in Him and His grace. I have seen others refuse and reject Him and have never come to faith in Christ. I am so ready for His coming. I would love it to be today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 12:1-21

WARNING

The Pharisees and lawyers were so incensed against the Lord Jesus Christ, they tried to provoke Him by any means to do something they could legally kill Him for. They created a violent scene deliberately, but to no avail. The bumping, jostling crowd of people didn't stop the Lord from giving instructions to the disciples who would experience these very things in their ministry for the Lord after He went back to heaven. The Pharisees were appearing to be good and holy, but had no real fear of God about them. It is possible for believers to fall into the trap of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is knowing what is right, but not doing it. It involves living a self-serving life where the concern is control and position, rather than humble service for God and His people. Often a hypocrite will push a set of rules rather than living by faith and those rules become more important than worshipping "the Father in spirit and in truth." Hypocrisy is conforming to details outwardly without spiritual reality inwardly. A public demonstration of piety is negated by rudeness toward a person in private.

Christians are expected by unbelievers around us to live to a higher standard of conduct and behavior than they set for themselves. Actually, they have a right to do this because we follow Christ. Consequently, there will be times when we will face opposition and ridicule. When the mask of hypocrisy is taken off, then what has been hidden will be revealed for what it really is. The hidden agenda of hypocrisy will be exposed for what it is as unseen leaven that produces something entirely different than what is right. Truth on the other hand, will come out in its mighty power and light. Let us never despair of the lack of apparent interest in the message of God's truth we preach. In any labor for God, payday is coming someday.

As the Lord spoke warnings to the disciples about the leaven of hypocrisy seen in the Pharisees, He also warned them about future opposition. There are two kinds of fear. Fear of ridicule and opposition can paralyze us in our service for God. We can get used to comfort and ease, and soon we will think this is normal - the way things ought to be. When that happens to us even if it goes as far as life being taken, there is no farther those who oppose can go. It is far more important that we fear God who controls eternal consequences. To be ashamed of Christ now will give us shame before the angels in heaven. The value of the person and life of a disciple is what God estimates, not what people estimate. The common practice of determining one's worth is based on how much money we have, what activities we are involved in, how we perform and what we achieve - God has a different standard. If we are embarrassed and hope no one knows we are a Christian, if we don't speak up for what is right, or stay silent about what is wrong, we are not being what we should be. When we just blend in with the ungodly world around us and accept the world's values, we are avoiding identification with Him. On the other hand, when we live in a way that honors the Lord and share our faith with others while we seek to help them, we are acknowledging Him. By standing for what is right with love and loyalty to the Lord and use what we are and have for Him, we are acknowledging Him before men. To deny "the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" is evidence of ungodly men who are apostates. They seemed like they were real Christians, but they will perish in their sins.

The warning against blasphemy has to do, not so much with the use of words, as a denial of the faith. When people refused to act sincerely to the ministry of John, they were rejecting the Father who had sent him as the forerunner. When they rejected Jesus, there was still the witness of the Holy Spirit who the Lord sent to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment to come. The ministry of the Holy Spirit through the church has been on-going even today. When the ministry of the Holy Spirit is rejected, there is no witness of God left and no place of forgiveness for one who rejecting the convicting power of the Spirit. For the disciple who is challenged by the well-educated religious leaders and would not be able to dominate the arguments laid against them, the Lord Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would give them the words they needed to say at the appropriate time. To the world, those who follow Christ are not impressive people, but God is able to "use the foolish to confound the wise." We need to be prepared by allowing the Spirit of God to give us truth through His Word. Then there are those truths of God within us that He can draw out in the most effective way. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always here to guide and comfort us even when we are under pressure.

A warning against covetousness is given by the Lord when a covetous man wanted what he considered his share of an inheritance. There are some things that are to be worked out only between the parties involved. The Jewish leaders often would be called on to settle matters like this, but Jesus went to the root of the problem to warn them all of the danger of covetousness. Greed is never far away from any of us. The accumulation of money and wealth is a great danger to relationships with other people - and with God. Material things are of far less value and importance than spiritual things. Living in fellowship with God and doing His will is of greater worth than all we can gain of this world's goods. It is not wrong to make plans for life, but to neglect preparing to meet God is a disaster of greater proportion than can be imagined. Faith in God, service for God and obedience to God far surpasses everything the world can offer.

Warnings about things yet to come may not give a welcome relief.
The more serious we know a matter to be, the more important it is to be brief.
Hypocrisy no matter how you say it is a mask of deception.
The masquerade must come off, there is no reasonable exception.

To pretend one thing and be in truth another, may fool some people some of the time.
When reality sets in the hypocrite is abandoned, a friend will be hard to find.
The false report or false demands will be seen for what it really is.
The one who tried to hide behind the faults of others, will find the big loss is his.

To blaspheme God is serious, there's no excuse for such sin.
Life and breath and all things, comes to us through Him.
When one blasphemes the Holy Spirit, there's no forgiveness for that
Because He is the final witness, apart from Him salvation is passed.

Some people really get upset when they don't think they are getting a fair share.
And though they are neither hungry or thirsty, with others they want to compare.
If someone has much, they always want more, it is not enough to enjoy what they have.
They are never satisfied in life, there is no way greed's demands can be salved.

Take warning about covetousness and claiming for self all your possessions.
Greedy activities soon lead one into further transgressions.
Accumulated wealth will never completely satisfy one's soul
And one who lives for material gain is a fool.

"Father, I thank Thee for all Thou hast given us. My trust is in Thee to meet our every need. Thou hast abundantly provided for us. Help me to keep an open hand to give, not a grasping hand to keep. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

LUKE 12:22-34

WHY WORRY?

Covetousness, anxiety and greed often find themselves working together. The anxious, worrisome concern that can fill a person's mind really doesn't produce any beneficial results. Responsible planning is a good thing. But anxiety over what might possibly go wrong after we have committed that work to the Lord, is bad. Worry doesn't fulfill any useful purpose. It is a futile waste of one's mind and time. It can even appear foolish to those around who are expecting better from a person of faith who they expect to actually trust God. Yet worry is a real problem in life to some people. The Lord Jesus Christ addressed that matter by saying in essence, "Do not be anxious," "Don't be afraid," and if possessions are a problem and a trap, sell your possessions and give the proceeds to the poor. Then you won't be worrying about what you possibly will lose. Even more than that, it will be a good investment in the kingdom of God.

So what can be done about worry? How can this futile emotion be dealt with and overcome? The solution begins with remembering who you are. We become children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. The one who created and controls the universe is our Father. He who made creatures like birds has arranged that they be fed. We can't add time to the length of our life or height to our bodies because those things are under the controlling power of our Father. He who covers the plants in the fields with colors and gives them the nutrients they need for life, is our Father. He is not some distant authority who does not know what is going on in our life, He is our Father. To overcome the problem (and often the sin) of worry, we need to simply trust Him. When we pray instead of worry, we get the right perspective on a problem. The when we understand the nature of a provoking issue, we can make plans and form a strategy as to how to deal with, and correct, the problem. We may need the help and support of others who will pray for us to have the needed strength and wisdom to deal with the cause of worry.

We can be comforted then by the fact that any perceived problem we have a tendency to worry about, is in better hands than ours. Our Father is a shepherd who is tending to His "little flock." He is our gracious Father who is delighted to give us what we need, and withhold from us what would be bad for us. He is also our King. He has authority over the animal and plant creation that He created for His own pleasure. We can certainly trust Him to deal with anything that we have been worrying about.

He maintains all things by the word of His power and He wants us to have the benefits of His kingdom. If we truly give Him the place as Lord and King in our life, then He has the right to direct and guide my work so the outcome of any meaningful labor will be what He intends, not what my ambition dictates. He has the right to guide my leisure time in a way that is most beneficial to me and the least harmful to my body, soul and spirit. The plans I make are under the direction of my Shepherd - Father - King. There will be mistakes if I go ahead with whatever my limited knowledge chooses to do. The friendships and relationships I form will only be profitable and right, if they are in submission to His divine will.

If money is a worry, then see how it can be best used for the purpose God allowed me to get it for in the first place. To accumulate it and hoard it up becomes a bondage to us which creates worry. The use of it frees us, especially when it benefits other people. By using it in that way, it stores up treasures in heaven. When money creates worry, it is time to get rid of it for good uses.

What really makes money useful? The labor expended and exchanged for money enables me to pass on what is valuable in the kingdom of God to other people who are at a distance from me. When it is directed to a work or service done by others, the cumulative effect of my hours of labor is passed on to others who do the same. It is remarkable how much benefit can be derived from one person's effort being used in this way. That is how it can be considered treasure in heaven. It is not just the accumulation of interest, but the means by which the on-going use of that initial effort can bring blessing to many, and through everyone involved, glory to God. Such a true investment frees me from worry about money and gives me joy and satisfaction as it continues to be a blessing.

It is a common practice for people all over the earth -
To labor, day by day and measure what that is worth
By what we call money, a value-oriented term
To express in a word what a person's daily labor earns.

That earned money then is used to provide for personal needs.
It may be used for shelter or food - many mouths to feed.
The point of it can be very good when used as it is intended.
And a faithful laborer finds satisfaction in the work he has expended.

The problem comes when worry is saved for merely selfish ends.
One who accumulated, then hoards, soon loses all his friends.
Covetousness creates worry, and worry has no aim.
When it continues on, the problems remain the same.

The ravens don't have to worry, there is food for them to find.
Even the bats who live in darkness, survive though they are blind.
Flowers in the fields may appear dead until the coming spring.
And then God supplies the color only the Creator can bring.

For those who know the Shepherd, He knows each one by name.
And His care never does diminish, every day He is just the same.
He knows everything that is needed, and the best way to supply
Every need that might arise, on His provision we rely.

He is our heavenly Father, and the Father knows what's best.
He knows when we should labor, and knows when we need rest.
He knows our every need before it ever comes.
And from His heart of love, meets every single one.

As King He has authority, and the wise person does submit
To His wise instructions given, and as to how we best can fit
Into His plan of the ages of which we have a part.
We don't have to worry because He knows the end before we start.

"My gracious and long-suffering Father, I thank Thee for putting up my poor manners in this wilderness. More and more each day I can see how orderly and in control Thou art, and how disorderly and out-of-control I can be when I take things into my own

hands. In my mind and hear I surrender to Thee. Help Thy servant to make this a daily reality. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 12:35-57

WARNINGS TO STEWARDS

Circumstances of life and events in the world sometimes leaves disciples of the Lord uncertain about the future. The Lord Jesus Christ gave clear teaching about deteriorating conditions on earth, both moral and spiritual. He has gone to prepare a place for us and entrusted us with the responsibility to live out what we believe. The uncertain time in regards to His return is not a trap laid by God to catch us off guard. In grace, He is giving lots of opportunity for those who follow Him to show the reality of their faith and commitment to Him. He intends for us as stewards of all that He has given to us to have our loins girded about with truth. Our lights burning in the darkness is our Gospel message to those who are in sin. The heart of a faithful steward will be waiting in the anticipation of devotion to the Lord. Our hands serving in meeting needs of others in the Lord's name, are ready for him constantly. The watching eyes of a faithful steward can see evidence in prophecy of the nearness of the Lord's promise.

A faithful steward will be a sincere person, not a hypocrite who lives one thing and says something else. Nor will such a servant spend his life in fear but will recognize events and characteristics of our times, gives us opportunities to witness for our Lord that we don't find when all is calm outwardly. The trusting steward does what he does "as to the Lord" and does not worry about every little thing that happens. In his life he is not known as one who is greedy but is generous in giving of what he has to benefit others. In that way he is laying up treasure in heaven. A faithful steward will always find plenty to do and applies himself with diligence to his work. He is not a lazy person living carelessly because his Lord is not seen visibly by him.

We may not see in our lifetime the results of our stewardship. We may not have material gain for the efforts we put in to serving our Lord, but the whole point of bond-service is that the Master is honored and what belongs to Him is honored and multiplied. Earthly rewards are just that - things that can be used on earth. Faithful stewards of the Lord Jesus Christ look forward and upward to heaven and the eternal future. That is where the rewards for this training time will be made real to us. The principles of stewardship are quite simple. Remember who you serve - the Lord, not self. Remember what is expected of a steward - that he will be wise and faithful. Remember the steward is to dispense to those around him who serve, "their portion." The steward isn't to keep everything for himself. Remember the faithful steward will continue to tend to his responsibilities so that when the Lord comes, he will not be found asleep and lazy.

Another warning in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ and our commitment to serving Him, is that when He came bringing "grace and truth," He lit a fire. That fire ultimately took Him to the "baptism" of crucifixion. That in turn, because of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, has divided this world of people into those who love and follow Him, and those who despise and reject Him. The distinction between light and darkness cannot be blurred. People cannot serve God and the devil at the same time. Loyalties and commitments must be decided, and those varying decisions divide people - even families. A faithful steward has to risk rejection by people to faithfully serve His Lord.

When the Lord Jesus again spoke to the great crowd of people, He pointed out through a common illustration, there is something fundamentally wrong that is common to everyone. That is the inclination to ignore warning signs of the times and live as if things will go on forever as they are now. Farmers and fishermen, and to a lesser degree, travelers watch the sky to look for favorable conditions. For more than three years the Lord and His disciples had gone to the cities and villages telling them the kingdom of God was here. But the people were intentionally ignoring the signs of the times of visitation. He called them to repent now before the time of final judgment and rejection of the sinner comes. There is a time of grace offered before getting to the judge, when things can "be settled out of court." God's grace is available now to settle the problem of sin that separates men from God. If one neglects or refuses this offer, there will be the full extent of the authority of the Righteous Judge to exact full payment for a rejecting God and His offer of mercy.

It is not uncommon for people to ignore warnings of things to come.
For reasons of comfort in present circumstances they hope there will be none
That will disturb their peace or force a change in the life they have chosen to live.
So, they choose to ignore or walk away from those who have warnings to give.

A faithful steward might say in his heart, "No one is paying attention.
The warnings I am giving and offers of mercy, face nothing but continual rejection.
But let us remember the One we serve is where our obligation lies.

The results are His to discern and judge, everything is open to His eyes.

The work He has given us to do for Him must be attended to each day.
To give attention to the distractions that abound, may lead us to go astray.
He has told us to occupy ourselves with the work He gave us to do.
When He comes to claim what is His, is the time He reveals the false and the true.

I may never realize now the outcome of an event or simple effort made.
It is beyond my area of understanding to determine the price another paid
In their service and unseen suffering, and yet in faith they persevere.
The Master knows, and that's all that matters, in His time He'll make all things clear.

There may be conflicts arise and we wonder how to avoid that problem.
Some things come to division between family and friends, there is no way to solve them.
That is part of the price to pay in being faithful to the Master's instruction.
Some will enjoy everlasting life by God's grace, others - everlasting destruction.

As stewards of the Gospel and of the truth of God, we must be faithful to Him.
To not apply ourselves to the work, or carelessly do it is sin.
He has given us the privilege of bearing His name and placed a work in our hands.
When reckoning time comes, we will then realize the value of the velvet, holy bands.

“Father, please give Thy servant some way to honor Thee this day and produce some benefit from the service Thou hast given me. May Thy name be praised in some way through these clay, mortal lips. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 13

THINGS THAT ARE MISSING.

v.1-9. NO REPENTANCE, for sin [v.3]: Perished, but not necessary. Some Galileans had rebelled against Rome. The Pharisees were opposed to force against Rome (“one die for the people”) and would've said the Galileans got what they deserved. The Zealots who were anti-Roman terrorists would say those working on the Tower of Siloam for the Romans got what they deserved. Jesus is saying that every person must repent to escape eternal death.

Whether a person is killed in an accident or survives is not a measure of righteousness. Everyone has to die but God expects fruit from us while we live. He will not tolerate lack of fruit forever. We may ask questions about tragedy rather than learn the lesson: Fruitful or taking up space?

- To perish is not necessary.
- Repentance for sin is within the grasp of any honest seeker. Death came to the Galileans because they were sacrificing that what Pilate did not want.
- Repentance is necessary because we do not know when life ends. The tower in Siloam caught those that died unawares.

v.9. NO FRUIT, in life: Cut down, but not immediately. To not bear fruit denies the whole reason for our existence. There needs to be a change of leadership; of life; of thinking.

- God has a right to expect fruit from that for which He gave life.
- God is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. The Spirit of God digs again.
- We have been made for God, for God's use, for God's glory. To not bear fruit for Him, denies the whole reason for our existence.

v.10-17. NO STRENGTH, over evil [v.11]: Bound, but not forever. This woman was bound by Satan. We should never underestimate his strength. The ruler of the synagogue would untie his animal to water it – how much more one of their own to be released from bondage. The hypocrites were humiliated while the rest were delighted.

- The woman with 18 year of infirmity was unable to do anything about her problem. She “could in no wise lift up herself.”
- Every helpless sinner is under the eye of God. She had to come when He called; at His time; to Him and not another.
- Her response to Him was within the power of her will and He blessed her for it.

v.18-26. NO ENTRY, through the door [v.24]: Door now shut, but it had been open. The people were expecting that Christ would come as a great king and free them from Rome and restore them to their past

glory. But the Lord is indicating His kingdom is beginning quietly: like a small seed growing into a tree; like a spoonful of yeast doubling the size of a loaf of bread.

To enter the kingdom requires a concentrated effort; more than most people are willing to put out. We cannot save ourselves, but we can earnestly desire to know the Lord Jesus Christ and strive to come to Him whatever the cost. We can't put this off because the door will not always be open. Respectable people who were religious may not be in the kingdom because they were not secretly, who they appeared to be publicly. There will be anguish on the part of some and despair because of what could've been. God's people from all around the world will be with Him. They were despised, but God considered them great. They were ignored, but God considers their commitment to Christ. I must consider whether my values match what God values according to the Bible.

- The terms of salvation are the easiest possible ones: "Look unto Me..."; "Come unto Me..."; "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..."
- When entrance into the kingdom of God is not of supreme importance to the sinner when God call, then entrance is denied. When the door is open, all may enter. When the door is shut, none may enter.

v.27-30. NO RECOGNITION, by Christ [v.27]: Depart now, but had been invited. Believing Gentiles will enter, but unbelieving Jews will be left out just like all the rest of the unbelievers.

- "Lord, Lord" has no meaning if it is not from the heart. Words can be deceptive. Words are often used to obfuscate reality.
- Christ knows what is in the heart of man, so is never deceived by the empty platitudes of Phariseeism.
- Reality is seen in the acts of genuine faith. One who comes to Christ will strive to enter in.

v.31-35. NO ACCEPTANCE, of Christ [v.34]: Desolate, but were loved. The Pharisees weren't concerned with Jesus' safety because they wanted to kill Him. They wanted to keep Him out of Jerusalem because that was their stronghold. At the same time Herod was a cunning deceitful man. No matter what Herod wanted, Jesus' ministry would continue all the way to Jerusalem because God's will must be done. It was a notorious place for prophets to die. That's where He would die. He mourns for the Jews largest city because He knew they would reject Him.

- The opportunity had come to them and they had ignored it.
- The Light had come and they would not receive Him.
- When they would not accept Him in their day of visitation, they cut themselves off from the blessing of salvation.

LUKE 13:1-21

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

There were prejudiced people in the time of the Lord Jesus on earth the same as there is today. Galileans were looked down on by those from Judea as a poor class of people compared to themselves. Whether they expected a comment or not from the Lord Jesus did not change His use of this time as a teaching moment. The Galileans who were worshipping when offering sacrifices, may have expected the antagonism of Pilate if they were part of an insurrection movement. Whatever the case Pilate exacted retribution by killing them. If their sacrifices were for personal sins, none of this made any difference. They had something in common with everyone. "It is appointed unto man once to die." Everyone must repent to God because before us sooner or later is "death day." In the case of these Galileans it must have been expected.

Then there were eighteen people, perhaps workmen on a project in Siloam who died unexpectedly. They may have been going about the labor of honest work or those who died may have been bystanders. Whatever they were and whatever they were doing did not change the fact that unexpected death came upon them. A catastrophe can overtake a person leaving no time to repent. Whether death is expected or unexpected, slow or instantaneous - everyone must repent toward God and put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved from the eternal consequences of unforgiven sin.

It is not within the scope of our ability to determine the reality of a person's experience. But we can assure people when we present the Gospel that without repentance of sin there is no salvation from sin. Moreover, that must take place before death. There is no offer of repentance of sin and salvation after death for those who die in their sin - expected or unexpected.

In order that there be no misunderstanding of repentance, the Lord gave a parable to illustrate the mercy and longsuffering of God toward a fruitless people. Israel is used as an example that blessing or cursing

follows the presentation of truth. God has the right of expectation of righteousness from those He has blessed. Year after year God has provided everything that is needed for us to be fruitful in life to Him. In patient, loving care we have been given all we need and more, that we might give in return that which glorifies God. The fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance in the life of a believer, is to be for the glory of God. The fruit of righteousness; of every good work; of our lips giving thanks to Him and confessing Him impartially and sincerely, pleases God and shows the reality of repentance and faith.

There are times when an opportunity arises and we don't even realize the importance of the moment. In this chapter there was warning given about unexpected or expected death. There is warning regarding the need of repentance. A woman, "a daughter of Abraham," perhaps indicating that in spite of her infirmity, she still had faith in God, was in a place where the word of God would be read. This is the last time we read of the Lord Jesus being in a synagogue. This incident took place in the last few months of His public ministry. This woman "bent double" would only be able to look at the ground so wouldn't know that "Jesus saw her." He knew Satan had bound her and bent her. He knew the woman's heart as He knows everything about us and the circumstances of our lives. When "He called her to Him," He immediately and totally healed her, breaking the bonds of Satan by the power of Him who has "all power in heaven and in earth." The straightened woman did what every liberated, freed soul does - she glorified God. This is evidence of a work of God in the soul of all who respond to the opportunity God gives. In contrast, the ruler of the synagogue was angry and bitter with envy. His authority and description of work was very different than the Lord's. He thought more of a thirsty ox or ass than a bound, hurting human. Even today, we can see this attitude toward animals that many think, are as valuable or more so than humans who are made in the image of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ used that event to give warning about the spread of evil. Evil comes in secretly and grows rapidly. It may have a good face on it but it is uncontrollable once it takes hold and begins to work. It is characterized by what looks like greatness and people will follow it because it looks so successful. Even though it may seem so insignificant at first, once it takes root, there is no stopping its rapid growth. It even takes hold without any visible evidence, but in a short time the effect of evil has permeated all of a person's life, and soon takes over all of society itself. There is a cost to following the Lord that those who live godly in Christ Jesus will have to pay. To reject what is popular does not leave any place where a disciple of the Lord can be halfway in an evil society or system. There is no branch in the great mustard tree where one is free from the presence of the "fowls of the air" - the emissaries of Satan, and can bring forth fruit for God. There is no place in bread that has been leavened where the leaven does not affect the flour. Loyalty to the Lord means we have to stay as a branch in the vine and remain unleavened bread.

Many will never react to warnings until it is way too late.
They will find because of indifference and sin, they're left to an awful fate.
Wise people will realize our life on earth is only a very short time.
To seek the Lord first in life will give meaning most people never find.

"Who is the worst sinner?" many will ask as themselves to others they compare.
They are not willing to admit that all people in common do share
"The wages of sin," and God respects no one by degrees of importance as we do.
We are all under that sentence of death no matter where we're born or to whom.

Without repentance there is no new life; without new life no fruit.
Without fruit there is no deliverance from evil, or self-righteousness able to suit
The righteousness of God, who though patient and kind, will not wait forever
To see if there is reason to longer wait before life's ties He will sever.

The question about sin's guilt was answered plainly, repentance for sin is a must.
When that happens, real repentance will show, in God the sinner has put his trust.
In grace God waits, His judgment restrained until the evidence is truly there.
If repentance doesn't come, He will righteously act, judgment He will no longer forebear.

To encourage a soul long weighted down by bands Satan for years has tied;
Don't despair, the Lord can see the reality of your faith deep inside.
When others can't help you, still refuse to blame God when hard things come to pass.
In His own time, He will do what is needed, a solution may come very fast.

There is no denying the fact that evil is increasing and pressure to conform is real.
People will want you to follow the crowd and reject what the scriptures reveal.
Though there is nothing great in ourselves, we can walk with the Lord in the light.
Do not mix in like leaven in bread, be strong, and stand solid for what is right.

"There are increasing pressures Father, on Thy people in these days of indifference. Pleasure-seeking, self-satisfaction and craving for more material things has taken the place of respect, honor, truth and righteousness. May all who know Thee as our Gracious Father commit themselves to Thee in righteousness and faith. And may Thy servant be found among these holy people when the Lord comes or I am called away by death. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 13:8-9. *"And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it along this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."*

MISSING.

No repentance for sin [v.3]: within the grasp so near to the honest seeker; no need to perish; so unnecessary. Death came because Galileans didn't offer what Pilate wanted.

When will life end? Why can I not wait to fill the cup of pleasure and drink it dry? We don't know. Who would have thought a tower would fall. But it did. People died. They still do. Whether death came violently at the hands of men or as unexpectedly as a falling tower; it was too late to repent then. Face sin now. Turn from sin now; a 180o turn is what repentance is like. Repentance was missing.

No fruit in life [v.9]: a fruitless fruit tree is a problem to any orchardist. The whole point of the tree in the first place is to bear fruit for the benefit of others. God has a right to expect fruit from those He gave life to. But God is longsuffering and the Spirit of God tries once again to stir to life that which was fruitless. To bear fruit for God is the reason for our existence. The order to cut it down was delayed a little longer, but without fruit, it will be removed. Fruit was missing.

No strength over evil [v.11]: a helpless condition for any person to be in. 18 years unable to have anything done about her problem was a long time. We must come at His call, at His time, to Him and not another person. Willingness to respond to His call was within her power and she acted. He honored her for it. She was bound, but not forever. Strength was missing.

No entry through the door [v.24]: the door was open but will be shut. To enter the door is a choice to be made. Salvation terms are not complicated: "Look unto Me...;" "Come unto Me...;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ..." If one does not consider salvation of supreme importance or does not respond to God's call, then entrance is denied. When the door is open, all may enter. When the door is shut, none may enter. Entry was missing.

No recognition by Christ [v.27]: they were invited but had denied the invitation. Words have no value if they are not from the heart. Words can actually be deceptive. They are used sometimes to obfuscate reality. God knows what is in the heart of man and is not deceived by empty platitudes of Phariseeism. Reality is seen in acts of genuine faith. One who comes to Christ will strive to enter in. Recognition was missing.

No acceptance of Christ [v.34]: these were desolate but loved. Opportunity had come but they had ignored it. Light had come but they would not receive Him. They would not accept Him in their day of visitation. They cut themselves off from the blessing of salvation. Deliverance was missing.

"Father in heaven: I am really concerned about those who do not understand the good things they are missing by neglecting Thy salvation. It is so important and yet people don't give it a thought. For years I have wanted to be able to lead people to Christ, but so few want to come. What have I left undone? What should I be doing to make the Gospel more real to people? What have I been missing? I know the people in this chapter are missing out on blessing. Am I missing out on some work or effort that I should do? Please let me know some way if I am. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 13:22-35

STRIVE TO ENTER IN

As the Lord Jesus Christ was making His way through the towns and villages on His way to Jerusalem, the numbers of people following gradually dropped off. In fact, on one occasion the Lord asked His disciples, "Will you also go away?" Their response to Him was, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." For the months this journey took, all the people had an opportunity to hear and believe the Gospel. The question that was asked, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" or "Are there only a few people going to be saved?" was not answered. It is not our concern to know or be anxious about the numbers of people who are going to be saved. The Lord Jesus never indicated it would be an easy thing to follow Him. To be a Christian involves being consciously aware of our Lord's leading in every situation in life. We do not

have to be concerned about numbers. We do have to be concerned about our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The standard established in the kingdom of God is the righteousness of Christ. They had heard His teaching and honest seekers would have realized their own inability to come to God on the basis of their own righteousness. But they had perhaps heard His words, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." So, the Lord didn't answer the question. People like to have dogmatic statements, but in this case, it wasn't of vital importance. In essence the Lord Jesus' answer was, "What about you? Have you entered in? Are you saved?" And He went further in His answer to make the point that the narrow gate (door) is open now but will not always be. There is an urgency involved in the Gospel message that must be made. "Strive to enter in" means that this is not a casual stroll by the cross and a glance at the One who suffered for our sin. No one enters the kingdom of God nonchalantly. There is an earnest seeking that bends every effort to enter the door. No obstacle can be allowed to keep one away, and a person who is striving will persist until they enter into Christ who said, "I am the door, by Me if any man enter in he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture."

Those who want to enter at their own convenience will find themselves outside when the open door is finally and firmly shut. A casual, familiar knowledge of Christ is not a personal saving relationship with Him. God knows those who are His. Because a person may have had privileges like being born into a home where parents are believers, does not mean they have a sort of second-hand relationship with Him. The number of those who will be saved is limited to those who strive to enter in.

Another matter arose after the Lord gave warnings of the terrible future of those who are outside the door. "Weeping... gnashing of teeth... thrust out" from the presence of the Lord forever cannot be described in words as to the terror ahead for those who do not strive. The Pharisees wanted to keep the Lord out of Jerusalem their stronghold, and so threatened Him through Herod, the false king the Lord referred to as a female fox. The Lord clearly and distinctly told them, and through them, Herod, that He was in control of what was going to happen. God's program was progressing as He intended and nothing or nobody could stop that. The puny, foolish ravings of men are as useless as a dog howling at the moon trying to get it to turn off the light.

But the real pity of the whole matter was the plaintive, pitiful cry of the Lord Jesus Christ as He looked down the years to what was going to happen to Jerusalem, that favored city. It almost seems like there is no hope for them. Then He adds the words of hope as He looked into the distant future. When he comes in glory into that city through the opened eastern gate, then He will come into His temple and the Sun of righteousness will shine again in that favored place upon those favored people.

There is a door standing open wide, that someday will be shut.
The welcome into the Father's house soon will be used up.
For years the invitation has been sounded, "Whosoever will may come."
But only those who strive with urgency will enter that holy room.

To think all is well with the soul is a deception of the worst kind,
If one thinks because of personal effort the heavenly home they'll find.
Smooth words spoken only from the lips, and not from in the heart -
Will hear in a coming day from the Lord, "I know you not, depart."

We strive for many things in life, for money and prestige.
Opportunities arise for material gain, for most of them we seize
With grasping hands and greedy hearts that are never satisfied,
Many, look for all these things, and for them many have already died.

Only those who strive to enter in will be those whom God will save.
They appreciate with thankfulness the Savior and what He gave.
When in the fullness of amazing grace, He took our place in death.
Those who will be in the kingdom of God enter in the door by faith.

"Gracious God, my Father: there are many I have spoken to, in this last few days who have heard the way of salvation. They have not made an effort of any kind to enter the narrow door. May some of them remember what they heard and come in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 14

FEASTING AND FOLLOWING.

v.1-6. A FEAST AND HEALING: People are more important than things. *Jesus and the Sabbath*: what type of people are coming into the kingdom of God?

- No doubt as to His Person: “watched Him.”
- No doubt as to His purpose: “He took Him.”
- No doubt as to His power: “He healed Him.”

A certain man with dropsy (fluid build up; kidney/heart failure); Jesus takes the initiative. The Pharisees were a very righteous group who had ascribed to oral traditions as well as the scriptures of truth. Human life always has value over animals and personal property.

v.7-11. A FEAST AND HUMBLING: The way up is down; *the place of honor*.

- The high shall be brought low.
- The humble shall be exalted.
- Pro.15:33 teaches us to make an honest appraisal of our weaknesses and our strengths.

We need to deliberately get some insight into human relationships: selfishness brings embarrassment; courtesy is appreciated and rewarded. Look for your prestige by serving, not claiming a high place on your own.

v.12-14. A FEAST AND A HEARING:

- Needy are called.
- Helpless are cared for.
- The giver blessed.

Fellowship socially is important. It is important to include those less fortunate when we entertain.

v.15-24. A FEAST AND A HERALDING: The folly of failing to enter; *the great supper*. The Lord uses a “teaching moment,” teaching about what we own, what we do and our relationships.

Feast prepared.

Servant sent: The Holy Spirit.

Invitation given: to Israel.

Response expected.

The Jews were expecting a great feast when Christ rules. The Lord’s parable goes way beyond that. When the invitation is given, He expects us to respond favorably. God’s things should always be first in priority. Anything else is lesser in value. Choices have to be made to receive the invitation no matter how it may inconvenience us.

v.25-26. THE DISCIPLE AND HIS CARES: The way to win is to lose. *The cost of discipleship...*

- Family life interrupted.
- Personal life changed.

Ties to humans are to be less than our commitment to God. The value of the things of God is more important than anything else we may be involved in. The disciple considers the cost and is willing to pay it. To be a disciple involves submitting to Christ’s terms. Entire consecration is necessary. Those who are not totally committed to Christ are like salt that has lost its flavor. What is acceptable from a disciple?

v.27. THE DISCIPLE AND HIS CROSS: He may be misunderstood.

- Personal identification.
- Personal choice.
- Personal commitment.

v.28-30. THE DISCIPLE AND HIS COSTS:

- Do I want to?
- Am I able to?
- Am I willing to?

v.31-35. THE DISCIPLE AND HIS CONDITIONS:

Forsakes all.

Follows after Christ.

Fit for action.

REWARDS AND COSTS OF CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIANITY

Cost/benefit analysis similar to the business world...

Benefits

Adventure: you go places you have never been and do things you have never done – spiritually. It is like the first white-knuckle ride you have ever been on. Then it leads to another.

Purpose: you start recognizing everyday events with the attitude that this is possibly the opportunity of a lifetime for someone.

Fulfillment: this rises above everyday experiences. What can compare to being an instrument in God's hand, a communicator of love and a clarifier of truth to people He cared enough to die for. [2Pe.3:9]. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me!" [Jn.4]. ("I eat that up!")

Spiritual growth: high stakes spiritual conversations with people who need Christ, make us come alive and our life takes on fresh significance. You read the Bible with new light. You pray with purpose. Worship becomes a well-spring. Personal purity becomes a priority we practice.

Spiritual confidence: efforts to pass faith on, strengthens confidence in our own faith. We begin to really understand what we want to pass on is true, and we can see the failure of that which is false.

Enduring investments: [Mat.16:19-20] the things that are eternal

Honor of being God's agents: [Acts 1:8] He gives us this kingdom expansion project and then goes about doing extraordinary things through us.

Costs

- Time and energy:
- Reading and studying:
- Money:
- Risk of embarrassment, rejection or persecution:
- It complicates your life:

LUKE 14:1-14

HIDDEN AGENDAS

A number of important subjects were addressed in one day in chapters 14, 15 and 16. All of them in one way or another, expose things that people thought were hidden. It is important to remember our God not only knows what we do, but "the thoughts and intents of the heart" are all known to Him. The prominent Pharisee and his group had laid the Sabbath day table as a trap for the Lord to yet again seek a legal way to condemn Him publicly. We are never free from attempts on the part of the world, the flesh and the devil to find areas of accusation and condemnation to stop our Christian testimony. The man who was so full of body fluids that he had dropsy, even though he was obviously sick, was not likely to die that day. In the scheme they had made, he was put there to see if the Lord would wait a day to heal him or if He would heal him on the Sabbath day. The Lord Jesus Christ knew exactly the motives behind this set-up plan. The opposition had learned not to ask questions of the Lord. He had used those occasions to denounce them and expose their hypocrisy. This time He put into words in the form of a question what He knew was the point of their orchestrated challenge against Him. Often the reason behind a matter that comes against us will never be articulated so that when one is challenged, they can say, "I never said a thing." Events that happen and the surrounding setting can make us well aware of the reason behind them even though challenging words weren't spoken.

When the Lord Jesus healed the man with dropsy and sent Him away, He exposed them revealing the fact He knew their objective. Again, He asked another question which cut to another motive behind their actions. In their materialistic minds they were willing to rescue a possession (an animal) that had material value to them even though the animal could be kept alive in a pit until the following day. Rather than leave a dumb animal to suffer and perhaps create a financial loss to them, they would lift it out of a pit - but not a human being in a worse condition. Again, they would not answer the Lord's question because they knew He saw right through them to another deceptive motive. Some silences are more telling than spoken words when we are dealing with those who oppose the Gospel and the Word of God.

As evidence of the spiritual departure of those people, the Lord saw how, though they would not prepare a feast on the Sabbath, they would gladly eat the food and not hesitate to make it a social occasion. They had made what was intended to be a day of rest and reflection on the things of God and the ways of God, into a time for visiting and feasting. The things of God to many even today are not taken seriously if they interfere with the seeking of pleasure or personal gain. Watching this scene, the Lord noticed the way the guests were moving about seeking preferred places for their own advantage. With obvious insight He again reveals a hidden agenda that people have when they seek privilege and position for themselves and forget the Lord knows every thought they use for personal advantage. It is not uncommon for people to seek to impress others by the way they dress, the home they build, the car they drive and the people they want to associate with.

Instead of trying to impress others with our importance and looking for prestige, the Lord taught just the opposite. Look for a place where you can humbly serve God out of the lime-light and praise of people. A person of honor and true humility will not seek to exalt himself. He is not looking for a place to show off his perceived self-worth. His self-evaluation is neither the appearance of humility to manipulate others, nor is it self-exaltation to impress others. True humility is a realistic assessment of one's self and involves a willingness and a desire to be of service to others.

In further insight into the hidden agenda of the Pharisee, the Lord Jesus exposed his reason for giving this dinner in the first place. He was seeking an invitation from someone else who was perhaps higher on the social scale than himself. Bad motives and bad manners are still common practices today. It really is a form of rudeness to offer hospitality expecting to be repaid in kind. The Lord indicated the value of good motives and good manners being shown toward those who are unable to repay your kindness. We need to remember that those things done for people in need have eternal consequences. Every motive behind every action is known and evaluated by God. There will be a recompense in the future even though you may see no reward now.

We may not ever know what is behind some person's actions.
Our response is up to us, we can only control our reaction.
I am not in a position to pass judgment on another person's motive,
But I can learn by paying attention to what my own response is.

Those unseen things we try to hide from men will someday be exposed.
What we may think is well hidden now, our Lord and Master knows.
It helps us to stop and consider the goal before in haste we act,
That He who knows all things we plan, sees each one as a fact.

It may not come to a deed, but if the motive in the heart
Is unbecoming to me as a Christian, I should never start
To even think about doing something over which I cannot pray
And ask God's fullest blessing on an action or what I say.

To seek to impress people with blatant boldness instead of humility
Is to reveal outward in an offensive way what is hidden internally.
Prestige is earned by integrity, not gained by subtle manipulation.
Underhanded activity will only ruin a person's reputation.

In God's way of doing things the proud man is resisted.
And he will lose forever that for which he once insisted.
When in a future day the results of what was hidden is revealed.
There will be no question as to motive, nothing will be concealed.

On the other hand, there are eternal rewards for the truly humble.
Their quiet obedience to God's will is a safeguard lest they stumble.
God is determined to put the proud man down and lift the humble up.
Though in worldly eyes they are low, at the head-table they will sup.

"Father, my prayer today is that I will truly be humble and yet not groveling, wise and yet not conceited, useful and yet not demanding. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 14:17. *"And sent his servants at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready."*

"COME."

When feasts are spread, there's a reason why such bounty is prepared.
It may be friendship is the motive as people gather there;
But sometimes, as when Jesus came, there are those dark designs,
To cast a doubt, and then find out by words and healing signs;
That He is who He claimed to be, in His Person and His power.
The first feast as they saw Him heal, gave answer that very hour.
As He healed the man who in his need, before the Savior stood;
By His healing power it was plain to see, He was truly the Son of God.

And then another lesson from a wedding feast, we now should really learn.
When you are asked to come, sit in the lowest place, from the highest seat do turn;
For the chiefest folks often come in late, and the highest place is theirs.

If you are in their place, you'll be asked to move, and under all those stares
You will find out then, in front of all those men, that pride will never pay;
Take the low place, you may save your face, and maybe one will say,
"Come up here, please do draw near, that we might honor you."
The lesson to learn is "don't exalt yourself, let others honor show."

And then are those who have been invited to, a feast in the heavenly hall.
They have heard the voice of the Master's servant, who came to them to call
Them to the greatest feast of all; but each of them had a lame excuse;
Instead of "Yes, I will gladly come," they made a serious, lasting choice
To stay away, not knowing they, would never be asked again.
To not answer right, when each one might, doomed each and every man.
To ignore God's call, whenever it comes, is the same as saying to Him,
"I have no time or place for Thee," and you will suffer the results of sin.

Then there are the folks who men forget, but are not unknown to God.
He called them too, to the Gospel feast; though not very high they stood
In the eyes of those who first He called, and now to them God does say,
"Yet there is room, there is plenty for all, don't worry, there is nothing to pay."
Whether sick or poor, blind or maimed; His feast table is going to be filled.
Provision is made, you can't demand this; you are invited because that's God's will.
So around the back roads and in countries afar; to those who we often forget;
God's Gospel is told and souls are saved - those who know they don't deserve it.

"O God of all grace: I praise Thee for reaching out to all with the offered blessing of salvation. Thanks for the simplicity of the Gospel. Help me to keep simple messages before the people, but at the same time not over-simplify the fundamentals of the way of salvation. People need to know why and how to be saved, but they must come to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 14:15-25

RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL

Quite often in the Gospel of Luke there are parables and stories that illustrate more than one important subject. Prophetically the parable of the great feast teaches us of a time when Israel was bidden to come to the blessing of fellowship with God. One after another, excuses are given and those people have, and still will, suffer from the choice of rejecting God's gracious invitation. The servant typifies the Holy Spirit who is sent out into the world to call those favored ones to come. Without exception they voiced their excuses, their lack of desire and interest, in the blessings of the great banquet.

Those to whom the Gospel is preached are without excuse because the Gospel goes out to "Whosoever will, let him come and take the water of life freely." In the parable of the great feast, every provision is made for a person to come "without money and without price." All of the cost for salvation has been paid in full and the invitation is given well in advance of the closing of the day of grace. The trifling excuses of people today show how little value they put on the things of God. A piece of land already purchased is not going to go anywhere while one attends a feast. If the man had not seen the land before buying it, he was a fool. If he had bought it after seeing it and used that as an excuse, he was a liar. His reason was plain and simple, he did not want to come.

The man who had bought ten oxen without testing them out to see what they were like was also showing an attitude that is common today. He just wasn't interested. If these animals had been given to him as a gift, his excuse wouldn't have been so lame. A gift of ten oxen would have been unheard of unless it was an inheritance. Even though he bought them, there isn't a suggestion they were in danger of being stolen or running away. The supper just wasn't important to him and he couldn't be bothered going. Many people consider the invitation of the Gospel to enter the kingdom of God to be unimportant to them. They would rather watch a game or indulge in something trivial and follow their own self-centered pursuits. They don't pay any attention to God's interests and consider what is important to others of no value to them. The only things that are of value to them are their own interests.

The newly married man and his wife would have both been welcomed at the feast. When it comes to the doctrine of salvation, the teaching is plain. God has made provision for all. To come into the good of the Gospel message, one has to want to hear and has the choice to respond to the invitation or reject it. The decision one makes affects others beside himself. A wife will often listen to something that is important to her husband, and the husband in return listens to his wife. Children often follow the opinions and decisions of their parents. Friends also affect friends. One who rejects the gift of salvation has a great responsibility and there are serious consequences that follow in the future. We cannot make the decision that will make

another person pay attention to the Word of God and the Gospel, but we can influence their decision to a great degree.

Those who were poor, maimed, blind and lame came from the "highways and hedges" and typify the Gentiles of the far parts of the world where the Spirit of God is working. They often respond quickly to the One who meets their need. There is nothing in them that recommends them to the grace offered. In their weakness and inability to help themselves, they quickly respond to the call of the Gospel. In many "Gospel favored" parts of the world, people turn away with deliberately deaf ears from the preaching of the Gospel. Other places where spiritual darkness prevails it seems more are responding to God's offer of mercy and are coming to Christ for salvation. Those who preach the Gospel as servants of God can warn the people and present the truth of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ for sinners, but it is the work of the Holy Spirit to "compel" them by striving and convicting to come in repentance and put their faith in Christ. Those who reject are responsible for their rejection.

There is a benevolent and gracious God who is calling to all men.
The call of the Gospel is going out inviting all to enter in.
But strangely there are attitudes that lie outside of reason.
Attractions that appeal the most are sin's "pleasure" for a season.
So while the good news is sounded forth the majority go their own way
And expect God to accept them into heaven when at the judgment day
They say, "Lord, Lord" - and think these words are some magic key -
Not willing to face the fact that choices made now affect our eternity.

Thank God for the Gospel, the word "Come" is not complicated.
Those who respond in faith to that call will find themselves in heaven seated
With those from every walk and clime who believed in simple faith
The invitation they received meant that God has for them a place
Where they could be accepted in Christ, assured God wanted them to come.
And the message they took personally was for them from God alone,
Who in kindness and grace provided for them what they could never earn.
They entered in by faith, while many others the invitation did spurn.

In our hands is a Gospel message we heard and received ourselves.
Now we are sent into the "highways and hedges" the Gospel invitation to tell.
We can urge people to come, but the response is their personal decision.
If they come, they are made welcome, if not they're responsible for their rejection.
There are "times of visitation" where it seems the Holy Spirit "compels" -
Many to trust in the Savior, the first-time hearing someone tell
Of the blessings of salvation from sin and the consequences they accept.
Some are saved for heaven; hell awaits all those who reject.

"Father, may Thy Gospel being preached in many places today result in many delivered from the wrath to come. Give encouragement, grace and power by Thy Spirit to those who are committed to reaching out in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to the lost. Amen."

LUKE 14:25-35

"CANNOT BE MY DISCIPLE"

To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ means we must be willing to submit to Christ's terms. Family life is interrupted when one is willing to follow the Lord. There is a certain sense of fear when we read how His path of obedience affects others for whom we have personal care. A disciple and his cares must be dealt with in view of the Lord's call to follow Him. We can with confidence "cast our care upon Him" knowing He cares for us and each of those people to whom we have responsibility. Family life in itself is important to God, so in this scripture the Lord is not saying that it is of little value. The issue at stake here has to do with loyalty. The highest worth of all that claims our loyalty on earth is our family. They claim our affections, our time, our energy, our love and our devotion. We are loyal to them and stand with them in times of difficulty, distress and despair. To be a disciple of the Lord Jesus means when a decision must be made as to what I must do, I will trust Him with full confidence to care for them, and I must follow where He leads me.

But there are other terms to be met as well. To bear my own cross does not necessarily mean I have some incurable sickness, pain or stress that I cannot lose and it makes me uncomfortable. And it does not mean I bear the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Only He could bear that cross. It does mean I evaluate my own life and empty it of things that are self-centered in motive and yield to a sacrificial life and service for the Lord. And there is more yet to yield - my own life. I have to give consideration as to what I estimate my life is worth. When any suffering I might have, any strength I might exercise, any sympathy I might show is

directed to others for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ and their well-being, then I am acting as a disciple, and it moves me to personal commitment to my Lord, to do His will.

The terms of discipleship are severe. These are not a casual walk in the park among sweet smelling roses. Do I really want to bear my own cross? Am I able to do this for my Lord and Master? Am I willing to take this step, in faith and really follow Him? To count the cost of discipleship goes way beyond what is promised in the "prosperity Gospel" that some preach today. They say you don't have to give up anything. Just receive Christ and His salvation and all that He has will be added to what you already have. When there is true repentance toward God because of the consciousness of sin and guilt, then faith in Christ becomes real to us. There is no counterfeiting the cost of bearing the cross. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord and he will find mercy, and to our God and He will abundantly pardon." This does not indicate in any way a casual stroll by the cross and genuflecting towards the Lord for salvation. When we count the cost and the effect of bearing one's own cross and following Christ, this is not some light-weight decision. This is full surrender to the Lord on His terms.

A builder counts the cost of completing the work before he starts. Those hearing the words of the Lord in that large crowd would be challenged to consider what they really wanted and what they were willing to pay or endure to follow Him. There is a building program going on in the world and the Lord wants those who follow Him to be those He can count on. They will be there building stone by stone into the work of building the church - each and every day. They have considered what it means to be a disciple and are willing to pay the price. When the battle for souls is on, they are there doing their part. Building is a choice we make. A battle is something that is thrust on us that we can't avoid. When we surrender to Christ's terms, we will be willing to meet the terms of forsaking all, following our Lord and are fit for service for Him.

When the Lord Jesus Christ concluded this teaching, He used salt as an illustration. Salt was used in the Old Testament times for covenant making indicating the lasting nature of entering into a covenant with another person. It was not used as casual element of covenant making. It was also used in the sacrifices the priests offered showing the eternal value of Christ's sacrifice. For those priests who ate from those sacrifices, the salt gave an enjoyment and appreciation for what was given. The heart of a true disciple always values and shows appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ. This appreciation does not go away nor decay, but our consideration of Him keeps us free from moral corruption and defilement.

We may never know the value of every single act.
We might not understand when we make with Him a pact -
That to follow Christ will lead us to places we don't know -
As disciples of the Lord, where He sends us, we must go.

We may wonder about our family as to how they will fare.
We might worry that they think we for them don't care.
To follow Christ means I place them in His gracious hands -
And trusting Him to care for them, does more than the best I can.

We may think all I've been trained for has quickly gone to waste.
We might never taste the prestige and power of leadership ever.
To follow Christ puts my future hopes on treasure that is above -
And surrendering to Him means my life is now lived in His love.

We may consider the cost to pay following Him is high indeed.
We must never think that following means I will never bleed.
To follow Him means I will have pain in body, soul and spirit.
As a disciple following the Master, He will give me strength to bear it.

We may think the conditions are high, why not a little lower.
We might wish the challenges are less and a little bit slower.
To follow Christ means forsaking all, and in faith and loyalty -
As a disciple every action is to give Him all glory for eternity.

We may never know on earth the value of what we have done.
We might not realize down here the glory for Christ that has won.
To follow Christ is reward enough for those who appreciate salvation.
As a disciple, following His steps is my own act of consecration.

"Heavenly Father, all the things done here on earth seem so trivial compared to all the glory I see when I look up to Thy throne. If there is any way I can please Thee and honor my Lord this day - please lead me to it and guide and empower me in it for the

name's sake of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 15

The Subject: "THIS MAN." The Theme: "JOY." The Premise: God has a right to get joy from what is His.

The point of this parable is not what is safe, but what is lost. God reaches out to find the sinner no matter how or why he/she got lost. The three areas of teaching are...

The Pasture

The Herdsman

The Sheep

The House

The Housewife

The Treasure

The Home

The Father

The Son

The grumbling Pharisees were opposed to joy. These leaders were cautious about who they associated with and what they touched. The Lord came to reach the unclean and the untouchables.

v.1-2. THE SON OF MAN AND SINNERS: He was among them as a physician among patients. Some people are in need and they know it. They were willing to hear Him. They wanted to hear Him.

- The people that hear.
- The Person they hear.
- The Parable they hear.

v.3-7. THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP: "The Son of Man" – the shepherd didn't lose the sheep. Even though one goes astray, it does not lose its value to the shepherd. Some people are in need and can't do anything about it. They are helpless and hopeless. *They are as helpless as a sheep alone in the wilderness.*

- His identification with the lost sheep: by knowing its value, and loving it for its potential.
- His commitment to the lost sheep: He searched until He found it. A lost one changes the whole course of life at that time.
- His search for the lost sheep: it took Him to the wilderness
- His rescue of the lost sheep: He carried it on His shoulders when He found it.
- His care of the lost sheep: He cared for it when He found it. "He cometh home."
- His joy in the lost sheep: He called others to rejoice because He found it.

v.8-10. THE SEARCHER AND THE SILVER: "The Holy Spirit" – the coin was lost through no fault of its own. The woman searches because this coin may have been part of a dowry and would have had sentimental value as well as inherent value. Each is precious. Some people are in need and don't know it. They are valuable but wasted. *They are as useless as a hidden coin in a dark room.*

The coin was something of value: she knew what was lost.

The coin was something that is useful: she knew the value of what was lost.

The coin was something that was needful: she knew what was needed to find what was lost – light (the Spirit and the Word); a broom (the sin problem has to be dealt with).

The coin had to be searched for: she knew it would take time to find it. Every obstacle had to be removed; every place had to be looked at.

v.11-32. THE SON WHO WAS A SINNER: "The Father" – watching for one who is lost because of selfishness. The prodigal showed arrogance and disregard for his father's authority. Some people are in need and are willing to repent. *They are as lonely as a son in a foreign country among strangers.*

The son...

- Knew what was missing; "spent all." Feeding pigs was humiliating and degrading to a Jew.
- Knew what to do: "he came to himself." Sometimes the wayward have to hit bottom before they will return.
- Knew where to go; "to my father." In the first two cases the seekers had to go to find the lost. Here, the father had to wait.
- Knew what to say; "I have sinned."

There has to be a choosing to return.

The Father...

- The Provision of the Father: "bread enough and to spare."
- The Place of the Father: "in My Father's house."
- The People of the Father: "hired servants."
- The Perception of the Father: "saw him."
- The Person of the Father: "compassion."
- The Passion of the Father: "ran."
- The Pleasure of the Father: "fell on his neck."
- The Forgiveness of the Father: "kissed him."

The robe: a stole; a stately garment, the best of the best.
The ring and shoes: the marks of a free man. A slave was barefoot.
The older son...

Is like the Pharisee who does not enjoy his inheritance. There is sin in the best of men.

Is angry at how God responds to repentance. There is great sin in being angry at what God does.

The Pharisees He was talking to had to choose for or against the Father's love.

It is always right to rejoice over one who repents and a life saved as well as a soul saved. There is great foolishness in being upset at another's blessing as if we had less because he has more.

The Father forgave because He was filled with love. The older son refused to forgive because he resented the injustice of it all. The Pharisees felt they had done so much good for God and resented God's forgiveness of those who were greater sinners.

PEOPLE MATTER IN CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIANITY

Jesus is surrounded by irreligious people: The "onecers" (once upon a time I attended a Sunday School/church), undesirables, unconvinced, spiritually confused and morally bankrupt people. The Pharisees (religious people) were off to one side and shaking their heads and complaining about Jesus hanging out with these people. Jesus moved over to the "holy huddle" and told them three stories that form this parable.

Something of great value is missing

- Sheep to the shepherd: his livelihood
- Coin to the woman: her survival
- Son to the father: his life. Every human being is valuable to God. They matter to Him.

That which was missing is worth an all-out search

Something of real value to us, we automatically search for. Contagious Christians
Are involved Christians.

Retrievals result in rejoicing

- The shepherd rejoices with his friends and neighbors
- The woman rejoices with her friends and neighbors
- The father rejoices and his household rejoices
- The angels rejoice – heaven knows what happens when a sinner is reached.

People matter

The Anthropic principle: the world around us was designed to support and nourish human life. This concept which is very prevalent in the world of secular science and philosophy, didn't originate with Christian scholars. Even so, because it is virtually undeniable, skeptics are still trying to find some sort of natural explanation for this supernatural phenomenon.

Lessons from science: some facts

- Raise or lower the universe's rate of expansion by even one part in a million, and it would rule out all possibility of life.
- If the average distance between the stars were any greater, planets like earth would not have been formed; any smaller and the planetary orbits necessary for life would not have been formed.
- If the ratio of carbon to oxygen had been slightly different than it is, none of us would be here to breathe air.
- Change the tilt of the earth's axis slightly in one direction, and we would freeze. Change it in the other direction and we would burn up.
- If earth had been a bit closer or further from the sun, or just a bit larger or smaller, or if it rotated at a speed different, from the one we're spinning at right now – the change would be fatal.

Lessons from business

The upside-down pyramid... the customer is at the top! It is the customer that ultimately makes the business.

People matter to God, so He speaks to us in science

People matter to business...

People matter to us!

LUKE 15

THIS MAN

Unfolding in the Gospel of Luke are various aspects of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of Man. In this chapter "this Man" is seen as the One who has concern for the lost, loves sinners, seeks the wanderers and welcomes the repentant ones who come to Him. All of this brings to the forefront of our minds and hearts, the grace of God. In each part of this parable the theme that accompanies the lost being found is joy. God has the right to get joy from what is rightfully His. Whether it be as helpless as a sheep lost in the wilderness, as useless as a coin lost in a dark room or as hopeless as a son among strangers in a strange country, God is wanting to get joy from that which is lost.

The publicans and sinners, who were outcast socially from those who led the Jews, could see in the Lord Jesus, a Person who cared for them and had genuine interest in them in spite of their situation in life. It is important for us to look on people with the Lord's eyes, not our own prejudices that are affected by the social "mores" and mere human opinion. "God is no respecter of persons." Our view of any person should be that of one who recognizes the value of every person as one who is going to live forever either in heaven or in hell. "This Man" was not only willing to open sinners to the benefits of His grace, but He was ready to take all the time necessary to let them know His interest was genuine by sharing a meal with them. Some people are in need and know it. They were willing to hear, and they wanted to hear Him. There are those today who are in need of a Savior and know it. They are usually the poor, overlooked and socially rejected by those who consider themselves socially acceptable. To say a person is not "assembly material" is to put people in a different place than God puts them. He wants to save the outcasts. Those are the ones who "drew near to hear Him." That simple act of faith gave God's grace the opportunity to show how God pities, loves and values sinners.

Some people are in need and can't do anything about it. Those who are lost souls are as helpless as a sheep alone in the wilderness. They don't know where to go. They don't know who to turn to for help. About all they can do is sound a call for help. The suffering Savior is not unaware of the need of those who are lost in this dangerous and ungodly world. The Lord Jesus Christ, "The Son of Man, is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The suffering of the Son when He was in this world was because we were all hopelessly lost and "without strength." How gracious He was when in His grace "for your sakes He became poor" that He might bring us to God. The Lord Jesus searched for this lost sheep until He found it. He cared for it when He found it. He carried it when He found it and brought it to His home. He called others to rejoice with Him when He found it. The ninety-nine left in the world were not lost even though they were in the wilderness. A person who has never recognized they are lost has never been saved. Until one realizes their condition and their need, they will remain "in the wilderness."

But there is more to be learned about lost sinners than is given in the part of the parable dealing with the lost sheep. Some people are in need and they don't know it. They are as useless as a hidden coin in a dark room. The inheritance and value of the lost coin was not known by the coin, but by the woman who knew its value. It is not uncommon for many people to underestimate their worth in God's eyes. Many, think of themselves of no greater value than an animal, bird or even old-growth trees. The tragedy of the humanists is they don't know the potential God sees in every man, woman and child He made in His own image. The seeking Spirit may not be known or even felt by the lost person until there comes a stirring of the intellect as they are convicted of sin by the Spirit. Then there comes the awakening of conscience when the Spirit convicts of righteousness. The wasted empty lives of people leave them unsatisfied. The emotions are awakened as the seeking Spirit convicts of judgment to come and a person looks beyond the grave into the eternal future. The stirring, seeking work of the Holy Spirit brings out of the darkness of sin that person who was useless to God, others and themselves, and brings them to the place they belong, and for the purpose for which they were created. The Holy Spirit knows what is needed to find the lost and that it takes time to search for it. When we are involved in the work of the Gospel, we need to leave the Holy Spirit to do His work, in His time and in His way. He awakens the lost soul. He convicts and brings about repentance. He produces the life of regeneration when Christ is revealed as the Savior of sinners.

There are also some people who are in need and are willing to repent. They are those who are as lonely as a son in a foreign country among strangers. Those are the ones who thought they were missing out on all the world had to offer. They were determined to "do it my way." When the emptiness of life without Christ, without God and without hope strikes home to them, they realize they have nothing left to try and nothing left to spend. The younger son knew what was missing - "he spent all." He also knew what to do - "he came to himself." He got to the place where he finally could think straight and sensibly. He also knew where to go - "I will arise and go to my father." He had been everywhere else he wanted to go and done what he wanted to do. None of those things satisfied. Now he knew what to say - "I have sinned." This was no casual statement lessening the seriousness of who he was and what he had done by calling it a mistake. This was an honest evaluation of himself, his life, his guilt, his sin and the only hope he had - "I will arise and go to my father."

The watching and waiting father daily waited for his son to come. God the Father is waiting for the return of the lost. When the lost one comes in repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, there is singing in the presence of the Father. Joy in heaven is a real thing that happens when God reaches out to the lost and is able to bring the lost sheep, the lost silver and the lost sinner to His home. Those who think they deserve all of these blessings because of who they are and the life they try to live in order to earn the favor of God, know nothing of the value of God's grace. They have no personal relationship with the Son, the Spirit and the Father. When the lost is found there is joy. Even the servants of the Father enjoy the abundance of the Father's table as they follow the Father to serve Him. They had access to His treasure and appreciated His house and His joy when the lost was found. Our service is not in vain in the Lord.

There are many who we pray for and hope they soon will see
The value of the work of God on their behalf as He searches earnestly
To bring them to His place of blessing when thy call on Him -
And when repentance of sin is real, new life in Christ begins.

The ones looked down on by many are the ones the Savior seeks.
While others seem self-satisfied, the guilty ones beseech
Him to speak to them in way they can easily understand -
Through clay lips of servants, He speaks truth to those in every land.

As a Shepherd He seeks for those who have gone astray.
Diligently as the Suffering Son, He searches night and day
To find the lost and bring them home where He can then rejoice
Over a lost one found who now intently listens to His voice.

The Spirit seeks in places dark where one's worth is really lost.
Things have to be moved and stirred so that in spite the cost -
Hidden value is revealed and the Spirit reaches out to save
The one who was useless once, now to him new life He gave.

With watching eyes of grace and love the Father in heaven waits.
The lost son in the world of sin seems near to hell's dark gate -
Until with broken heart and will, he turns his feet toward home -
And finds a welcome from the Father who waited for him to come.

In boundless grace the God of heaven waits for each one who comes.
We who read see two different brothers, but there is a third Son.
He is the Son of Man who came lost sinners to befriend.
The message of God's redeeming grace is a story that never ends.

"I thank Thee, O Gracious Father, for Thy longsuffering and the patient watching for the lost to come back from the dark paths of sin into the light of Thy great salvation. This day is open before me to use in ways which can bring glory to Thee. Keep Thy servant from wasting time on things that have no value. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 15:2. *"This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."*

THE ACCUSATION.

There are some accusations that are directed at those who commit significant acts; that can be called "Blessed Accusations." The picture in my mind of the Lord Jesus sitting with the common people and outcasts of the mainstream, is one that I appreciate. He is not identifying with their sins or shortcomings but with the people themselves. They are leaning forward to hear what He says at the dinner table. They may have questions they need answers to, and He receives them and makes it clear to them He cares for them.

I would like to be known as one who receives sinners and eats with them. I do not want to be known as a person who thought he was important, but as one who knows everyone else is important to God and is worthy of my attention. May the Lord keep me a lowly person; may my mind be kept humble; may my heart always be sensitive to those around me. May I always be able to look them in the eye and may they be able to look into mine as a person they know that can be trusted. I know this is only possible as I yield my will and wants to the Lord Himself.

"Father of the fatherless, and God of all grace to lost mankind: Help me to see the unspoken desires of those who are without Christ. Give me understanding as to how to anoint my eyes with heavenly eye-salve and see beyond the exterior of those with whom I dwell. Keep me from discounting the value of any soul. Let me see their

potential through the eyes of the divine nature Thou hast given me. Make me share the pain of the hurting; the loss of the sorrowing; the grief of the guilty. May there, to them be given the understanding, through me, that there is a God who receives "all that come unto God by Him." That "him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." And when I fail in carrying out the charge of the Gospel, help me to recognize that failure, confess it, forsake it find mercy, and move ahead again with the great Example who was willing to receive sinners and share that most expressive form of fellowship - even if it is horse meat, beans, lentils and rice day after day, or a stale piece of bread that can be shared with the ones looking for acceptance with Thee. Amen."

LUKE 15:6b, 9b, 32a. *"Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost... Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost... It was meet that we should make merry..."*

REJOICE WITH ME.

Songs in the night, the Shepherd is glad -
 Voices blending in hymns and words of gladness fill the rooms-
 The lost is found, the helpless is rescued, the danger is passed-
 Loneliness of being away from the others-
 The fearful sounds in the wilderness-
 The trembling, the total "lostness" that can't be explained-
 Then comes the sound of a familiar voice.
 The call is personal, real, simple - I know it means me.
 Strong Person, strong arms, strong shoulders, strong legs-
 And the journey back is so much safer and comforting.
 His loud voice, linking two together, "I have found my sheep."
 "I am His and He is mine forever and forever."

Dust is flying and the impatient sounds of searching fill the house.
 Room after room, corner by corner, high and low-
 The lost must be found - the value is too high to ignore.
 Things have to be moved; the furniture is moved;
 Hindrances dealt with, changes made, decisions made.
 Things cannot remain the way they were.
 Nothing is any more useless than a lost coin in a dark room.
 Light shines in every place, until there-
 Lying alone, unused, unable to accomplish a thing-
 The lost is found, and placed in the proper place where it can be seen.
 The useless is useful again; the lost is returned to its owner.
 The house is filled with rejoicing neighbors and Owner is glad.

Hands over the wet, red eyes to get a longer look-
 Heart beating slowly with sadness day after day-
 Inner thoughts lingering on flesh-pots in far away places.
 No thoughts of self-pity, but of genuine concern for a foolish son.
 Not self-recrimination filled with "What ifs."
 Not anger, humiliation, threats to be carried out some day,
 But anxious looking for an object of love, for a son He loved.
 And one day of impatient waiting leads to another, until-
 In the distance the dust from shuffling feet: words unnecessary-
 Actions that speak louder, embraces, a kiss (maybe even some tears),
 And a feast is spread, servants and Master alike filled with joy-
 This is right, this is the right way to welcome home the wanderer.

"Father, I still get such great joy when You save a soul. It is always a cause of amazement and thanksgiving that doesn't lessen at all, when a soul is able to be led to the Savior and I see the light of life come into dead eyes. When understanding dawns, it is so evident. I never want to lose the thrill and the joy and the rejoicing of the lost being found. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 16

CONTRASTS AND CONSEQUENCES.

What we do now affects our eternity.

v.1-12. UNJUST OR FAITHFUL: emphasis – the steward thought of his future. A steward was the manager of another person's possessions. Present opportunities can be used for future blessings. Most are concerned for shrewd interests of this world. We should be as concerned for the things of God. All of us, no matter who we are, are only stewards of what God gives. What we have is not our own. Our stewardship

has an end. There is reckoning for all we do. Others may be blessed by what we do with what God gives us. Use what we have to bring the best to our Lord. God expects faithfulness in His stewards.

- Opportunities and benefits (goods): a steward of a rich man. Use what I have because it belongs to God.
- Responsibilities and choices (wasted): I have to live with the consequences of my choices. Money can be used for good or bad. Much of what we have is the same: time, talents, gifts, possessions – use what we have carefully because it has the ability to greatly impact others.
- What others see and what I do (accused): I cannot ignore what others see and say. What I have, must promote what is right and good.
- Cause and effect (he called every one): something is better than nothing. Act quickly when it is necessary. Don't wait to make necessary changes. The steward got half of what he should have but more than what was in hand. In a way, he helped both his employer and his own chances of being hired by those he had reduced the debt for.
- Wisdom and understanding (sit down quickly and write): learn to grasp the situation and do what is needed. The steward was clever enough to grasp an opportunity. We as believers should be alert to what is happening so we can benefit others in getting to heaven. Earthly investment can bring eternal blessings.
- Yours and another's (faithful): take advantage of what you have been trusted with. The time will come for you to act on your own. Use the wealth of the world for heaven riches.

v.13-18. GOD OR MAMMON: emphasis – the scriptures are the guide to bring us to God. Our character (integrity) will be challenged in money matters. Sometimes this is the hardest area of all. This is one area where God tests our fitness for service. The worldly person serves money as his one master, The Christian has to choose which one he is going to serve. Mammon – riches gotten in an unrighteous way. Use what God gives in a beneficial way for God. Be trustworthy in what you have and God can trust you with more. What we have is not our own. These two are opposites. The Pharisees were covetous; and resentful when reproved.

Serving God or mammon...

- Servants and the authority of the Master: What do you think about most?
- Servants and attitude (love or hate): Would you quit what you are doing to make more money?
- Servants and actions (hold or despise): What takes up your time?
- Covetousness and spite: Is it hard to give money away?
- Selfishness and sight: Are you in debt?
- Lawlessness and slight: What is my idol?

Money is deceptive: it controls; makes promises; can be made or lost quickly; cannot provide happiness, health, eternal life, peace of mind, permanent security. The Pharisees loved money: we measure worth in money or how much a person makes. The Pharisees derided Him: "turned up their nose" at Him. What is an "abomination unto God" is what people value.

The law didn't become invalid, but was fulfilled in the preaching of the kingdom. Every item of it is fulfilled in Christ. Divorce is an example of how the law works. Because a thing is legal, doesn't make it right. In the Old Testament there has to be a certificate. Here is what the law really means.

v.19-22. RICH OR POOR: emphasis – Pharisees taught that what looks good is not necessarily right. The contrasts...

- Clothes and food.
- House and street.
- Healthy and sick.
- Life and death.

The consequences...

- The beggar rewarded – the rich man punished: self-centered, hard-hearted, covetous.
- Abraham's bosom, a place of honor—Hades, a place of torment.
- Great gulf fixed: righteous and wicked separated forever.
- Remember: characteristics of personhood remain.
- Messenger from the dead: even though Jesus rose from the dead, many do not believe.
- Moses and the prophets: The Word of God must be accepted as truth. The light which a person has determines their responsibility.

v.23-31. HEAVEN OR HELL: The Word of God in the hand is good, but if it is not in the heart, you are lost. The contrasts...

- Near or far.

- Carried or buried.
- Comfort or torment.
- Name or fame.
- Good things or evil things.
- Here or there.
- Together or alone.
- Alive or dead.

The consequences... (lessons)

- The soul does not die with the body.
- The soul is conscious after death, not asleep.
- The righteous go immediately to a place of happiness; the wicked to misery.
- Wealth does not secure one from death.
- We should not envy the condition of the rich.
- We should go in for what is better, rather than what we can possess in life.
- The suffering of the wicked in hell is very great.
- There is a place of suffering beyond the grave.
- There will never be an escape for the lost.
- It is foolish to think there will be an end, and that it will be okay to go to hell for awhile.
- God gives plenty of warning to prepare for death.
- God is not going to give us further warnings than what we already have.

LUKE 16:1-13

CONTRASTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Some things in life affect both believers and unbelievers in the same way. One of them is money and the use of it. When the Lord addressed this subject as recorded in this parable, He directed it toward His disciples even though the Pharisees standing by heard it plainly. Really - who is the true owner of what my name is on? Everything belongs to the Lord. We, are only and always stewards of what God has given us to use. In my use of my home, my vehicles or anything I have put my name on, it is only as a steward of this that God has allowed me to have for His purposes. It belongs to God. It is my responsibility to use it in a way that is befitting the Master I serve. The scheming steward in the story the Lord told had been using his master's goods for his own interests. If he was charging interest to his fellow Israelis or charging exorbitant interest to those of other groups, he was doing wrong. What he was doing was not just. He was an unjust steward and was in no way being commended by the Lord Jesus.

What the Lord was teaching is that everything we use belongs to God and we are to use it wisely in His best interests. Money can be used for good or evil. It is up to us to use it for purposes that are consistent with the will of God. The use of material goods has power to produce benefit or to corrupt us. It is my responsibility to use what God has allowed me to have in ways that will produce in me and in others, faith and obedience to Him who owns it. We have opportunities and benefits (goods) to use every day. Our God has given us what we have to use for His glory and the benefits of His kingdom. Every day that passes gives me responsibilities and choices that can be profitable or wasted. I have to live with the consequences of my choices. I cannot ignore that others see what I am doing with whatever the Master has entrusted to me. Let nothing be done whereby they may make an accusation against Him because of me.

God has given us the use of financial opportunities to use with wisdom and understanding. This does not earn a place in heaven for me but can be a means to help others find Christ. The people of the world are often more committed to the use of what they have for their own gain, than the children of God are who have been given things of eternal value to use for the kingdom of God. When I have the understanding of what God has given to me to use for Him, then I will be faithful in using it.

There are opportunities that arise to use what we have, be it little or much, for the work of the Lord. I have been given this by God to use in a trustworthy manner with integrity. The shrewd steward in the story the Lord Jesus told, used his opportunities to help himself in the future. What we "owe" our Lord is everything. The "mammon of unrighteousness" (money) can be used for right reasons. Money in itself is nothing but a tool to be used. Money isn't the "root of all evil," the "love of money" is. The steward was a man who did wrong and used it for selfish reasons. As those who have been given money to use, we can use it in a right way to bring blessings to others. Money does not provide happiness. But if I allow money to be my master, it is a hard master that can deceive me very quickly. No amount of money can give me satisfaction, bring me peace or make me happy. Whether I have little or much, I must never let it master me. Whether faithful or dishonest in both the little things or the great things, that is up to me. Can God trust me with money? Am I a slave to the possessions God has allowed me to have? Do I worry about money or the lack of it? Do I think

about it a lot and talk about it often? When opportunities arise to make more money, do I give up what I should be doing to make more money? Do I spend a lot of time taking care of what I claim as my possessions? Am I in debt to the extent I am a slave to those I owe money to? Is it hard for me to give money away? These questions challenge me to evaluate who I am and what I am expected to do as a steward for the Lord.

When it comes to the contrast of God and mammon - if mammon is the one I serve, it will make me edgy, temperamental and touchy. The person who serves God is kind, gentle and unaffected by the rise and fall of the stock market or the value of those things God has allowed him to have. The balanced nature of a child of light sees beyond the mere stockpile of goods and the amount of money invested, to the value of what can be done to further the interests of the Master and His kingdom.

“What is that in thy hand” was asked of a person of old.
Those things we consider important are what we have and hold.
Everything we claim for ourselves, came from our Father in the beginning.
Each one should be used for His glory; if not, then I am sinning.

A home to live in is needed; with food and raiment I'm to be content.
From time to time to my hand comes something the Master to me has sent
To be used by me in His service and He lets me make the decision
As to how and what I should do with it to meet the present condition.

The greatest need of a steward is to the Master and His will to be faithful.
To be allowed to serve Him in life, is a privilege for which I am grateful.
For His own reason He has trusted me to use what I have been given for Him.
The careless handling of such a trust would be a very serious sin.

There is cause and effect to everything I put out my hand to do.
When done as a faithful steward, there will be blessing when I am through.
With wisdom and understanding the benefits can be quite far-reaching.
The proper use of the money God gives is often much better than teaching.

I need to keep a clear perspective on what God has given me to use.
The temptation to keep it for myself is a bad one, I am responsible to choose
How and where it is best to bring the Master the greatest dividends.
Then I will be able to ask His blessing on everything He has chosen to send.

Money can be used in two ways; it can be invested in bad things or good.
The bad will produce only grief, the good uses will do what it should
To help the work of God's kingdom, and bring blessing where it can.
The proper use of “mammon” will honor God and help out needy man.

“ Father, by Thy wisdom and guidance, help us to always use what Thou hast given us in ways that Thou canst bless. Keep me from the careless use of money, and please keep it from occupying my mind and thoughts lest it take the throne of my life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 16: 13. *“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”*

CONTRASTS AND CONSEQUENCES.

UNJUST OR FAITHFUL [1-12]

The goods were there, opportunities abound; profits to be made blessings to be found -
But wasted.

Choices to be made for profit or loss; rushing around not counting the cost -
Or consequences.

What others see and what I do; I cannot ignore what I know is true -
I'm the accused.

There's cause and effect, something must be done; act now before accounting comes -
Don't wait.

I've been given much, use it quickly now; when the Master comes, I must tell Him how -
I used His goods.

GOD OR MAMMON [13-18]

I am not my own, I'm a servant of God; it is His right to control my every word -
Under Authority.

The one I love, other one I hate; the one I obey, the other one I make wait -

Shows Attitude.

The one I despise, I will not give time; the one I hold to, I claim nothing mine -

Servant-Actions.

Covetousness and spite go along together; they both bring trouble no matter to whoever.
Selfishness and sight want everything they see; I must be careful, or they'll overpower me.
Lawlessness and slight are a pair of twins; not realizing the consequence of sins.

RICH AND POOR [19-22]

The one has clothes and lots of food; the other nothing and goes to "Dr. Dog."
The one's in a house so great and fine; the other on the street where he spends his time.
The one is healthy thinking he'll live so long; the other died first, but now both are gone.
They both had life and they both met death; far apart in life, now farther yet they spread -
By a Great Gulf Fixed.

HEAVEN AND HELL [23-31]

At the present time, neither near or far, affects us much as to where we are.
The day is coming when we're carried and buried; the one is close - the other far.
One is comforted, the other in pain; one at peace, the other in flame.
One is with others, the other alone; one in darkness, the other at home.
One has good, the other has bad; one is happy, the other is sad.
One is alive, the other is dead; one filled with joy, the other with dread.
The contrasts are plain, it is not hard to see; the destiny of mine is up to me.

"I need discernment, O heavenly Father, to always make decisions and see things through Your eyes. Some choices are easy because they are so far removed from what is right. Others are tougher because they are more convenient and don't see too off base. I need my divine nature to not be ignored. I need this throne of grace in this needy time. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 16:14-31

GOD KNOWS

It is a sad commentary on some of those who profess to know God, that they believe prosperity and wealth is a sign of God's blessing on what they do. The Pharisees believed their material wealth was because they were zealously guarding the law. They made faces at the Lord Jesus when He taught what stewardship and the right use of money was to be. Their derisive sneers revealed their avarice and love of money. Money was very important to them and they would have hated the words of the Lord when they heard what they esteemed was an abomination to God. It still is. Accumulating money is a passion to many today. Even Christians who have become wealthy will say, "God has certainly blessed us." "An abomination" is that which has an awful smell. We need to consider how we look at the material things God has allowed us to use, and make sure those are not the things we "highly esteem." The Lord Jesus Christ never did teach anything like the "prosperity Gospel" some teach today. That is one reason why "few there be that find it." The narrow gate and the narrow way do not allow for the great accumulation of material things.

The value of the Old Testament and the law has not yet diminished. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" "They are they which testify of Me" still impacts those who read the scriptures. John was one who assisted in teaching that pointed out the difference between the dispensation of law and the dispensation of grace. When Christ was born, "God was manifest in the flesh." John told of Him and pointed out the Lord Jesus when He came to be baptized. He identified the final lamb of sacrifice - "Behold, the Lamb of God" who was given for the whole world. Now those who enter the kingdom of God have to press against the prejudices of human opinions. Those who enter will be laughed at and scorned; will have to face opposition. No, the purpose of the law had to be fulfilled in every way because it reveals the perfections of God's standard and the holiness demanded of those who enter the kingdom. That is why the "righteousness of Christ" has to be imputed to us. The blessing we need is not money or what can be gained from it. It is the perfections of the Substitute God has provided that is the source of our blessing.

The religious leaders not only had wrong thoughts and practices regarding money, but they had wrong thoughts and practices about marriage. The idea of "any cause" divorce was an opinion of men, not the teaching of the law. God always intended marriage to be a lifelong relationship in which each person is committed to the other. The Jewish practice of the Hillel school of thought was not right back then and it is not right now. It has always been God's intention is that marriage is for life. Some have experienced any cause divorce before they were saved by God's grace and made a new creation in Christ. Others have experienced being wronged by the adultery of the other after God saved them. The problem of moral looseness has come as a result of those who for one reason or another, love money. A wrong estimation of what is important to God leads to wrong actions on the part of people in more than one way.

Flamboyant living, giving the wrong estimation of what money produces, is behind the story of the rich man and Lazarus. The accumulation of wealth often leads to ostentatious living and spending what one has been allowed to have, on things that are only for "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life." The contrast between the two was very plainly defined so there was no question about the benefits of misused wealth and the needs of others. But both men had one thing in common - they both died. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment." The poor beggar was treated with indifference by the rich man. He made no effort to help him in any way. Money has a way of creating a careless indifference toward others. We may think we deserve it, and if the other person would do the same, he would have what he needs. We need to remember, "What have we that we did not receive."

Death is no surprise. It is the wages of sin - both physically and spiritually. Death cannot be escaped even by the best of care provided for by great financial expense. It is impossible to avoid this common denominator of all humanity. Whether a person is buried with great pomp and another is burned to ashes, each one has gone from the place where money, or the lack of it, defined them. Beyond the veil the Lord lifted as He told the story of these two men, we can see the results of life lived here on earth. Privilege in life does not guarantee blessing beyond the grave. It just increases our responsibility in life to use what God gives us for the right reasons. Friendships and family ties are not a consideration after the death of one who is in hell. The man who was blessed after death was no longer in pain or concerned about what he had or didn't have. He had lived with eternity in view. The wealthy man had only lived for the present and found that the false standards of men only leads to eternal punishment. The Pharisees were hostile towards the Lord and loved their money. Like them, lost souls will never be persuaded to turn to the Lord for salvation unless there is a consciousness on their own part of personal sin. They must face their need of God and come to Him in repentance and put their faith in Christ alone to receive the righteousness of Christ.

When moral light is given and deliberately ignored,
The gains we could have had in life are gone.
Accounts of money accumulated and goods which we have stored,
Bring no lasting benefits when life is done.
So live each day on earth as if this one is the last,
And lay up your treasure where it will never rust.
There is no place to repent once this life is past,
Repentance is not just a choice; it is a must.

What God has given me to use I must carefully appraise,
So that it is not wasted on things that never count.
It is up to me to make decisions that are right and wise,
And not be too concerned about the real amount
Of money that I have or material things around
That can be lost to me as quickly as they're gained.
These things that are unseen are the ones that do abound,
Unseen eternal things can be maintained.

The things we see are temporal, they can go quickly up in smoke,
By nature, they are only for the here and now.
The words of the Lord when here and the truths to men He spoke,
Are the way we learn the what and when and how
Of living life that counts for the present and eternity,
So, our every-day living should only be for God.
Then when life is over it will be easy for us to see,
Why when we first were saved, we gladly called Him, "Lord."

A glimpse into the future to life beyond the grave,
Gives insight into what is important here today.
We may not realize the value of the things we gave,
That others may be helped and hear what we have to say.
Some in heaven will bless the interest that was shown,
And continued until salvation's light had finally dawned.
Others down in hell will remember what they had known,
And realize then their opportunity is forever gone.

"Heavenly Father, the things that happen here on earth seem to take up much of my thoughts. I pray that this day I might realize how closely tied together the things going on now are to the final result of the efforts of life. My prayer is that Thy servant will in some way make each day count for eternity. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 17

WARNINGS FROM THE SON OF MAN.

Guidelines: do not do something to cause another to sin; seek to correct appropriately; be quick to forgive; faith and forgiveness go together.

v.1-2. WARNING AGAINST OFFENDING LITTLE ONES: when we sin against others. Influence over others has a great responsibility. Rebuking has restoration in view. Forgiveness following repentance is essential.

- Offenders are a reality to be faced.
- Offenders are warned ahead of time: there is very severe punishment.

v.3-4. WARNING AGAINST LACK OF FORGIVENESS: when others sin against us. Radical forgiveness must be genuine. Faith is the key to forgiveness. We must absolutely depend on God to enable us to do what is not natural.

- Be prepared personally.
- Be willing to say what is necessary.
- Be willing to forgive.
- Be willing to forgive every time a trespass against you is made.

v.5-10. WARNING AGAINST LACK OF FAITH: faith to serve. Real faith grows, even though it may not be easily seen. It is not something we advertise. Faith will ultimately produce visible results if it is alive and growing. Plowing or feeding [v.7], he did his duty for the Master just because he is His servant. We don't advertise what we do for God because we can never repay what we owe Him. All credit or glory goes to Him for everything.

- Faith comes from God's Word.
- Faith has great power.
- Faith accepts what is right regardless of how I feel about it.
- Faith does not exalt itself, is not proud.
- Faith does what is necessary and appropriate.

v.11-19. WARNING AGAINST FAILING TO GIVE GOD GLORY: the healing of the lepers. Standing afar off was according to the law of the leper. In faith they went to show themselves to the priest before they were healed. That was faith and they were healed while they went. Appreciation for the Lord is the response of faith. The more we grasp what God has done, the more we will learn by faith. God's grace extends to the Samaritans again. Faith is open to all.

- Mercy to the hopeless is reason to give God glory.
- Cleansing for the defiled is reason to give God glory.
- Appreciation for blessing is reason to give God glory.
- Humbling oneself in thanksgiving is reason to give God glory.
- A new life to live is reason to give God glory.
- Wholeness of body, soul and spirit is reason to give God glory.

v.20-30. WARNING AGAINST FALSE PROPHECIES: coming of the kingdom. The Pharisees didn't know the kingdom of God was here because they refused to see the evidence of it in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. His kingdom doesn't have boundaries. It is God's working in lives of those in the kingdom. Even today we look for outward evidence of the kingdom of God rather than looking for evidence in the believers.

- False teaching about the kingdom of God.
- False teaching about present events.
- False teaching about the Son of man, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- False teaching about coming events.
- False teaching about coming judgment.

v.31-37. WARNINGS AGAINST FAILURE TO HEED WARNINGS: we do not know the date or time of Christ's return. Do not follow those who make such claims. When it happens there will be evidence. People will be carrying on normal activities of life. Our responsibility is not to know when, but to be ready for it when it happens unexpectedly. Lot's wife thought of what she leaving rather than where she was going. Don't hang tightly on to "things." Separations are going to occur. *Where* they are taken in the tribulation will be seen by the gathering of vultures; *when* will be seen by increasing evidence of events.

- Listen and learn.
- Remember and repent.

- Lose and win.
- Save and lose.
- Taken or left behind.

LUKE 17:1-10

DUTY CALLS

This particular Sabbath day was filled with activity and teaching that gives examples and lessons for us today. Warnings and instructions are not just to be heard but to be acted upon. The needs of new believers as well as young children are similar. There are predators on every hand who seek to claim the minds of those young in the faith as well as those young in years. Many of those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation are young in years. The offenses the Lord referred to are like baited traps used to catch unsuspecting animals in the forest. These deliberate snares come today through television, computers, the internet and music and the lyrics of songs that Satan and his emissaries use to bring down unsuspecting young people.

For any person who has influence on others who are new in faith, we need to take special care. Once a person has made a profession of faith in Christ and we are in a position to help or hinder, we need to watch ourselves lest we stumble them in any way. We have a duty to every child we have any influence over, or anyone new in the family of God to lead them by the way we speak, socially, materially or spiritually in ways that strengthen and establish them. They have a right to look at us as examples of those who follow the Savior, not those who follow the paths of sin in this ungodly world. The light of truth and righteousness is to come from us and be a guide to them. Otherwise woe is pronounced on us who do not take up the responsibility and duty to which we are called.

One area of life that is linked with our duty when offenses come, is our obligation and responsibility to forgive - even when those offenses fall on us. It is up to us to assist, not hinder, those who are young in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. We should never cause them to sin by our neglect or careless living. However, if they do, and that sin is against us, it is our duty to forgive them. We need to make sure any correction or rebuke we make is done with compassion, love and consideration for the one who repeatedly sins against us. Each time confession and repentance is verbalized, we are to grant forgiveness, even if it repeated over and over again. This indicates we are to be looking for ways to genuinely forgive rather than look for excuses not to forgive. Rebuke against sin is linked to forgiveness otherwise we are not helping the sinning person. The care for new converts and young people is our on-going responsibility. But we are responsible to instruct them as often as necessary and help them to see through the offenses they are committing to the duty they also have to the Lord. It is our duty to help, teach and forgive them as often as necessary for them to learn the needed lessons. Offenses and forgiveness are linked together. It is our duty to respond to both needs as the Lord gave instruction.

Faith and service are also linked together. The disciples realized that for such radical forgiveness, they needed necessary faith. They were looking for a large quantity of faith they thought was necessary to meet such a need. Trust and dependence on God are faith and it shows itself to be real when there is a willingness to act on God's direction. However, the amount of faith isn't what is important. It is the quality of faith that makes the difference in faithful service. Faith in God is what counts; not how much we have. Faith in ourselves or men is useless. Sincere, real trust in our loving, omnipotent God is what is needed for true and effective service. Strong faith in the wrong person has no value. The object of faith is what is important.

The servant who is plowing is doing the work of an evangelist. Often there are disappointments because the results are so slow in coming. But the faithful servant knows what he is doing is the will of his Master so he keeps at his work. The servant who is feeding the cattle is the teacher who is tending to the on-going needs that are before him. He has been called to "shepherd the sheep," to "feed the flock of God," so he does that and leaves the results of his faithful service to produce the desired results to God who gives the increase. It is our duty to do God's work in God's way according to God's will. That is expected of us. The spirit of our service is linked to our faith in the One who has called us and our devotion to Him. If there is no real devotion to Him, service is a drudgery. When our devotion to Him is real, our duty to perform service for Him is a privilege and a delight.

They need our care and interest, the ones who are young and new -
 The faith that we have practiced long, for their sakes we must carry through
 To the place where we know they are able to avoid the traps and snares
 The enemy of God and his people use, to catch them unawares.

May we never deliberately stumble anyone, or even by our mistakes

Create a problem for those young in faith who watch the way we take.
It is our duty to be on guard lest we cause them to fall.
Instead we need to be available and near so we can answer to their call.

When we have been wronged and we are tempted to seek revenge -
May my faith in God be strong enough to take what others send -
And then with a gentle rebuke, accept their request for my forgiveness -
So that my desire for justice will not interfere with my Father's business.

If the same thing happens to a person, again and yet again.
My duty is to help that person to change his way and know he is forgiven.
By grace being demonstrated it is to be hoped that he will learn,
Not to do the same thing over, and from wrong practices turn.

The acts of faith are not the key to what for God is done.
The Object of our faith is what is important that victory be won.
When our trust is in God Himself, though our faith is sometimes small -
Assurance of service accepted by Him, is His answer to my call.

He directs and my response is to obey the directives that He gives.
Everything at my disposal is really not mine but His.
When I have done what is right and that still is what I am expected to do.
I am an unprofitable servant at best, my duty is to Him be true.

"Father, even this very day I have been tested as to my duty and service. I believe we have done what is right. I am not sure we have done all we should. Please take these feeble efforts and use it for Thy glory and the blessing of Thy servants. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 17:22. *"And He said unto the disciples, 'The days will come, when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and ye shall not see it.'"*

WARNINGS.

V.1-2

To offend a little-one is a serious act;
If you act wrong to them, you can't get it back.
The warning is given, there is punishment due;
Such an offense will be one you will rue.

V.3-4

Prepare yourself, for the time will come,
When forgiveness is needed, in your own home.
Be willing to forgive again and again,
And the favor of the Lord you will surely win.

V.5-10

Don't try to fake it, faith must be real;
Do what is right regardless of the feel.
Faith doesn't exalt self; it is never proud;
Its source is in God, then to us through His Word.

V.11-19

Mercy to the hopeless, gives glory to God.
Cleansing for the guilty, assurance in the Word.
Thanks for God's blessing, it is for His grace;
Humbling of pride, we lower our face.

V.20-30

Counterfeit teaching about things to come;
Is a danger to those who know not God's Son.
To cover up truth that is best to be told;
Leaves those who are wrong, out in the cold.

V.31-37

Listen and learn from those who lived in the past.
Remember and repent, before the die is down cast.
If you lose, you will win and from God you will find;
What you save you will lose, and be left behind.

“O Holy God and Father: I learn from the warnings given in the scriptures, that lessons learned in time are lessons learned wisely. It is a serious wrong for me to take any thing for granted. Keep me with a sense of propriety in every part of my life. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 17:11-37

GIVE GLORY TO GOD

The final journey of the Lord Jesus Christ to Jerusalem, led Him to many places on the way where there were needs He alone could meet. Drawing near to a village, ten men drawn together as outcasts from society because of the disease of leprosy, called to Him from a distance with a clear understanding of who Jesus was. The impact of the Lord on those men must have come from what they had observed in others who had come near to Him. We may never know the impact our faith in Christ had on others during our lifetime. Nine of them perhaps were Jews who were willing to associate with a Samaritan because of a problem common to them all. Sin is the great common denominator of all humanity. It doesn't make any difference where we find ourselves in the world. We all have been afflicted with the same fallen nature and there is only one remedy for that problem - the grace of God.

The Lord Jesus did not always deal with the same problems people have in the same way. In this case He did not touch the lepers who had called out to Him from a distance. He called back to them to go show themselves to the priest. Another time the healing of leprosy took place before the Lord sent the leper to the priest. This time He sent them on their way to the priest first. This in itself testified to their faith in Him and the truth of His words. On the way to the priest they were healed of their leprosy. However, physical healing is not an assurance of saving faith. Nine had faith in His words; the Samaritan had faith in the Lord personally. Faith in Christ alone saves. Ten were cleansed from leprosy. Only one was also cleansed from sin. To recognize God for who He is and what He has done is a way to glorify God. To acknowledge God as the Giver of every good and perfect gift is to glorify God. To honor Him and demonstrate His Person and worth in our bodies and spirits is to glorify God. To live godly lives in times of persecution and following Christ against the tide of public opinion, glorifies God. Those who glorify God are in the minority, but it does not change the responsibility and blessing associated with giving God glory.

The kingdom of God does not come when those watching with critical eyes motivated by hostility toward God, are seeking to see it. They are those television news anchors and other public figures who look at believers in Christ alone for salvation with hostility and scorn. Others we know and live among have an antagonistic attitude toward the Bible and those who seek to live for the Lord. They do not like it, when Christians do not share in the modern smooth Christianity, they enjoy that leaves following Christ out of their teaching and practice. Such a hostile attitude will never allow them to come to where they can identify the kingdom of God and say it is here. The Pharisees did not believe the King of the kingdom of God was among them. They had rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. People today resist the striving of the Holy Spirit and evidence of God that is easy to discern when one "returns to give God glory." There is no use looking at religious groups or movements for evidence of the kingdom of God. That evidence is seen in the hearts and lives of those people in our world who love the Lord Jesus Christ and still want to give glory to God.

Counterfeit Christs and false reports have been and are still great deceptions to the world. Such false displays of ignorance should never be given credence by those who know the Lord Jesus. When the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed at the end of the tribulation, it will be very obvious to the whole world. The Lord told His disciples of His coming rejection. That would precede the time when in His glory, He will be revealed to the whole world. When this happens the Son of Man will be revealed quickly and break in on the affairs of life of every person. Not everybody will be waiting and ready for Him to come. He will have been hidden from the eyes of men, but like in the days of Noah when he warned of coming judgment or when judgment fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, the Lord will appear like a flash of lightning. In judgment some will be taken away at night, others in the morning and others at noon. This revelation of the Son of Man will be known by the whole world. Those remaining behind will go into the blessings of the millennium when Christ comes to reign. Those who are taken will go into unmistakable judgment. The ones "who endure to the end will be saved." Those who live now for what they can get and are only concerned with themselves and ignore the future, are examples of those who will be left out of the kingdom of God. The signs of the end are like birds circling over a dead carcass. The carrion birds will have full and plenty when the Lord returns in power and great glory. Let us commit ourselves to give glory to God now.

To give God glory now is a response we can pass on -
Both for who He is and also for what He has done.
There is no question or challenge that can honestly be raised,
To negate the positive truth, "God is greatly to be praised."

We give God glory for who He is when our eyes behold creation.
The evidence of supreme intelligence and power is in every nation.
Glory, the display of excellence, is seen in every view -
Whether atoms or galaxies, there is that which He foreknew.

We give God glory when we see a new-born before our eyes.
Our amazed eyes behold His life-giving power; our ears hear their cries.
Watching the development of life amaze each and every one.
To the person in whom faith begins to dawn, God reveals to them His Son.

We give God glory when faith springs forth and new birth takes place.
There is evidence in changed lives that God has saved them by His grace.
Now that person and their life take on a new direction.
There are those things easily observed that accompany God's salvation.

We give glory to God when the words we use bring darkened souls some light.
The proof of reality is there for all, shining like a candle in the night.
A cleansed-leper who returns to give thanks, gives God the glory He deserves.
Faithful servants who stay at their work give glory to the One they are called to serve.

We give glory to God in life or in death when His name and Person we revere.
In the eternal day to come, we will realize better the value of our life here.
When the Lord of glory comes in power to righteously rule and reign -
We will better know the value of what we have done in Jesus' name.

“Our Father in heaven; Thy name and Person is to be honored here this day. May anything of value done this day by Thy servant, bring glory to Thee. May the thoughts, words and deeds done in the hours ahead, in some way honor Thee. May Thy servant bring glory to Thee in life and death, in good times and bad, in the beauty of day or in the despair of night. May it all be done in the name, and for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 18:

NEEDS MET BY THE SON OF MAN.

FAITH – given when the need is urgent. [v.1-8]
RIGHTEOUSNESS – given but not earned by the selfishness of man. [v.9-12]
MERCY – given by grace alone when the heart is broken. [v.13]
JUSTIFIED – given when the soul is contrite soul is humbled. [v.14]
BLESSING – given to those helpless ones who needed Him. [v.15-17]
ETERNAL LIFE – a gift given from God when it is not deserved. [v.18-27]
SIGHT – given when the call is to the right Person. [v.31-43]

v.1-8. Persistent faith.
v.9-14. Genuine faith.
v.15-17. Child-like faith.
v.18-27. Lack of faith.
v.28-34. Reward of faith.
v.35-43. Saving faith.

Five examples of those who enter the kingdom of God...

- One who admits he is a sinner [9-14].
- One who comes in child-like faith [15-17].
- One who gives up all [18-30].
- One who cries out in faith for help [35-43].
- One who joyfully receives Christ and repays [19:1-10].

v.1-8. The Lord's coming is still in view with all the difficulties of adversity. God intends to continue communicating with Him. To begin to pray is one thing, to continue is quite another. The Lord pressed the subject of prayer as much or more than any other subject.
There is liberty to pray and make our requests known.
There is the duty to pray because God commands it.
There is the constant necessity to pray.

There is the season to pray – always: the morning and evening sacrifices indicate on-going.

There are advantages to prayer: God always hears.

Fervent prayer, constant prayer, persistent prayer leads to successful prayer.

v.8. When He comes, there will be comparatively few who do not faint.

v.9-14. He reproves the Pharisee...

- Prayed with himself.
- Trusted in himself.
- Exalted himself.

He justifies the Publican...

Humbled himself

Condemned himself.

Acknowledged God who could answer his prayer.

Humility in prayer is the right attitude – not exaltation of one's self.

Sincerity in prayer is the right approach – not extolling of one's virtues.

Honesty in prayer is the right action – not exaggeration of one's activities.

There is a moral and spiritual position when we pray that is not synthetic but is genuine.

v.15-17. Child-like faith: our attitude should be to bring any and all to Christ, not just the adults.

Children need the grace of God as well as we do.

There may be discouragement and resistance from those who should help.

Many we may overlook who the Savior calls.

Let nothing be done to hinder children, for they are as welcome as anyone else.

Children are sanctified by believing parents.

Children don't feel they deserve anything from God. They just accept the blessings in simple faith.

v.28-34. Riches are a hindrance to many.

- The hearts of most are attracted to the world's ways.
- The difficulties that hinder salvation can be surmounted by the grace of God.
- We do not advertise what we have left behind for Christ.
- Christ will abundantly recompense.
- Christ's sufferings are the fulfilling of scripture.
- The disciples found this impossible to take literally.

v.35-43. The Blind man:

- He was begging: blind, poor, by the wayside – a common beggar.
- He hears the multitude: inquisitive, asked questions, got understanding.
- His prayer: faith and fervency; owns who Jesus is; believes what He can do.
- He was not willing to be put off: those who pray must keep at it.
- Jesus stood still and commanded: He is wanting to bless those who call in faith.
- State your case: He wants us to express what we are in need of mercy for. The beggar was specific as to his need.
- Christ promises an answer: Christ favorably answers his request. Sight and salvation both resulted.
- God's grace: he followed, glorifying God. We please God when we praise and glorify Him and honor Him.
- Others: when others saw the results, they praised God too. We praise Him for His mercies to others as well as to ourselves.

LUKE 18:8. *“Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?”*

FAITH.

Faith isn't in popular vogue at this moment in the world's history. It seems like everyone is living for the moment. Each day seems to be an end in itself and the phrase, “Just live one day at a time,” seems to be what people feel is important. Where is the need of faith, if I have all the food I can eat and more? What do I need faith for if I have more money than I can spend? Who do I need to turn to if I am self-sufficient and can get for myself anything I desire?

It is true we act in faith in many different ways daily. But there is one aspect of faith that is increasingly hard to find. That is faith in a righteous God, who knows every thought and intent of the heart. Out of all the billions of people on earth, most want to be in complete control of their own life. The thought of their need of faith in God is an affront to their independence and capability that gives power to their identity. Will there be people of faith when the Lord comes? Will there be those who are so in touch with God that they fear acting without divine guidance? If I am alive when He comes again, I trust I am one of those who truly realize "Without Him I can do nothing." I have found the life of faith so satisfying and assuring, I would feel incomplete as an "independent." Dependence on God gives strength way beyond any self-motivated strength. Dependence on God empowers one to attempt and accomplish far beyond what is normal. Dependence on God keeps one humble and happy at the same time. Dependence on God is satisfying beyond any form of self-satisfaction because literally, "The sky is the limit." And that is not just the blue sky I can see, but it means all the power, benefits, joys and life of heaven can be mine here on earth.

Yes, the Lord will find faith on the earth. There will always be the genuine among the counterfeit. Even though the number of people of faith may be small, faith will be there. The light will be shining. Reality of faith will be seen in its resonance amidst all the noise of self-importance going on so blatantly. He will find faith on the earth among those who love Him supremely and serve Him happily.

"Thank You, O heavenly Father, for making faith so realistic and important to me. I know that this does not fit the natural man, but it does fit me well. I am finding faith to be an on-going part of my life I can't do without. Thanks for making it evident in so many "life situations" and for making it normal to me. I know it is all Your doing and I love You for it. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I give you heart-felt thanks. Amen."

LUKE 18:1-14

JUSTICE - SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

On His way to Jerusalem with "his face set," the last things of the Lord's public ministry took place in Luke's account of the Son of Man. One subject of teaching He reviewed is what prayer is like and why it is important both to God and man. True prayer is the urge of a person to reach out to God. The desire to go forward is a characteristic of prayer. It implies there is an inner need that presses one's spirit to reach forward and upward beyond our present position and state of mind. One brother in Christ said, "Prayer puts people, places, possessions, privileges, problems, plans and purposes in proper perspective" (Arnold Adams).

The first parable the Lord told had to do with justice being done. Men need to remember we cannot discern all the ramifications surrounding issues and incidents in life, but our omniscient God does. There is an attitude of mind and life in a believer that is in us whether we put it into words or not. It is that there be the victory of spiritual things over the physical; the eternal over the temporal; the unseen over the things that are seen. If that isn't true in one's life, we will "faint" in despair, frustrations and pessimism. One would think all is hopeless unless we believe in the willingness of a benevolent, righteous God to do for us what we cannot do.

The judge in the parable is pictured as one who does not fear God and has no compassion toward people. He was not above being bribed. It seems like he had no respect for authority, people or God, but he didn't want anything to interfere with his life and the comforts he enjoyed. All the woman wanted was justice. All the unjust judge wanted was his own comfort, but that was being disturbed by the woman's persistence. So, he finally administers justice to the woman for his own sake, not just hers. He did not act in a righteous way. The Lord uses this in contrast as to how God responds to the prayers of His own. How different is God's speedy action compared to this unjust man!

God acts under the authority of His own righteousness which He in no way ever violates. The unjust judge took his time and gave an answer at his own convenience. God, by contrast, as speedily on our behalf. He does not keep people dangling in doubt or worrying if He heard our prayer. His answers may not be what we had hoped for, but He does answer quickly with "Yes," "No" or "Not now." He is ready to hear and answer every sincere request the oppressed person makes. God answers with compassion on those who need mercy. God acts in love towards those who call upon Him. He is always near. When He returns to reign in righteousness, will He find *the* faith, the body of truth, that should control and motivate righteousness in men? There will be those few and faithful ones who continue to wait and pray in spite of widespread departure from *the* faith.

The second parable has to do with those who in self-righteousness trust in themselves instead of God. Not

only do they trust in themselves, but they despise and treat with contempt, those who are not like them. The teaching of the first parable is that we can trust God to do what is needed. In this second parable - we cannot trust in our self-righteousness to justify us before God. The Pharisee prayed in a normal fashion using eloquent phrases that pleased his sense of propriety. His self-occupation was so erroneous that he couldn't get away from himself after the first utterance and acknowledgement of God. Far too often our prayer life centers around ourselves, our needs, our wishes and our expectations. We do not impress God nor men with flowery words full of self-taught information.

When a person senses their own unworthiness like the publican in the parable, we are not putting our best foot forward. A person who has the right estimation of himself is looking to God alone for mercy. We understand our only claim to even be heard by God is that "Christ died for the ungodly," and that He "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." The humbled, needy soul who casts himself on the mercy of God is heard and his prayer is answered. When one exalts himself, he "shall be abased."

If we try to justify ourselves in any way, we are taking ourselves out of God's hands and are on our own before men and God. Before men, such a person will be despised inwardly if not outwardly. Before God, such a person will not be justified and cannot be declared righteous. When the attitude of true humility is in a person, it is not hard to see. It can be heard in the tone of voice when one prays. It can be seen in one's face when he speaks to the Lord Jesus. It shows itself in reality in the bent of one's life and in their attitude toward other people. God hears prayer and answers in justice and mercy when there is sincerity and honesty evident.

Sometimes I am caused to wonder if my prayer is even heard -
And yet I know God hears and answers prayer.
The problem causing doubts may be that I haven't really learned -
Whenever I find myself, my God is there.
In the activities of daily living, God is there to give the strength
Needed to produce and do His will.
Even when the problems seem to go on and on at length -
He is there to give needed grace and wisdom still.

I do not pray to try and manipulate God into acting in my way.
His purposes and plans are already there for me.
But sometimes distractions come and I neglect to hear what He does say -
And for some strange reason, act foolishly.
When that happens, I need to pray in confession and His promise claim -
So that any hindrances to His answers are removed.
Forgiveness for sin is assured by the power of Jesus' name -
And forsaking what is wrong one's sincerity proves.

God answers, for He is just and quickly moves to take
In hand the requests that I have asked.
He knows the need in its fullness of the request that I make -
His grace makes possible the completed task.
I am not left alone trying to do the impossible-
His sufficiency is there for me to use.
To some looking on they can't conceive it is plausible
That such a weak vessel, God would use.

By its very nature, prayer increase faith in things unseen,
And our trust in God is made much stronger.
We don't look back to see the danger of what might have been.
Instead we see blessings much greater and much longer.
Some things we once wanted now are ours to have forever -
Joy and peace for today are two of these.
God in matchless grace tells us He will fail us never -
These things Christ gave us each to seize.

With quiet and calm assurance, we maintain an attitude of prayer,
That in fellowship with our God we do remain.
In few words or in many, we know His promise is to be there,
And by prayer that connection is maintained.
I ask and He gives answers, He speaks and I reply -
When to His revealed word I give my earnest heed.
The answer I seek may come now or by and by -

I trust Him who knows when and what I need.

“Father, these thoughts about our communication do not really convey what I would like to express. But I know You have a better knowledge of my heart’s desire and my appreciation for Thee than I do. So thanks so much for making it possible for me to live with Thee moment by moment, even when we are not talking all the time. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 18:18. *“And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”*

NEEDS MET.

v.1-8

FAITH – from God, through His Word; real confidence in another Person;
Given when the need is urgent - Will He find faith when He comes?

v.9-12

RIGHTEOUSNESS – not earned, not deserved, nor claimed by self.
Given when humility is real – Is my head bowed?

v.13

MERCY – longed for, needed, petitioned, asked for from the right Person.
Given by grace when the heart is broken – What is the condition of my heart?

v.14

JUSTIFIED – God alone can do this; He sees and knows what I am.
Given when the soul is humbled – Is my contrition real?

v.15-17

BLESSING – in times when we wonder what to do about helplessness;
Given to those helpless ones, what is needed – Do I thank Him for blessings?

v.18-27

ETERNAL LIFE – from God comes a gift we need more than all others,
Given to those never will deserve it – Am I enjoying eternal life?

v.31-43

SIGHT – seeing God in every situation, enables us to enjoy Him more.
Given when we call to the right Person – Have I called on His name?

“O Father God, how can I thank Thee sufficiently for such a gift of eternal life. It is an overpowering thought that Thou dost give Thy life - that which is uniquely God’s, to such a failing, small insignificant man. I praise Thee for this, and give Thee glory, praise and thanks, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 18:15-30

SEEING FROM GOD’S EYES

I watched a group of people last night ages ranging from infancy to old age. Some were small enough to spend most of their time in their parents’ arms. The oldest in their eighties were stooped and slow. In between were all ages, some in their vibrant youth, some in the strongest time of life, some looking for meaning in their lives, some quite well off financially - many different walks and stages of life. Which ones were most important? In God’s eyes - who was most significant to Him in the kingdom of God? Parents brought their children to Jesus when He was here among men because they realized the significant of the touch of the Master. A blessing from God in early life can be fruitful all through life. Our children need to be made conscious of God and His grace from infancy. The minds of little children are open to impressions that remain for life. Guidance from parents needs to be more than passing on skills and stories. They need, and can learn, the wisdom from above that guides decision making, morals and righteous living, the value of truth, the nature and Person of God and the saving work of Christ. Parents and grandparents can still bring children to Jesus for the sanctifying touch of His grace.

Children instinctively know they need someone else to depend on for their fundamental needs. When they are having careless fun and are exploring their environment, they are quite independent. But when hunger, danger or pain comes they automatically raise their voice in loud cries to get the attention of one who can meet their need. Any who enter the kingdom of God, young or old, must recognize their need of God and come with dependence and trust to the Lord Jesus Christ. The trusting attitude of children is a living example of what God expects of those who come to Him. "Must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." A child in need comes running to one they trust completely, and with outstretched arms, confidently expect to be received and their needs fully met.

For those who recognize their need of salvation and come to Christ in child-like faith, they will find

themselves gladly received by the Savior. Those who know Him and realize their need of His guidance and power in their lives, will call upon Him in believing prayer, will open the Bible and listen to His words of guidance and instruction. They will trust what He says and act upon that with faith in Him.

By contrast a well-to-do young man whose morality and righteous living would please any parent, came to the Lord to find out what he could do to get eternal life. In another place he asks, "What good thing can I do...?" He probably had a place of authority in the government, and that may have been based on his reputation as an upright person. He addressed the Lord Jesus Christ as "Good Master" and Jesus immediately gave him opportunity to testify as to whether he recognized he had come to One who is God. The young man missed that and the opportunity of a lifetime he had been given. The young ruler had placed himself on the same level as the Lord Jesus. He considered himself righteous and the Lord Jesus as simply a good teacher. Many are making the same mistake today. Rather than humbly acknowledge their real need, they consider themselves capable of making themselves acceptable to God. The Lord Jesus quickly gave five of the commandments that have to do with our relationship to other people. The young man had already missed the point that he was dealing with God Himself. The Lord did not quote the last commandment he would have learned as a child. The young man knew what that command was and the words "thou shalt not covet" is what convicted and condemned him. He likely would have been giving alms to the poor. By allowing his riches to control him, his heart was condemned but he was not willing to apply that final commandment to himself. Riches make it very difficult to submit and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ as Master and Lord. Power, prestige and possessions are claiming the souls of many people today. If our sense of security is based on wealth, we must get rid of those things we claim for ourselves.

It is impossible for any person to be saved if they are trusting in anything or anyone but the Person and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf. Peter said they had forsaken all they had to follow the Lord Jesus. They had begun to pay the price of discipleship. The Lord focused their attention more on what they had gained rather than what they had lost. No matter what a person might give up and contribute to the work of God, they will never be able to give as much as the Lord gave for us to have eternal life now and forever. The young ruler had to see things from God's eyes in order to get eternal life. Nothing has changed today. We need to see sin and its consequences from God's eyes and then we will be able to appreciate Christ and God's salvation from His eyes.

To look upon a child at play or busily engaged in their life -
Can give to a thoughtful watching person a lesson for them to learn.
A child will carelessly go from one thing to another until they get a fright -
They quickly look around seeking a special person to which they can turn
With assurance and in those arms, they will find the safety they need.
And with trusting but fearful eyes they run to the one they trust -
The voice of concern and welcome makes them confident to heed,
With childlike simplicity assurance of comfort, and in that one they rest.

There are considerations we need to look at on occasions -
When a young person has been awakened to their need of God.
The time and circumstances they face make possible some instructions
Where they are open to God's light and needed guidance from His Word.
Be ready then to give explanations as to the grace God has provided.
They can comprehend with open and frankly honest concern
Before the urgency of the moment has dimmed and subsided -
And the way sinners are able to come and the way of salvation learn.

It is different looking through God's eyes at those who are older.
A wealthy young ruler seemed to want what was right.
Compared to young children who in simple trust are bolder -
And are more used to faith than only living by sight.
The young man who came to Jesus and wanted to earn eternal life
Didn't realize the Deity of the One he was talking to.
When he turned to go his own way, he walked away from the Light
Not having the eternal life, he sought when the meeting was through.

"Father, there are a lot of people seeking to bring children to the Savior. Bless their efforts and maybe some young adult will remember what they learned as a child and will come to Christ for salvation also. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 18:31-42

UP TO JERUSALEM

Since the time of the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ on the mountain where He talked with Moses

and Elijah, Jerusalem was before Him. There on that mountain those three spoke together of His death "He was to accomplish." There was no question as to the fact it was going to happen. All that was going to result from that sacrifice has not been finished yet, because souls are still being saved. The glory that results from that accomplishment will be on display forever. From that time His face was steadfastly set to go to Jerusalem. Even though for several months the Lord led His disciples from place to place, the ultimate end of His journey was Jerusalem. The significance was not just in the city. It was there the prophetic scriptures were going to be fulfilled. From Adam and Eve on there were prophecies concerning the events that were going to happen at Jerusalem. He had told His disciples about them before, and again the Lord gives a concise account of what was going to happen.

We may not know every detail about prophesied events but in a general way we have been taught by the Holy Spirit in the scriptures. It is right that we should tell what the scriptures say. It is wrong when we add our perceived ideas to the written words. The Lord filled in the teaching of Psalm 16, 22, 69, Isaiah 53 and other portions of scripture by putting them all together in a simple concise phrase. When explaining the scriptures to those who do not read them or cannot grasp the truth presented, the Spirit of God assists and guides us to make these things understandable to others. The Lord Jesus made the important things clear. He was going to be delivered to the Gentiles. The rejection of Israel was going to be complete. The mockery, shameful treatment, the spitting, the scourging, the killing of the Savior by the Gentiles in no way took away the guilt of the Jews. Jews and Gentiles alike are responsible and guilty for the crucifixion of the innocent Son of Man.

The disciples did not grasp the reality of any of the things the Lord spoke about concerning His death and resurrection. Their interests were focused on what they thought would happen when they got to Jerusalem. They were looking for the restored kingdom of Israel. It is not uncommon for people to be blind to what they do not want to understand. There is a sense in which our own expectations override the reality of events that come. At this time there seemed to be another reason for their blindness to be allowed. Rising again on the third day would have seemed to them to be an impossibility. They would understand going to Jerusalem and being delivered to the Gentiles - but to kill Him who gave life to the dead (they had seen that happen) - and to rise from among the dead - this was more than they could conceive. Perhaps they were trying to grasp this as an illustration. By nature, we can understand events and things around us that are normal to our experience. By faith we have to grasp those things that are beyond what to us are natural events. We can understand death because we see it often. Resurrection from among the dead we have to accept by faith. This is why the prophetic scriptures are so helpful to us. When we read of the prophecy and then it is accomplished, our faith is affirmed. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." The Old Testament scriptures give us ample reason to believe God fulfills what He predicts.

The final journey through Jericho gives us a wonderful illustration of Gospel truth. The blind man knew his need and was not afraid to call out for mercy. The urgency of a person's need changes the results. If a person is willing to remain in the pitiful state of sin without seeking the Lord and calling upon Him while He is near, he will not find relief from his guilt and consequences of sin. When a person recognizes who Jesus is and calls upon Him from an anxious heart seeking mercy, the Lord hears and answers.

There was no question in the blind man's heart as to who Jesus was, and there was no question as to His ability to heal him. The call was to the Messiah and was made as one who is undeserving of any mercy. But the needy cry of one who knows his inability and admits to his need is not overlooked by the Lord Jesus. This was no half-hearted appeal. The loud shouts revealed the earnestness of the blind man. The very first word he said when he was brought to Jesus was, "Lord." "For this cause Christ both died, rose and revived, that He might be Lord."

There is no hesitation on the part of the Lord to bless those who seek Him with all their heart. Not only did the Lord give him sight, He saved his soul. The blessings of genuine faith go far beyond what was normal in life. When a person comes to Christ and is saved by God's grace, the blessings of faith in Him are available to us and we find living by faith far greater than our expectations could ever think of. So, the blind man who was healed and saved followed the Lord and glorified God.

The widow prayed earnestly and received justice. The publican needed mercy and was justified freely by His grace. The children were brought to Jesus and were gladly received. The rich young ruler wanted eternal life but missed it because something else filled his heart. The blind man needed sight and light and got both. God is ready and willing to supply every need and is waiting for the exercise of faith in Him to be real. He responds quickly, appropriately, understandably, graciously, mercifully and justly to the one who calls upon Him in genuine faith.

It was before Him from His birth, the work for which He was sent.
Jerusalem was the place where He would accomplish what John meant
When he identified the Lamb of God who would bear away the sin of the world.
Lest every human who ever lived would into the pit be hurled.

The Lord set His face to go to Jerusalem knowing what would happen there.
He knew beforehand that He would be treated in ways that are most unfair.
But by the determined counsel of God He went and that city would never be the same.
Like a microcosm of the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles are to blame.

He told them plainly but it was hidden, some things can only be accepted by faith.
Who could conceive that from such a perversion of justice would come forth redeeming
grace.

The city stands again as a significant place because the Savior died.
There also the miracle of His resurrection took place, in the future here He will abide.

It has been fought over and burned, rebuilt again and again and still it remains.
The reason it fills such a place in our history is because of the blessings it claims.
David lived there, then Solomon and the temple was built, God dwelt with His people there.
That all happened long in the past, but with His people the rule of peace He will share.

To us it is just the name of a place in the world, but more than a name is at stake.
There the Lord was publicly rejected, there full atonement for sin He did make.
From there He met with His own in a room after He rose from the dead.
It is there He will reign in wondrous glory over every nation and power - the Head.

“Father, I praise Thee that the humiliation of the Lord is over. I praise Thee for the glorious redemption He accomplished. I praise Thee for the promises that will be fulfilled in the future. May I bring some honor to my Lord today in word and/or deed. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 19:

THE SON OF MAN IS COME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THAT WHICH WAS LOST.

Many, practice a Christian life-style without its inner reality. The Savior's visit to a sinner revealed Himself; showed His grace; revealed the sinner.

v.1-10.

THE CHARACTER OF ZACCHAEUS: the people of Israel would hate a tax collector who got rich at their expense. Extortion was part of the job.

Who he was:

- The chief among the publicans [v.2] – in his own eyes.
- Little of stature [v.3] – in the eyes of the people.
- A sinner [v.7] – in the eyes of God; sinners are important to God.
- By faith in Jesus, a son of Abraham: faith is important to God.

A chief of sinners with the chief of saints; a conversion of the rich; probably well along in years; desired to see Jesus; sought to see Jesus. There is power in the Lord's "looks". He speaks with familiarity and kindness. This is the first time we read of Jesus inviting Himself to a home. Evidence of Zacchaeus interest was in his speed to come down and welcome the Lord with joy. The Pharisees would look upon Zacchaeus with disdain. The Lord looked at him as someone sick and lost.

What he did...

Sought to see Jesus [v.3-4]; unsatisfied life.
Ran before [v.4]. Undeterred by others.
Climbed up [v.4]. Unable to see.
Made haste [v.6]. Unhesitating obedience.
Came down [v.6]. Unafraid of the consequences.
Received Christ joyfully [v.6]. Unashamed faith.
Generous to the poor [v.8]. Unquestioned responsibility.
His restitution [v.8]. Undeniable evidence.

Obvious works of the grace of God...

- Not what I lend, but what I give...freeness.
- Not I will, but I do...readiness.
- Not my spoils, but my goods...honesty and justice.
- Not a small percentage (tithe), but with charity and generosity.

- Not to his heirs, but to the poor...fitness and focus.
- Not to the synagogue, but to those he wronged...restitution.
- THE COMPASSION OF JESUS:
- Jesus came to the place [v.5]. The Savior knows where you are.
- Looked up [v.5]. The Savior knows where you are.
- Saw him [v.5]. The Savior knows what you are.
- Called him by name [v.5]. The Savior knows who you are.
- Bade him make haste and come down [v.8]. The Savior knows what you need.

THE CROWD OF PRESENT-DAY PEOPLE:

Human testimony:

- They saw it [v.7].
- They all murmured.
- They called Zacchaeus a sinner.

Divine testimony...

- I must abide at thy house.
- A son...

v.11-27. THE TEN SERVANTS: the Lord reveals how the kingdom will take form.

- He introduces His absence and rejection [v.14].
- The nobleman (the Lord Jesus) is receiving the kingdom from His Father.
- He will then return with glory and power, not humiliation.
- The Lord expects us to use what He has given us to further benefit the interests of the kingdom.
- There is a reckoning day when we give account for what we did with what He gave us.
- There are degrees of happiness. The faithful will be unspeakably happy, the unfaithful will be miserable.
- Those who will not submit to Christ's authority will be cast out.
- The third man who didn't use what he was given:
 - Didn't share his Master's interest in the kingdom.
 - Didn't trust His Master.
 - Was concerned for himself.
 - Did nothing.
- Resentment destroyed his love and loyalty. He tried to shift blame onto the character of his Master.
- It is a serious mistake to blame our disobedience on the Lord.

v.28-44. INTO JERUSALEM:

He led the way to where He would suffer.

He had previously walked, but now fulfills prophecy [Zec.9:9].

He demonstrates His authority over creation by riding on an unriden donkey.

He establishes His right over all things by saying, "The Lord hath need" – Supreme Ruler. He knew before what would be said – omniscience; what the owner would do – omnipotence.

Without worldly pomp and magnificence, He moves into the city as a King.

The Pharisees were begrudging this adoration by the poor and an entry unlike the earthly king they wanted.

The poor thought their time of freedom and kingdom was here. The Pharisees didn't want one who overrode their authority. They rejected their King.

Why did He weep?

- Sorrow for their coming sufferings.
- Sorrow for the lost.
- Concern for their salvation.
- They only had a short time for salvation
- He still warned and sent His apostles.
- Time of visitation: when the Gospel comes it should never be neglected.

v.45-47. CLEANSING THE TEMPLE:

• An animal market was set up in the Gentiles court. There is to be a reverence wherever God's people attend to God's things.

• Prayer is probably the most important activity when we meet. It sanctifies the word spoken. Preaching and praying go together.

LUKE 19:1-10

THE SON OF MAN IS COME

The key verse to the Gospel of Luke is verse 10 of this chapter, where the whole of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth is summed up in 16 words. "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Zacchaeus wanted to find out who He was. As the Lord passed through Jericho, this small man who knew his own limitations found a place in a tree where he could easily see the Lord Jesus. There is no indication written as to whether he was dissatisfied with his life or not. Even a sense of guilt up until the time of his search for the Lord is not recorded. Whenever there is an interest in seeking the Lord for whatever reason, there is an opportunity for the grace of God to be displayed and ultimate blessing to occur. An invitation given may not seem to be all that significant at the time it is given, but we must never underestimate the value of a little interest shown on the part of those we know or connect with in some way.

Wealth and the official position Zacchaeus had, did not hinder him from seeking to satisfy his curiosity. The amount of time or the degree of conviction of need is not mentioned in this account. We do not know what is in the hearts of those we contact with the Gospel. All we can go by is what we can see outwardly and what we can hear audibly. The inward desire of a person is really only known by the Lord who looks on the heart. When the Lord came to that spot under the tree, looked up and called Zacchaeus by name, everything changed. Instead of one who controlled others with his words, he was now completely under the authority of Another. This happened instantly. Instead of telling others what to do, he immediately and quickly acted on what he was told. The look on the face of the Son of Man, was the look of the Savior who came to seek and to save the lost. Not only was Zacchaeus quick to act on what the Lord Jesus said, but he was glad to do exactly what he was told, and more than that, glad to personally receive the Lord.

That attitude and response is not something that can be easily be put on falsely. The initial desire to see Jesus, the anticipation of even a visual view, the hearing of his own name indicating personal recognition, the gracious command, the assurance of acceptance all brought joy to the seeker then as it does today. This is no casual nod of acknowledgement. This is a life-changing intervention. The Son of Man is come. Even though those looking on and following Jesus and Zacchaeus to his home were critical and very judgmental, it didn't change Zacchaeus from his purpose. We cannot allow the criticisms of those who do not agree with us to turn us aside from our reason for presenting the Gospel.

Evidence of the reality of faith in Christ is not long coming when the Lord Jesus Christ is received. There is an inward relief from the guilt of sin and outward expression that indicates the new birth has taken place. In the case of Zacchaeus there was a verbal expression of commitment to restore what was wrongfully taken and restitution of that which was deliberately cheated.

The word of the Lord gives to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, including Zacchaeus, the positive assurance of salvation. It is not based on our feelings of acceptance. Zacchaeus, and all who believe on Him are able to refer to the testimony of the Lord Himself as to what takes place in the life of a believer. It affected the heart, the home and the life of Zacchaeus. Not only was he saved by God's grace, he was identified as a person who was justified by faith even as Abraham was. This is true for any today who God saves. They are justified, cleared of all guilt. Abraham was a man honored by all the Jews. Zacchaeus was a man despised by them. Both were justified by faith in the same Person. Both met Him personally under a tree. Both heard His words. Both gladly received and entertained the Lord, and both were accepted by Him.

The seeking of the Son of Man is a longing for an actual connection to be made, not just a bent of emotional desire. Seeking by the Lord is an act of grace that culminates in saving one who is lost. In this case the lost is a general term that includes every man, woman and child. He has come that all men through Him might be saved. His seeking is to reach out and claim those who are looking for Him. How great is the grace of the Son of Man! How important is faith in Him in the life of one who wants to see Him!

What is in the heart of man that stirs the soul to seek?
What moves a person the Son of Man to meet?
There is within every one of us a longing after God -
That cannot find satisfaction until we meet the Lord.

What is it keeps so many away from what they know is right?
What makes people continue to live in darkness instead of light?
The pressure of people and desire for acceptance is an awful tie -
That must be released or broken before to Him we fly.

What is it makes those looking on prone to show animosity?
What is behind their resentment, what do they think they see -

That makes a bitterness against the Gospel message?
It is a reality from the heart that shows more than mere vestige.

What is the motivation that urges one to testify?
What reason is behind the need one has to satisfy
The urging of the heart to speak out and publicly say -
That salvation has come to my house bringing joy to me today?

The Holy Spirit working opens the searching heart and mind -
Moving one to seek the Lord, knowing one who seeks will find
The solution to the guilt of sin, when to the Son of Man they come -
Resulting in salvation and eternal life to the seeking one.

There is joy that follows, and peace with God within.
The awakened conscience responds creating awareness of sin.
One who has been seeking learns Another has been seeking him.
When the two have finally met, new life in Christ begins.

"Father in heaven, doubtless there is joy and satisfaction to Thee when the seeking Savior and seeking sinner meet. I pray that will happen here. I praise thee for hearing of that happening in other places we have been praying for. Thanks so much! In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 19:11-27

WHEN HE RETURNS

The people listening to Jesus after He passed through Jericho heard Him say, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The Lord continued to speak linking the parable of the nobleman giving ten servants each a pound to use for him while he was gone, with the Son of Man seeking and saving the lost. The people were expecting the Lord Jesus Christ to establish the kingdom of restored Israel when He got to Jerusalem. The parable tells plainly the nobleman (the Lord Jesus Christ) was going away and when He returned, He would be a King. Each of the ten servants received a pound as an opportunity to show their ability as a trustworthy representative of the one who was absent. Those ten must have been able to act in His name to transact business for Him. During our Lord's absence He is expecting us to use what He has given us in ways that are consistent with His desire. We need to remember everything we do as servants of our Lord is a representation of Him to those who do not know Him.

There are many ways the people of the world express their hatred for the Lord. The Jews hated Him when He came unto His own people. His teaching of kingdom principles condemned their practices. They "received Him not." The Gentiles for the most part, mocked and tormented Him before they crucified Him. They just couldn't be bothered with Him. The similarity to the Herod who went to Rome to be made king by Caesar is quite obvious. Leading Jews made it clear to Caesar they would revolt if Herod wasn't removed. When Herod returned from Rome, he killed 3000 Jews in Judea who revolted against him. The Lord Jesus knew what the people as a whole and leaders in particular thought of Him. Yet in His grace, 3000 were saved ten days after He went away when He sent the Holy Spirit to come in blessing upon those same people. We do not need to suppose the message of the Gospel will ever be popular with the people of the world. It exposes sin and its consequences. It calls for repentance of sin to God and faith put in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation. "Few there be that find it." The ideas and personal expectations people have does not change the message.

Between the time of the Lord's leaving and His coming again, we have this opportunity to use what He has given us for His benefit and glory. The day of accounting will come when we present to Him the results of what has been done for Him. The judgment seat of Christ will reveal what is behind all of the activities done in His name. When we use what God has given us as gifts to be used for Him, He enables us to accomplish His purpose through us. There is no evidence of special skill or unusual ability of one more than others. The results have to do with faithfully using what has been given to us. Whether the increase is nine for one or four for one isn't really the concern. God knows who we are and what we can do with what He has given us. When one is faithful with a little, the King will reward when He returns to give responsibilities to His own servants in His kingdom reign.

To not use what we have been given by our Lord is wickedness. Even a little service done for Him has the potential to honor and glorify Him. To not have an interest in the things of God prospering in our labor, indicates there is no interest in the coming King Himself. One may take the place of a servant but if one in their heart has determined the things of God are not my concern, that person is just like the citizens who

hated the nobleman. If there is no love or honor for the Lord Jesus, no desire to see Him glorified and exalted, no concern for the future - that testifies that such a person is wicked. It is serious when one who claims to be a servant of God and faithful to the King, is only concerned for themselves and their own ideas about the kingdom of God.

When we have been made stewards of the things of God, we must remember that "it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." There are those that teach there is no coming kingdom of God. They say now is the time the King is reigning over spiritual Israel, the church. We must be careful to differentiate between that which is an illustration and what is really going to happen when Christ returns to take authority and reign in a future day.

Those who are enemies are still widespread throughout the world. Those citizens who hated Him then have been joined by many who hate Him now. When just judgment comes at the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the kingdom He has gone to receive will be a reality all over the world. "Jesus will reign where'er the sun, doth its successive journey's run." There will be real "peace on earth, and good will toward men." Those who reject Christ will not be part of that reign of the King. It is incumbent on us to faithfully use what He has given us in view of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We do not grasp the full import of all that happens each day.
There are unseen influences that are affected by what I do and say.
If from real love for Christ and a desire to see Him enthroned -
I will commit to faithfully use what I sometimes call my own.

I know it is not really mine, it came from His own hand.
He has passed it on to me to wisely invest as best I can -
To bring spiritual dividends that will honor Him in the end -
And will testify to faithful service as to how His trust I spend.

It is possible to waste what He gives on things that do not count.
It is also possible to return to Him the very same amount -
He gave me at the beginning because I did procrastinate -
Leaving any opportunity to serve Him well until it was too late.

Foolishly I might be inclined to compare what I do with others.
Each servant has what he needs the expectations of the Lord to cover.
For me to pass a judgment on others based upon what I do
Would leave me totally bankrupt when the labors of life are through.

"Little is much when God is in it," is more than the words of a song.
There is a fundamental serving principle that keeps me from doing wrong.
Opportunities are there when I seek them to serve God by serving men.
Then when that time has past, doors are opened to serve him again.

I have no idea at all what the outcome of life's service will be.
It is just up to me to be faithful, and when reckoning time comes, I will see -
From eyes that are much clearer than mine what produced good dividends.
My concern is to use now what He has given, and go to wherever He sends.

"Father of those who believe, sometimes it seems like I am not doing very much that is directly related to the outreach of the Gospel. But if in my daily life the things I learn or have learned can be beneficial to others in Thy service, then bless it I pray. Give Thy servant an opportunity to pass on in any way truth to encourage, build up and strengthen Thy people. Help me to be ready to pass on the Gospel when opportunities arise. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 19:37. *"And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;"*

MIGHTY WORKS.

Discontentment moves a man to change a life focused on wealth. He acts with haste in a desire to see Jesus. Obstacles do not turn him away from finding the Savior. Pride is not allowed to stop his search. The results are all that he wanted – and more. The Savior knew Zacchaeus needed salvation and he was rescued from the "lostness" of a man who was living for the wrong things. This is one of God's MIGHTY WORKS.

Faithful people using what they have been given to bring gain for their Master – these are fulfilling what God intends. There may be different amounts of gain, but the Master knows what effort has been put into the charge He gave. The stewardship He gives is evidence of the expectations He has in us. The reward for faithful stewardship is one of God's MIGHTY WORKS.

The colt had never been ridden. Those who came to get it were strangers. And yet, placidly, it submits to the control of the One who is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. The nature He gave to the beast is still under the authority of the Lord. He comes riding into the city on a tamed animal that walks through the shouting crowds of people, walking on clothes and branches that normally would cause the colt to shy away. The control of nature and the nature of an animal is one of God's MIGHTY WORKS.

In the place where God met with His people, the scene is one of chaos and confusion. Money changers, animal sellers, people buying in the place where God's honor was to be upheld. This was wrong but the practice had been in place for years. Practices that people have become used to, does not make it right. The Lord Jesus Christ acts to do His Father's will – in the temple, always, in all things. All that He does in every place and in all time are God's MIGHTY WORKS.

“Father, I join with those disciples of times past in rejoicing and praising Thee for all the mighty works that I have seen Thee do. It does cause me to praise and honor Thee for such great evidence of Thy working even today. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 19:28-48

THE PEOPLE WERE VERY ATTENTIVE

The ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem, the imagery is that of the King coming to claim the kingdom, and as far as the great company of disciples, that was what was going to happen. Their hopes were based on prophetic scriptures that refer to Israel returning to its past glory among the nations. Many then, the same as now, did not realize something greater was happening. The foundation was being laid of a kingdom that would encompass the earth and that would never end. Those people were concerned only with the fact the Lord entering on a colt indicated the intentional fulfilling of Zechariah 9:9. He was publicly announcing the fact He was the Messiah. He chose a time when there would be Jews from Judea gathered together, Galileans there who had followed Him and strangers from many parts of the middle east who would have come for the Passover. The place of His declaration was where all the people could see Him as He entered the city. The way He proclaimed His mission was the fulfillment of a well-known prophecy. The people thought He "would at this time restore the kingdom to Israel."

The Romans probably looked on without too much concern because there were no armed men surrounding the Lord. The rulers watched from a separated position, fearful lest the Roman soldiers would come on them with force. The people were filled with contagious joy because the miracle working Jesus was now coming into the city after months of gathering huge crowds on His way "up to Jerusalem" from Galilee. It is always wise for us to make sure our understanding of events happening in the world today are looked at through a biblical perspective. It is true we are living in "perilous times." It is true "evil men and seducers are waxing worse and worse." It is true people are "lovers of themselves," "lovers of money," and all descriptions given concerning the "last days" can be identified as happening now. But it is not in our power to give dates and times when the plans of God will unfold. Far too many mistakes have been made by followers of those who thought and taught that "at this time" some special event prophesied would happen. We do well to remember that coming events cast shadows, but only God Himself has the timetable.

Three successive days the Lord entered Jerusalem from the way of the Mount of Olives. One day He entered the temple, looked around and left. The next day He entered riding on the colt to the cheers and praises of the people. On this occasion there were clothes and branches of trees spread before Him as He rode into the city as a triumphant King. We are not always able to discern the full extent of what God is doing when we seek to follow and serve Him because "His ways are past finding out." Our responsibility is to act on what is appropriate for the moment to the best of our ability. The Lord Jesus could look ahead and see everything that was going to happen and grieved over what He saw. The tears of the Savior were real even though those around could not understand all that was involved.

As the Priest, the Lord Jesus went into the temple on that busy day of profiteering and covetous money making and drove them out. He knew what was happening and gave no quarter as He fulfilled the scriptures. They had made the temple "a den of thieves." He again cleansed the temple He called the "Father's house." It is important for us to do God's work in a way that pleases God - not with the profit-and-loss mind-set of a business. It is possible for us to use the things of God. The sin-polluted works of covetous

people have no place among the people of God. To charge people for what God freely gives has deceived many into thinking they have some merit in their own works.

The people who followed the Lord that last week were hanging on every word He said. They must have been expecting some signal to be given that would have produced the miraculous overthrow of Rome. We need to maintain what God has given us to do and leave all the results to Him to be accomplished. "Our times are in His hands." His words were the warning words He spoke as the Prophet when He taught the people in the temple.

As the King, the Savior moved regally into David's royal city.
Looking over that privileged place, tears ran down His face in pity.
He could see beyond the walls, the buildings and the temple -
To the day to come when every person there would be in fear, and tremble.
As death approached, He saw beyond to those who Him rejected -
Not wanting Him to personally reign over them who grace neglected
Until there was no hope and their Roman enemies drew near.
The city would fall in ruins - the place He was rejected when He was here.

As the Priest He entered the temple and saw the desecration.
They were dealing in business in the place intended for consecration.
The Father's house on earth needs tending, not to deteriorate.
To carelessly ignore the purpose of God is to seal one's awful fate.
Instead of worship there was business, instead of worship there was greed.
Instead of the fear of God on all who entered, to holy things they gave no heed.
In driving them out, as the Priest, He again defined the purpose of that place.
The intention was it was for a place of prayer, where God can reveal His grace.

As the Prophet, He taught the scriptures daily to those who came to hear.
The truths He spoke of included those of warnings of danger drawing near.
Day after day He came back to speak, this opportunity was the last.
A week later those who had rejected Him, their day of blessing had passed.
We never should ignore the lessons learned from the Prophet, the Priest and King.
These are the words of truth and righteousness that hope to listeners bring.
One is wise to pay attention when the voice of God has spoken.
The final outcome will be eternal life when self-will of a man is broken.

"Heavenly Father, the fulfillment of scriptural truths in the past assure me today they will be fulfilled in Thy good time. I look for the Lord to come - I really do. When that time comes, may Thy servant be profitably involved in Thy work. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 20

THE AUTHORITY OF THE SON OF MAN.

v.1-8. THE RIGHT OF AUTHORITY:

- The leaders challenged His authority.
- He condemned their hypocrisy.
- His authority was in Himself:
"What manner of Man is this that even the winds and the seas obey Him."
"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."
"All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore..."
"Now commands all men everywhere to repent..."
"As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God..."

v.9-19. THE REJECTION OF AUTHORITY:

- A certain man: God, the planter and owner of the vineyard.
- The vineyard: the nation of Israel; specially blessed by God.
- Husbandmen (vinedressers): Jewish leaders who set the course of the nation.
- Three servants: prophets who instructed and warned the people.
- Beloved Son: The Lord Jesus Christ, sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world.
- The "others": the apostles, who took the message of the Gospel and brought blessing to the nation.

v.20-47. THE RULE OF AUTHORITY:

- Authority of the governor (Pilate): *"The powers that be are ordained of God."*

- Authority of the emperor (Caesar): *“God is the judge: He putteth one down one, and setteth up another.” Ps. 75:7.*
“The nations are as a drop of a bucket and are accounted as the small dust of the balance...” Isa. 40:15.
- Authority of God (His Word):
Misuse of God’s Word:
Misunderstanding of God’s Word: the Sadducees denied the resurrection.
Right use of God’s Word: The Lord quoted Moses as proof of the resurrection.

David: the highest civil authority of the Jews because of the kingdom promised to David. The placed the Messiah less than David. The Lord reminds them that David called the Messiah “Lord”, indicating the superiority of the Messiah.

LUKE 20:2. *“And spake unto him saying, ‘Tell us, by what authority thou doest these things? Or who is he that gave thee this authority?’”*

AUTHORITY.

He planted the vineyard, is it not His right
To do with it as He might?
To expect some returns from the investment made;
Is such expectation far too hard?
And isn't it right for the One whose loss
Who in the beginning paid the cost -
With authority, to say to me,
“Bring to me now, that I might see,
What you have done with what I gave -
Just bring from your hand, what you really have.”

He is lord of the vineyard, we owe to Him
All we have done, just the same as them
Who wanted for themselves, what belonged to another.
And the Stone they rejected, ground them to powder.
And though we may not hurt, or destroy or kill;
Yet it is possible that we too, still,
May want for ourselves what belongs to our Lord;
May want from men, praise for reward.
It is important for me, under His authority,
To give to my Lord all praise and glory.

When it comes to law and government;
There is authority from God that He has lent
To those who rule over the affairs of the land,
And I am to bend to such demands
As I can, under God who is the Supreme Lord.
I bow to the authority of His holy Word.
I submit to Caesar the things that are his;
Cause in this nation, I am truly blessed.
But to higher authority than his I bow;
My Lord alone claims my solemn vow.

What is my Lord's role in the after-life?
If I am married more than once, who is my wife?
Then I read that He has made that very plain,
Even though one is widowed and married again;
That is only for life, not for heaven above.
In that glorious sphere there is a different love.
Love there is like families - Father and child.
We are one in the Lord; the past life is dead.
Our Lord is the Bridegroom in the heavenly sphere;
The Church, all as one, is His wife up there.

“O Supreme Lord: I bow in reverence and acknowledge Thy authority in every aspect of my life. I admit there are times when it is only form, but I do not want that to ever be. I need to recognize real submission every day of my life. I need help in this. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 20:1-18

THE STONE

On the day the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking as the Prophet to Israel, He was telling them of the Good News of the kingdom of God. He had preached the Gospel message publicly many times before. His disciples also had been sent out to proclaim the Gospel to the whole nation. Those were not quiet private conversations where there is an exchange of opinions as many people want to do today in place of public Gospel preaching. There may be times when conversations can have a useful purpose in presenting and explaining the doctrine of the Gospel to earnest inquirers. These do not take the place of the herald of the Gospel standing forth and making plain the necessity of a lost sinner facing his or her sin. In Gospel preaching we must clearly define the problem that separates ungodly sinners from a holy God. It is important then that we give the solution for the sin problem as taught in the scriptures. The works and ordinances of men have no value in this solution. "The wages of sin is death." Death for sin is the only thing that can stop the hemorrhaging disease of sin in the sinner. The solution to the problems is the Good News. "God commendeth (demonstrated) His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." How welcome to the convicted sinner are the words, "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me."

The leaders of the Jews had carefully planned two questions to ask Jesus after His entry into the city of Jerusalem as the Messiah. In this scheme of two questions, they thought the Lord Jesus would legally and publicly be condemned. They began this interrogation by seeking to establish their authority as leaders. "Tell us..." was their demand. They probably were referring to the turning over of the money-changers tables the day before and upsetting the business-like order of religion that had taken the place of spiritual worship in the temple. Their questions covered the "what" and the "who" of authority they thought they had and that He didn't have. Whenever someone claims authority there is the right to find out what that authority is and what person gave it as in the government and those who represent it.

In His reply the Lord Jesus, with dignity, grace and firm authority said, "Tell Me..." using the same method of speaking those who opposed Him used. They assumed they had authority. The Lord Jesus exercised the authority He had when He answered their questions with His own question. If they had believed the message of John, they would have believed the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah. John had made that plain in his preaching. Those men were not ignorant of what the Lord was asking. They chose to disobey the light they had been given and so had to give a dishonest answer. They knew their answer was dishonest and so did the Lord. His answer was honest. If they were not honest with John, they could not be honest with Him. He was not going to tell mere men of His divine authority when they were not honest - nor were they willing to be honest. Their strategy of finding a legal way to condemn the Lord of getting His authority from God, failed. They could not charge Him with blasphemy against the law nor could they charge Him with insurrection against the Romans by saying His authority was given by men.

The parable the Lord Jesus told the people, and the leaders would have heard it all, was about Israel as a nation that was like a vineyard. The leaders and maybe most of the listeners would have recognized the imagery from the Old Testament scriptures. The lord of the vineyard was God who was expecting the fruits of righteousness, holiness and true worship as a result of the blessings He had given them and He wasn't getting anything. The prophets were the servants who came to get what belonged to God and sent them away rejected, empty-handed and injured. The listeners would have easily understood the parable unto this point.

Then the Lord inserted a part of the story that not only answered the questions they had asked, but prophetically exposed those leaders of the Jews for what they were - and they knew He meant them without having to hear a word of explanation. The man who planted the vineyard (God) who had sent servants (the prophets), now sent His own son (Jesus). But just like they had been planning to trap Jesus with so they could kill Him, the story exposed the whole plot without giving them a way to charge Him. He had just told them a story. He also gave them the rest of the story. Those who reject Him will be rejected and destroyed. In effect, He cast the nation out and has given the blessings of the Gospel to the whole world. God turned from Israel to the Gentile world. This is where we come in. We have a message to tell the nations of the world in our day. It is important we give full diligence to this important mandate.

The people who heard and knew what the meaning of the parable was, worriedly voiced their hope that this would not happen. We need to remember the power of the Gospel we preach, the impact for good or bad it has on people, and the results that follow. The Lord quoted a familiar psalm they would have often sung at that time of year. The warning was given that those who rejected Christ when He first came will experience His just judgment when He comes again. As one wrote in a poem, "Nothing but rejected light will doom a soul to endless night."

What is authority and from where does it come?

It needs to be used in the country and at home -
So those living there will know there are lines
Over which we don't step to order and guide our times
In ways that peace and order can be maintained
By the use of authority and the power it contains.
When used properly it is a wonderful tool -
To keep both adults and children from acting the fool.

In the Lord, that authority was to fulfill God's plan
Of redemption and the Gospel to bring blessing to man.
His authority wasn't usurped, it was given to be used -
To bless the needy, not like those leaders who abused
The authority and position that was expected of them.
Their plan after their rejection was to crucify Him
Whose righteous acts in contrast to theirs, blessed the people -
Those schemers knew well, not one of them was His equal.

The parable he told left in no one's mind the question
About what He meant and how it would affect them.
What would they do with Jesus needed an answer from each?
Would they ignore what He said, or act on what He did preach?
It is really no different now because people still choose.
Will they believe and be saved, or will their soul they lose?
There is no neutral ground when it comes to our own reply -
Will we believe on Him now or will we in our sins die?

"There is no question, Father, about the seriousness of that time when the Lord Jesus was speaking in the temple. People knew it was going to be one way or another - no middle ground. May Thy servant remember at there still is no middle ground - no easy road for sinners to be saved. Christ had to die, and they must come to Him for salvation no matter what the cost. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 20:19-47

THEY WATCHED --- HE PERCEIVED

The on-going antagonism of the priests and scribes was because they understood the claim of the Lord Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. They would not accept Him but could find no way to condemn Him for this claim. Everything that was happening in His life was supporting this claim. There are many people today that deny the deity of Christ, and many other even deny the existence of God. Deliberate rejection of God, Christ and the truths of God's word, results in deliberate blindness that we cannot take away from the eyes of unbelievers. Our strongest witness of truth to such people is the meekness and lowliness of Christ lived out in our lives. It is very difficult for watching people to refute visible evidence of godliness seen in human lives.

There were two ways in which the opposition continued in their search to find a reason to kill the Lord Jesus. One was political - to find a way to get the Romans to deal with Him, and the other was religious - to get Him to make a judgment contrary to the law. To give tribute to Caesar was very offensive to the Jews. The tax system was corrupt then as it is now, and the money was used in offensive and unjust ways the same as tax money is used now. So, what are we to do? By telling them to produce a coin of exchange they used themselves, the Lord made His first point. They themselves were using that money for their own benefit even though they were secretly condemning it. Caesar's image was on one side and his title "Pontifex Maximus" ("the greatest potentate") was on the other. By using this coinage, they had shown they accepted the authority behind the use of the coin. The Lord's answer simply meant: if you travel on roads made by taxes, are protected by armies paid for by taxes, enjoy privileges in any way that are provided by taxes - then pay Caesar. We are to do the same today in spite of the misuse of funds we know is happening.

Then the Lord told those watching of a greater responsibility. "Render to God the things that are God's." God only is the "Pontifex maximus." There is no higher authority than He. Right in their midst was God in human flesh. He perceived their question was an attempt to refute the fact that He was the Messiah. If they were true to God, they would give to God their all - including themselves. We have that privilege and responsibility today of presenting our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable (priestly) service." If God is our "Pontifex Maximus" this will be the desire of our hearts.

The silence of those who watched Him, testifies to the fact they understood perfectly what He said. The next question that was asked came from the Sadducees, and was along the line of a religious test. Those men had already taken a position religiously, so were obviously wanting to provoke a reply that would give a

reason to condemn the Lord in some way. Is there life after death? That was their real question. Those who had watched Him to catch a legal reason against Him, failed because He perceived the real issue behind the question. The same thing happened in this illustrated, and in a sense foolish, question they asked. The Lord Jesus went behind their question to the fact of resurrection - life after death. Many people today do not believe in life after death. They are willfully limited in their minds to a preconceived position, the same as the Sadducees. They limit themselves to consider the reality of things only from the length of their own personal experience. In His answer the Lord qualified and corrected what we know about angels. Angels are real, angels do not die and angels do not marry or procreate.

Marriage is a part of our life now. It is a condition of this age that people die because of sin. There wouldn't be a human being alive if there was no marriage and the producing of off-spring. When there is "no more death" there will be no more need of people being born. Humans are not angels nor will they become angels, but will be, after death, as the angels who do not marry and produce off-spring. The family relationship in heaven has only God as our Father. Interpersonal relationships will be on a different basis than the family relationship we have here. Even the Sadducees who knew the scriptures and the story of Moses at the burning bush would remember God told Moses, "I AM (not I was) the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." This means He is now still their God - not that He was only their God when they lived on earth. God is the God of those who are living now even beyond the death-day they had on earth. The existentialism of the Sadducees was denied and that atheistic philosophy was dealt with in a very authoritative and dignified way so that they didn't ask any more questions of Him.

After the Sadducees questions were silenced, a lawyer asked Him about the greatest of the commandments. The Lord answered him with the question, "What think ye of Christ?" The Jews had great hope in the coming Messiah who would come from David. They answered, "David's son." The Messiah they hoped for was David's son and they were correct in their answer. So, the explanation the Lord gave was in the form of another question after quoting a very pertinent scripture from Psalm 110:1. How would Jehovah, the great I AM, then say to Adonai, the Sovereign Lord, "Thou art my Son ...?" The answer was actually very plain. The Messiah is not just another king, but is David's own Lord (Sovereign). He was the Son of David according to the flesh, and the Son of God by the resurrection from (among) the dead."

The self-centered, arrogant, crafty, uncaring scribes were the subjects of His public warning to the disciples. In their hostility they were so blinded by hate they could not see, and so deaf by their own self-importance they could not hear. They desired people to see by the way they dressed, they had important positions. The uniforms people often wear today makes them officious and arrogant. They want people to honor them and give them prominent places because of their station in life rather than their moral integrity. Even while claiming this from others, they are foreclosing on widow's houses. Even the long prayers they make is only for show. The more public a person is, the more serious the offenses he commits as far as God is concerned. The more offensive they are, the greater the punishment such people can expect.

Nothing of what we do in life is done without observation.
Things we might think no one knows, God knows each situation.
Questions people ask may have as the objective our condemnation.
God perceives their duplicitous and crafty intention.

There are those who watch and wait for an opportunity
To find a way to make one fall and then escape with impunity.
Their subtle words and questions they hope will give them immunity.
God perceives the dark plans behind their insincerity.

Others who with sanctimonious looks and pious visage seem unflappable -
By their interpretations of God's word use it ways inapplicable.
When the truth is pointed out in the context, they become implacable.
God perceives the ulterior motives they have that are undeniable.

When you see those watching out of narrowed eyes that seem suspicious.
And they have actions and they dress in such a way as to be officious -
And furthermore, they act in such a manner as to appear to others religious.
God perceives it all and carries out His justice in ways most righteous.

When you think there is a problem arising from those with looks askance.
And you feel intimidated, still to do right in the face of adversity, take the chance
To do what you know God wants in spite of others and their critical glance.
God perceives it all, He knows the duplicity, and needed help He grants.

“Gracious Father, may the fellowship and spiritual strength the saints of God enjoyed

yesterday give power to each one to face the tasks of this day. May we each be able and willing to apply the truths Thou dost teach us to every event of this day in a way that will glorify Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

LUKE 21

LOOKING AHEAD.

v.1-4. GIVING AND KEEPING:

- It is not what we give, but what we keep that counts.
- What looks small in the eyes of men, may be large in the eyes of God.
- Do not pass a judgment on an act of the heart.

v.5-19. HEARING AND KNOWING:

- Listen with discernment. The words one speaks may sound good but be false.
- Increase of false teaching [v.8-11] often accompanies false claims made by those who deliberately deceive or those who unwittingly follow them.
- Increase of natural disasters and political upheavals will precede the coming of the Lord.
- Increase of persecution of believers [v.12] will be experienced in many nations, cultures and families.
- Increase of power to witness [v.13-19]: they can take your physical life, but no ultimate harm can come to a disciple. The comment about “put to death” and, “not a hair of your head perish,” is looking at two different aspects of a believers life. The physical life is very distinct from eternal life.

v.20-24. DYING AND SURVIVING:

- The destruction of Jerusalem happened in AD.70.
- Fulfilling of scripture [1Kg.9:6-9; Da.9:26; Mic.3:12].
- Edge of the sword: 1 million Jews died in the war when Titus overcame the rebellion of AD. 70. 97,000 were taken captive into Egypt (Josephus).

v.25-33. SIGNS AND SEASONS:

- Predicted signs [v.25-26].
- Following the signs [v.27].
- Obeying the signs [v.28]:
 - Look around – these things happen.
 - Look up – beyond the event.
 - Stand up – lift up you heads.
 - Shape up – your redemption draweth nigh.
- Trusting the signs [v.31]:
 - These things ... all things [v.31].
- This generation [v.32] – the near view: that generation who lived when He spoke; the far view: the generation before His return.

v.34-38. WATCHING AND PRAYING:

- Avoid sin.
- Be careful how you live.
- Consider the unexpected.
- Do keep in fellowship with God.
- Events predicted by the Lord, will happen.

LUKE 21:1-24

HE LOOKED UP AND SAW...

That week before the Passover was filled with teaching from the Lord Jesus Christ as He prepared His disciples for the work ahead of them after He left. It may have been with a sense of grief He was looking down as the well-dressed scribes strutted about the crowded courtyard of the temple looking very important. The fact is, men look on the outside - only God can see the heart and what is behind our actions and words. If I am conscious of the knowledge of God about my every action and motive, it will preserve me from pride and haughtiness. It will make me conscious of all I do. God Knows that, but He also knows the motive behind it.

When the Lord raised His head and saw those affluent people putting their tithes into the boxes in the temple, He not only knew the amount they gave, but He also knew the amount they kept. Even more

important, He knew the motive behind the giving. "He saw also a poor widow" and even though no one else would have known, He knew she gave everything she had out of love and appreciation for God. She was a true daughter of Abraham who was committed to living by faith. When you have nothing left, to whom do you turn? She knew God well enough to entrust her future to Him. A willing gift of everything is a true sacrifice to God. The way we view our money tells a lot more about us than all of our well thought out words. Quiet, sacrificial, joyful giving to the Lord is of great value to God. Dollars and cents don't give the true value of things in the kingdom of God. When the Lord Jesus looked up and saw what all of those people gave, and there must have been hundreds putting money into those boxes, He said this certain widow woman gave more than all of the others put together. The lesson of giving and keeping is one we need to think about every day as we make decisions regarding the money God has trusted us with.

Many things are happening in our day that has awakened the world to the potential dangers that are everywhere. Some people talk about the wonders of the accomplishments of mankind. We are amazed at the changes that come about so very quickly. A computer, instead of filling a huge room in a building as it once did, now fits in a person's hand. A journey around the world that once took months can now be accomplished in a day. People who once would have died young from disease are able to be helped to live to old age. None of those great advances of mankind is able to stop the things "which will come to pass." The promise of coming judgment and tribulation can not be avoided. The beautiful temple Herod financed was destroyed before all those who saw it completed had died. The future is not secured as a time of peace nor are human beings getting better or becoming more moral and righteous as time passes.

Coming events are casting their shadows before them and the increasing evidence of moral decay and spiritual darkness just makes us more conscious of the teaching of the Lord during those days just before He was crucified. There is an increasing opposition against those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Persecution is on the increase in many parts of the world against Christians by other religions of men. There has been a marked increase in the number of destructive earthquakes and other natural disasters. Between the nations of the world there is a lot of tension, and civil wars in countries are going on with terrible consequences. And yet with all of these things happening even in our day, there are worse times coming.

People in families as well as the general population are opposing those who "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." Leading up to His betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection, the Lord Jesus gave the disciples a preview of what they could expect when the Roman armies under the leadership of Titus would level Jerusalem in 70 AD and kill thousands of Jewish people. Included in that warning, the Lord gave a preview of events that will take place in the distant future. Whether for those living in that time, those living now in the shadow of coming cataclysmic events, or those living in tribulation times yet to come - the reality of salvation is manifest by the way we present what we have as believers to watching people who want to know how we "possess our souls." The Lord watched the people when He was here and knew the motives behind their actions. Under severe testing time unbelieving people watch the people of God, the saints, the children of the Living God to see if they are truly people who live by faith and what and what their faith is in. People in the time when the Lord Jesus was here had their faith in Him because they thought He would restore Israel to its former glory. Only a few had faith in Him as their personal Savior. Today many want to see proof of the existence of God if He brings peace to the nations of earth. Very few put their faith in Him alone to save their soul from hell.

The "times of the Gentiles" began many generations ago when the Jews were carried away as captives to Babylon. From time to time some of them have been able to return to their promised land, but the times of the Gentiles are still not fulfilled. Occasionally something happens in Israel to make people think the children of Israel are finally in control of their own place in God's plan of things. And then again, the pressure comes on them and those nations, even like the United States, lets them down in the face of pressure and they again struggle to maintain their identity.

This type of existence for Israel will continue even after the rapture of the Church. The antichrist and false prophet will appear to favor Israel for awhile but in the last three and a half years of the tribulation, Israel will be in danger of being annihilated. That is when the Son of Man will come in glory and will take the throne of David. Then the times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled.

There is nothing I can give to God that I have not received from Him.
Everything I possess and call "mine" - even life and breath from Him did begin.
So, whatever comes into my hand is only a trust from Him to me to use.
What I get in life and use right, is gain, what I spend wrong, I lose.

The eyes of the Lord are not condemning as such, we really have nothing to fear
As long as we maintain His stewardship well, recognizing that He is near -

Nothing is hidden from the eyes of Him, our Lord and Savior with whom we have to do.
The motives behind all we do in our life, can be blessed if they are true.

"Little is much if God is in it," is a song we occasionally sing.
The Lord who watched giving in the past knows what from our bounty we bring.
There is no point in me pretending, God knows the motive behind each act.
In His omniscient wisdom, He can easily assess each fact.

Unfolding before our eyes now is what the Lord could always see,
Sometimes I don't understand how these events have any effect on me.
Then comes a "wake-up call," and opposition begins to flourish.
It is in times like that I need to make sure my faith I nourish.

Then when the time comes and I am called by others to make a defense -
The Holy Spirit can use what's been given so what I say makes sense.
Accusers will expect me to fail under the pressure they apply to my soul.
But God can make my words to convict when of the Spirit I'm full.

No matter what others say and do, greater is He this is within -
Then he that is in the world with a determination to make me sin.
By God's grace imparted, His strength is perfected in weakness.
He can be glorified in me when I show a Christ-like spirit of meekness.

There is no need to be distressed though times get worse and worse.
The downfall of men and nations is inevitable; all are under sin's curse.
The end of the times of the Gentiles will be when Christ appears in His glory.
God graciously gives us victory now, because we know the end of the story.

O God my Father, there is no question in my mind as to the outcome of history. The unfolding of Thy plans isn't just fascinating to me but it also challenges me to step ahead in faith and keep involved in the march of grace and glory that is going on in these troubled times. What joy it is to hear of others coming into Thy kingdom. I praise Thee for all of this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 21:19. *"In your patience possess ye your souls." ("By standing firm you will gain life." NIV)*

APPEARANCE.

At first glance at the box, you would miss with your eyes,
What the woman had given, that God so highly prized.
Others who came by wanted those around to see,
And think what they gave, made them very holy.
Man looks - and values, by terms of the world,
God has a different way of measuring; that to mankind is hard.

We look at the outside - God looks at the heart.
We look at the finish - God looks at the start.
What my hand does starts from deep inside me.
What goes in the box is not its true value to see.
A conscious awareness of living before God;
Will give to my actions a sense of true worth.

Looking around at all the things going on,
Make some folks afraid, because hither and yon
Events that are happening in significant places,
That make them think now, is when the time of "the end" is.
But I must make clear when to others I speak,
These shadows are warnings; God is making them think.

Because these things happen both at home and afar;
This is only the beginning, of events that will jar
All men from the lethargic state they are in;
The last of the "last days" has only begun.
So by faith I stand firm and lay claim on my life,
So that all that is seen does not turn me aside.

To my eyes, it seems like the fig tree sends shoots;
So, the coming seems nearer the closer I look.
The effect that it has, is to make me aware,

That the coming of the Lord really is drawing near.
I must live such, each day, before those all around;
So that they too are ready when God's trumpet will sound.

"It is true, O gracious Father, that thoughts of the coming of the Lord, does purify me. I do not want to be ashamed before the Lord when He comes - neither because of what I am doing or not doing. I really would love it if this was the day the Lord calls the Church home. If His coming is at a later time - give me the insight to never let any barrier arise that would bring dishonor to His name. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 21:25-38

LOOK UP AND LIFT UP

The picture of the future the Lord Jesus Christ verbalized in those last meetings at the temple certainly painted a gloomy, dark future ahead for the nation of Israel. Some people resent those who predict dark days ahead. They naively think everything will soon get better and all we need to do to make that happen, is to maintain a positive outlook. The idea of evil increasing and moral degradation as a reason for judgment - they don't want to hear. The Lord used the word "perplexity," which really means at wit's end as a word to describe how people in that coming day will feel. The word "waves," indicates things will be out of control by any or all men. "Roaring" create confusion and chaos, and people will not know where to turn. With "hearts failing for fear," they will be "looking after" those things that fall upon the earth in such a short time with the expectation of dying at any moment.

Things on earth are not presently like that, but the shadows of these coming events are already being cast. What are believers to do in these times or those dark days in the future when the whole world is in upheaval? Most people will have their faces down and will be hunched over in fear seeking shelter from the disastrous events happening all around them. The Lord intends those who know Him and put their faith in Him, to look up and stand up erect so others around may see the faces of believers lit up with expectation looking for the appearance of the Lord. If people can see someone standing erect and with neck craning as high as possible, they will know something more is going to happen. The tendency of the disciples when the Lord Jesus was crucified was to hide in fear and keep hidden from those around. But they knew the promise of the Lord, that they would receive "power from on high," was real. When that power was evident, they looked up, lifted up their heads and stood up to testify for the Lord. People "took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

It is our privilege to be identified with Him today, so our faces should be seen looking upward as we wait for our Lord to come for us. Our backs should be erect and our steps firm as we continue to walk in the light of the word of God, in the middle of increasing darkness everywhere we look. People are afraid of what is coming next. The unknown is happening in spite of false optimism that deceptive leaders and teachers give. Designating places to pray and the words to use; controlling the parts of the Bible that can be read publicly, dictating the location, time and number of people who can come together to worship God - are all dark shadows foretelling coming events. Shining "uplooking" faces and the straight backs of God's people in spite of all of this, gives power to the words they say.

When the cataclysmic events the Lord Jesus Christ taught the people about in the temple begin to be felt in their reality, it won't go on and on for a lengthy time. The generation alive then will see it in its' entirety. The word of God will not change. It will happen as the Lord said. That is reason enough to be committed to consistent, godly living now as we are giving our testimony to the veracity of the word of God. As for believers today, we can heed the injunction to "take heed" to ourselves, to "watch" and to "pray always" in view of what we know and why we are still here. We can apply these urgent commands to ourselves to look up, lift up, stand up, pay attention, keep our eyes and hearts open and pray that God will give us opportunities to testify and present the Gospel to this generation. They may be the ones who go into the terrible times of tribulation unprepared unless they hear the way of salvation now.

The example of the Lord during those last few days of public ministry show us the value of keeping at the work to which He has called us - whether it be preaching the Gospel or teaching the Lord's people. He camped out on the Mount of Olives at night and went back early in the morning to again teach God's truth to those who gathered early to hear Him. There would have been crowds of people from many distant places who would have only this opportunity to hear Him, believe on Him and be saved. This is a challenge to us to do whatever is necessary, go where we are sent and pay whatever cost is needed to reach lost souls before this day of grace is ended.

The future for earth does not look bright ahead.

There's a lot of doom and gloom to face instead.
But all of this the Savior previously said -
Just before He died.

When all the dark signs begin to come to pass.
Be aware it will get worse, but it will not last
Forever, and those who themselves on the Savior cast -
Will by His grace survive.

For us today there are lessons to learn.
We must from all forms of careless living turn
Lest those unbelievers around God's offered grace do spurn -
And will find no place to hide.

We are not looking for the tribulation.
From the consequences of God's wrath, we have salvation.
But we should look up and speak with dedication -
And daily in our Savior abide.

The days will get darker, of that there's no doubt.
We need to be alert to needs as we look; all about.
And at the same time, be erect and awake as we await the shout -
When the Lord calls us to His side.

"I am not sure Father , how many responded to the warnings of the Lord Jesus in those final days of His ministry on earth But I am thankful that in spite of what the people did or did not do, is did not stop Him from going to the cross and finishing His saving work. May Thy presence and power enable this servant to finish the work Thou hast given me to do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 22

THE SON OF MAN DELIVERED TO DIE.

v.1-6. THE PLOT, TO TAKE THE LORD JESUS:

The Conspirators:

- Priests, men of sanctity; scribes, men of learning; Satan, the evil murderer; Judas, the treacherous disciple; captains, men of authority.

The Betrayal:

- The covenant – money; 30 pieces of silver; the price of a slave.
- The opportunity – in the absence of the multitude; they feared the people.

v.7-18. THE PASSOVER, TO SHARE WITH THE LORD JESUS:

- The purpose of the Passover: to remember past deliverance from bondage; to remember how God freed them with His mighty hand; to remember the shed blood of the paschal lamb.
- The procedure: follow a man bearing a pitcher; speak to the master; find the room; make ready the meal.
- The participation: His "desire to eat" this important feast; His taking leave of it, "shall not eat", because it serves no more purpose.
It was fulfilled when Christ "our Passover was sacrificed..." [1Cor.5:7].
It was fulfilled in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.
A more glorious redemption is remembered than the deliverance from Egypt.
The legal feasts are done; the Gospel feast is now spread.

v.19-20. THE PURPOSE TO REMEMBER THE LORD JESUS:

The breaking of bread: food for the redeemed soul who is nourished and satisfied by the atonement of Christ for our sins. We are now partakers of Him and are joined to Him forever.

The taking of the cup: His blood has made atonement for the soul. A new covenant is ours based on the giving of His life for us.

v.21-38. THE PLAN TO PROCLAIM THE LORD JESUS:

The Betrayer:

Was one of them twelve who followed Him.
The effect of the treason – goes to die.
The threat to the traitor – "woe to that man."
The fear upon the rest.

The Strife:

- Because of pride and a desire for a place above others.
- The reproof was gentle but clear.
- To do good is better than to look great.
- To do good is the best way to be a benefactor as a disciple of Christ.
- To be like Christ is the calling of a disciple.

The Commendation:

- They stayed with Him when others deserted Him.
- He appreciated their “continuing” in His trials.
- The recompense is the blessings of the Gospel now and the food of His table in the kingdom.

The Denial:

Satan is still at work doing the same as he did in the time of Job.
 Faith will quench the fiery darts of Satan.
 Even when we fail, it is not fatal. Christ is at work on behalf of His own.
 The charge to Peter is to help others as he was helped of God.
 Peter’s resolve was genuine but Christ knows us better than we know ourselves.

The Review:

The Lord has brought us through difficulties. He is a good Master and service for Him is good service.
 They needed nothing else.
 People are not going to be favorable. Enemies will be more fierce. Expect trouble.

v.39-46. THE PRAYER TO PREPARE THE LORD JESUS:

The Garden:

His disciples followed Him in the night to the garden. They all went to that place of privacy.
 He exhorted His disciples to pray and then went to pray by Himself.
 He resigns Himself to His Father’s will. Sorrow can make one weary. An angel appeared and strengthened Him.
 He was supported in His soul-sufferings. He used the angel’s assistance only for strength, not for help in warfare. The word means “putting strength into Him.”
 When in need; when in agony, when in travail of soul; prayer is the only real recourse we have.

v.47-53. THE PERMISSION GRANTED BY THE LORD JESUS:

The Arrest:

The mark: a kiss of betrayal.
 The sword: Christ could cast them to the ground with a word.
 Luke tells how Christ excused the blow and cured the injury by His power, His mercy and His goodness.
 “Their hour” allowed them to do their own will.

v.54-62. THE PRESSURE OF IDENTIFYING WITH JESUS:

The Fall:

- Peter followed “afar off”: “followed” to satisfy his conscience; “afar off” to save his reputation and his life.
- He associates with the high priest’s servants rather than his Master.
- He disclaims knowing Christ; disowns following Christ; he denied being a disciple of Christ three times.

The Recovery:

- The cock crowing created climactic consequences.
- The “look” of the Lord Jesus was condemning, convicting, concerned, concentrated, compassionate, consuming, cleansing – the grace of God at work.

The Council:

Abused Him; accused Him; attacked Him.
 Challenged Him; condemned Him; convicted Hi,
 They were unfair and unjust; illegal and irresponsible.

LUKE 22:1-13**THEN**

Great multitudes came to Jerusalem for the feast of unleavened bread and the Passover. These two national feasts that came at the same time had teaching the Jews would have understood to a degree. Unleavened bread was to remind them of the moral condition God expects of His people, when they gathered to review the great deliverance, He gave them from the bondage in Egypt. There are occasions when God’s people are in a condition when God can use them. That usually follows some special experience they have had with

God following a time of fellowship at a conference gathering of believers or some traumatic event that brings us back to where we get our priorities in order once again. While the opportunity for such spiritual renewal is there for everyone, most people only see the enjoyment of the time spent with others from distant places, the excitement of being in a large crowd and singing "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" together, and miss the real and lasting blessing spiritual awakening brings.

A serious problem arises occasionally at such times. We are tested as to the reality of our commitment - and maybe even the reality of the confession of faith in Christ. Judas went three years appearing to many to be a genuine disciple. Satan will try at the spiritual high points of our lives to bring us down. He, the enemy of God and of the souls of men, made it a point to be in Jerusalem at that particular time. We don't know the way this implacable enemy gains his information, but perhaps he was there because he knew great crowds had historically gathered there at that time of year. The leadership of Israel was seeking to kill Jesus and the archenemy of the Lord Jesus Christ who had been defeated by Him before, used those men and Judas, to bring about the death of Jesus - or so they thought. We know it was "by the determinant counsel and foreknowledge of God, Jesus was crucified and slain." This "son of perdition," Judas, was probably trying to force the hand of the Lord Jesus into acting on behalf of the nation and liberating Israel from Rome. He may have expected a high position in the coming kingdom.

In This Plot to take the Lord Jesus and force Him to act miraculously on behalf of the nation, Judas allied with Satan, then he allied with the wicked leadership of religion that had their own agenda. It reminds us again that among God's people there are found those who are there for their own personal reasons and have never been born again by the Spirit of God. They are schemers with an agenda that can be quickly controlled by Satan if he finds out about it. Judas was not unaware of The Plot to destroy Jesus. As a thief, a traitor and a son of perdition, he was "without God, without Christ and without hope in the world," and sought no place of repentance.

The Lord had probably eaten The Passover feasts with His disciple in the years before when they were with Him. When the time came for this Passover feast, there was something special about this one. "With desire I have desired to eat *this* Passover with you before I suffer." This Passover was the last one. All other Passovers were held as a remembrance for a past deliverance and a hope for the future "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." When Peter and John went to get things ready in the "upper room," they went in faith they had learned to exercise during the time they followed Jesus. They found the man bearing the pitcher of water coming toward them just as Jesus had said. When they followed the water-bearer to the house, and spoke to the man responsible for the house, he showed them the large furnished upper room, just as Jesus said. They got everything prepared for The Passover, just as Jesus said.

When we receive directions from God there is no reason to question what is obviously His will. The only question they asked was, "Where...?" The rest was very clear and precise. The actions of faith are contrasted with the actions of deceit and betrayal. When the course of events lead up to a place to fulfill a work about which we don't have all the information at first, it is only right that we should act on what we know. Then the Lord will reveal what has been withheld from us up until then. When great crowds gathered and it seemed right to Judas, then Satan entered. Popularity and favor with the ungodly are not necessarily evidence of God's will. When the time comes that some action must be taken about a matter, then go ahead and act in faith on what you already know is right. Anything farther than that will be revealed to us as the Holy Spirit guides, just like the man bearing the pitcher of water.

When everything seems wonderful and popularity increases -
When more are cheering loudly for us and sounds of opposition ceases -
Then take heed to yourself because our enemy is not dead.
He can bring upon us quickly the things we most do dread.

When people question truth and even God's existence deny.
When there are those who think influence, they can buy.
Then the only course to take is to turn and go away.
An opportunity may arise to give them light another day.

When you wonder what is next and what you're supposed to do.
When because of things that happen, you wonder if you are through.
Then remember it is in weakness God demonstrates His grace
Through those whose strength is in the Lord, in Him they put their faith.

When the report comes to your ears and you know that it is wrong.
When for some unknown reason deception seems so strong -
Then look up to Him who called you to do this very thing.

The time will come when to the Lord the fruit of labor you can bring.

When the doctor comes and tells you, you don't have very long to live.
When you've passed along what you've received and there's no more to give.
Then take courage because He promised with us through the valley He will go.
The seed we have sown in the harvest field, He will make some day to grow.

When we have finished our course and over the years we look back.
When we realize our failures and the things which we do lack -
Then just leave it all with Him who knows the motive behind each deed.
He will be glorified in what has worth, and when His guidance we did heed.

"Father, as the Lord drew near to the cross, there were things He wanted to do to fulfill Thy will and please Thee. Please give me the understanding and wisdom to finish what is Thy will so I can please Thee. I am gradually slowing down but I do not want to leave undone those things that I can do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 22:14-30

THE NEW COVENANT

Remembering past events and the significance they have to the present generation has historically been an important part of national life. Actually, in some cases it affects the national psychic of the people, giving them a special sense of identity with those in the past. One of the purposes behind feasts, holidays and activities that remind us of past important events is to instill loyalty in those who live in the good of what happened but were not there, so it cost them nothing. The Passover was such an event. This particular Passover was important because it signaled the end of the shadows and types linked with the Old Testament. A New Testament, a New Covenant, was taking its place that was the reality of which the other was a foreshadowing. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast."

When the Lord Jesus Christ took the bread in His hands, the first thing He did was give thanks for it. He was not resenting what was going to happen to Him. When He broke it and gave it to them, He was testifying to the fact that He was the Bread of God which came down from heaven so that we might be able to partake of Him and live forever with Him. We become partakers of Him and His life when we are placed into the Body of Christ. "The corn of wheat" that fell into the ground and died has brought forth "much fruit." "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." He gladly submitted to the will of His Father, and by His death, burial and resurrection many have been blessed by this emblem of the New Covenant brought to us through the Gospel.

The cup which He took in His hands and gave thanks for in the same way, indicated the shedding of His blood would establish this covenant. A life forfeited for another is the basis of all covenants. Each person who enters a covenant with another gives their life for the other. Marriage testifies, that each die to his and her self and now lives for the benefit of the other partner in the covenant of marriage. "Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it," is the testimony to that fact. The shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of this new relationship we have with Him. Communion with God is established on what was accomplished when the "precious blood of Christ" was shed for our redemption. In this significant remembrance-feast we keep weekly on the "first day of the week," the bread is the evidence of the life of the Lord that was "given" for us. The cup is evidence of His blood that was "shed" for us. These two emblems are tremendously impacting by their simplicity. The meaning goes way beyond the elaborate rituals and forms men have devised, to the very Person and work of Christ. Nothing of men comes in between to cheapen the value of what has been done for us. Because this sacrificial work of redemption was "determined" by God does not mean that we are absolved from the responsibility of that decision made. Judas, the religious leaders, Pilate, Herod, the soldiers, the people and we who have received the benefit of the cross-work of the Lord have to accept the consequences of that action. When we receive the Savior personally, the guilt of sin has been taken on our behalf by Him.

Judas had been there at The Passover but had gone by the time this testament of the New Covenant was given. How typical of failing, imperfect man was the "strife" between those who still had the taste of the bread and cup on their lips. They were still expecting the kingdom to be established that weekend and were each hoping for a high position.

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride.
He that is humble shall ever have,
God to be His guide."

Humility is a hard lesson to learn and the lack of it deserves a rebuke. The Lord Himself was the greatest example of humility and they were taught by that example when He washed their feet.

After the words of rebuke from the Lord, came words of encouragement as He gave them a brief look into the future. Those men loved Him and were willing to die for Him. Yet He knew they would soon flee and forsake Him in His trial. Failure is very different from the plotted and planned evil Judas engaged in. There is suffering and cost to following Christ, but there is blessing that follows. The Lord let these men have a little glimpse of the kingdom when Christ reigns and when fellowship and service will be shared by those who followed Him. Those two things go together today - fellowship with the Lord and service for Him go together. We come together on the first day of the week to break bread and drink from the cup in fellowship with the Lord and with each other. Then we can serve Him acceptably with appropriate reverence and godly fear. May we never consider either of these privileges to be of little importance.

It is true we don't always say what we mean, or do what we really should.
In the passing events of life, it is possible to not give our Lord
The first place in our life so that through us he can be seen -
But at the table of the New Covenant spread, there is evidence He is Supreme.

The Passovers are done, there is no further reason to dwell on shadows and types,
When we have the reality of the New Covenant before us, and the Lamb who died is alive.
And dwells with His people empowering their service by the Spirit He sent.
The bread and the cup remind us that sin's price was paid for at the greatest expense.

It is not some casual observance when we gather with Him in our midst.
As guests we have been made to remember that we are not our own, but His.
He is our Bread of life, His blood shed for remission of our sins.
He is the theme of our remembrance in prayers, our thoughts and our hymns.

To remember what He has accomplished and the legal requirements of God He met -
Keeps us on track in our thoughts, so that we will in no way forget
Who He is in Himself, and what he fully accomplished for us.
With sweet sorrow and yet sweeter gladness we testify in Him is our trust.

By faith we weekly remember the One who at that first appointed feast -
Gave us the blessing of fellowship with Him from the greatest to the least.
We all come as those He redeemed, as a kingdom of priests we give
Our praise, our thanks and our worship to Him in whom now we live.

"O Father, may the awe, the emotion, the grace and the joy that is evident at the Lord's Supper, never escape those of us who gather weekly to our Lord Jesus Christ to remember Him and show His death until He comes again. Amen."

YOUR FAITH

We never really know very much that is going on around by what we see. Our limitations hinder us if we are not careful, to thinking everything important is able to be seen. However, when we stop to think about ourselves, our lives, our past and our future, we realize that the important things are those that cannot be seen by natural eyes but by the eyes of faith. Who would ever think that Satan prays to claim power over a person so he can test them in a similar way to the testing of the Lord in the wilderness? Only we do not have to go anywhere but here to be tempted and tested by Satan. He wanted to blow away the wheat from Simon's life and leave only chaff. But the Great Divine Intercessor was also praying for Peter that his faith would not fail. Peter's faith never did fail although his courage and hope did. His love for the Lord and trust in Him did not fail.

The intercession of the Lord goes on and prevails when Satan prays that he might sift us. Job's sifting was severe and in every experience of life except dying. God was constantly aware of all that was happening in his life. As a result of Job's sifting time, many of God's people have been strengthened in the trials of life they are going through. As a result of Peter's testing time when his courage was gone, his sword put away, and the voices of accusation came against him - yet his faith drew him outside where he wept bitterly. His faith brought him to the place called Calvary, where he saw the Savior he loved, die. His faith sent him running to the tomb on the first day of the week when Christ rose from among the dead. His faith kept him in the upper room and then led him to speak publicly for the Lord on the day of Pentecost as the "Lord's messenger in the Lord's message" until his faith led him to be crucified upside down at Rome.

Now it is our turn to let our faith be real, Satan wants to sift us in this ungodly scene where we live. He wants

more than our courage and hope to fail - he wants our faith to fail. The same Great Divine Intercessor prays for us who prayed for Peter. The same Father who heard the Lord Jesus Christ pray on Peter's behalf hears His prayers for us. The Holy Spirit also makes intercession for us with a sense of urgency way beyond our own ability to pray when we are in desperation.

As the Lord looked ahead to what was about to happen to Him, He prepared His disciples for what was going to be their responsibility in the future. When they were sent out previously to declare to Israel the good news of the kingdom of God, the time they were away was comparatively short and the commission they had received was quickly accomplished. Now the commission they would receive soon would be different. It involved preparation and a willingness to go into places of serious danger and would last for the rest of their lives. The scriptures were going to be fulfilled regarding His death, burial and resurrection. The disciples from now on were going to be His public representatives. That was all they had to know at that time so, "It is enough." In other words, "This subject is closed."

In our service and life for the Lord Jesus Christ, we do not have to know the outcome of thing before we start. It is enough that our faith in Christ assures us that this is what He wants for us at this time. As we go forward in faith, the way will open up before us. In a similar way they followed the Lord to the Garden of Gethsemane on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, so our Lord has the right to expect us to follow Him who "left us an example that we should follow in His steps," even though we may not know where or why. He may lead us to where we have our own experience with "strong crying and tears." There will be times when we find ourselves alone and no one even cares, let alone understands what we are passing through. In such times our faith in God becomes more real to us than at other times. Complete trust in times of desperation doesn't mean we have no faith at other times. But in those times of sifting or maybe serious challenge as to our commitment to Christ and His work - our faith in Him is put to the test.

Peter's use of the sword was a stumbling attempt in a moment of passion to defend his Lord. Who can enter into what the Lord passed through in His sorrow in the Garden of Gethsemane (the press)? Who can really understand the agony that makes sweat look like blood? Who can feel the loneliness when those you were counting on to share your pain are sleeping? But we can understand and feel the urgent bravado of Peter with a sword in his hand. And we can sense in a little measure what he must have felt when he saw the bloody sweat streaks on the face of his Lord. And we can experience the bitter anger at the deceitful kiss of Judas who Peter had known for more than three years. We can experience the guilty feelings of one who was awakened from sleep when he knew he should be praying. We can understand the first actions of one who is ashamed of himself and wants to make amends. A sword in a sheath by one's side would give a sense of hope to one who has failed and choose to die rather than fail the one you love again. But it was that his "faith fail not" the Lord prayed for, not that his courage would fail not.

May we all be impressed with the fact that the object of our faith is the Lord Himself and our confidence must remain in Him alone. Self-confidence comes and goes and may be entirely wrong. Confidence in others can easily be misplaced and it may not be wise. Unfailing faith in our Lord Jesus Christ will give us strength in our weakness, courage in testing, hope when in darkness, vision when challenged and peace in troubled times.

We watch an infant child with arms extended high.
Simple faith by its nature means a mother hears the cry
And reaches down to comfort, to feed and to heal.
The object of maternal love responds in faith that's real.

The youth has been away from home but now is coming back.
Hands were full when leaving but now everything they lack
Has led that wayward person to turn again to home
In faith knowing that there is one who loves in spite of what he's done.

The gathered company are dressed the best for they are there to see
Two people declare their love and faith to believe implicitly
That this one they are now to marry deserves full faith and trust.
For life they make this commitment in testimony to us.

The businessman shakes hands as an agreement has been reached.
In faith the words agreed upon make it incumbent upon each
To keep the word, they have given to fulfill their obligation.
Faith is used in business life in almost every situation.

The two white-haired people sit and quietly look at one another.

For years they have shared everything in fair and foul weather.
Each had faith in the other although they speak a lot of faith.
Trust is a constant reality that they share with simple grace.

The child, the youth, the older ones all need to have faith in Christ.
That comes when we are born again, and start over in a new life.
Our faith in Him affects every aspect of faith by which we live.
In faith we leave the future with God when our all to Him we give.

"Father, sometimes I am not able to tie the words together quite right, but I know Thee, love Thee and trust Thee to make from my feeble attempts at communion and fellowship, a result that will honor and glorify Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 22:32. *"But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."*

TESTING TIME.

Three years of watching, listening, instructions without comparison -
Satan's subtlety: temptation in a weak spot -
A desire for money - never satisfied - claiming the thoughts.
Covetousness looking for more.
Smiling faces - but not smiling eyes: a covenant - with men or the devil?
A promise made in the darkness of a lost soul to lost souls.
An opportunity for betrayal of the best for the worst -
A fatal kiss in the darkness.
JUDAS FAILED THE TEST!

A table cleared of remnants of the past - the Passover is done.
A desire expressed for fellowship, before terrible suffering -
Symbols of a Person: "My body - My blood."
Communal loaf and cup to express oneness in Christ -
The taste of bread and wine still on surly lips - "who is greatest?"
"Self" is not dead, even when the Highest is among them.
I am better than you because of - whatever reason you choose.
The darkness of "self" at the place of highest fellowship.
THE DISCIPLES FAILED THE TEST!

A face to face conversation between Master and servant -
The desire of Satan is to claim the man, and ruin him.
The Master prays - simply, basically, for the key - faith not failing.
The Master identifies Himself with His servants.
Loud affirmations of fidelity sound out dramatically, "I am ready..."
Cautions are given - no doubt received sulkily, "I am strong already."
The sound of sword pulled from the sheath, "I am ready to fight."
In the dark night by a fire. "I know Him not." A rooster crows.
PETER FAILED THE TEST!

I am here, now, in this place and time of testing for the sake of the Master.
Questions come: "How do you know?" "What makes you think you're right?"
Challenges come: "We don't do that here." "No, not like that."
Opposition comes: "Take your Gospel to the heathen."
Am I here because the Master wants me here, or are my motives pure before Him?
Am I trying to please people, or am I God's true servant without partiality?
Am I getting a "word from the Lord" or wanting the praise of men?
I am here in the dark trying to evaluate myself and my work.
CAN I PASS THE TEST?

"O my gracious Father: I hardly know the treachery of my own heart. I wonder if my attitude, my life-style, my commitment to Thee allows me even a chance of passing the test of fidelity and faithfulness. Are my ways and words appropriate to the needs we are facing in this place? Are the realities of the Gospel being presented in such a way as to give light in the darkness? O my God, please help this frail feeble mortal to, at least in some way, shine some light on the immortal souls around me, that they might live and see the Light of Thy truth and grace. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 22:47-71

YOUR HOUR

In my mind's journey to the Mount of Olives where we first came upon eight sleeping men and then further into the Garden of Gethsemane another group of three sleeping men - I am sensing not the calm of a normal night, but the tension of expectancy even in the restless sleeping men. They had prayed, slept, been awakened, prayed and slept again. Beyond those that last hundred feet or more, the Lord Jesus Christ lay on the ground praying. But there I must stop because the holy ground ahead is for Divine Persons only. The Spirit of God has given us some of what was spoken there that affects us. "This cup" is nothing like the other cups the Lord shared with His disciples. In that personal cup was that which He alone could partake of and of which He alone could feel the effects. "Not My will" again defies my ability to discern the fullness of its meaning. He came to seek and save the lost - we know that because He said so. He came to fulfill all righteousness. He was going to be lifted up and draw all men unto Himself. So "Not my will" is something very personal between the Father and the Son. I can imagine perhaps in a little sense what it is to be estranged from someone because of perceived wrongs that may or may not be true. But knowing this could never happen between Divine Persons, it would have to mean something else. The divisions of responsibility in their working is to a certain extent, revealed in the scripture. For the Lord Jesus to be "the Savior of the world," He had to be "the Lamb of God which taketh (beareth) away the sin of the world." In order for Him to do this, it had to be done by Him alone, while the righteous justice of God had to be carried out to its fullest. This He had to do alone. This cup was what the Father sent Him for and was the will of a Righteous God.

The kiss of betrayal of Judas prompted the quick action of Peter's sword although he obviously did not know how to handle a sword. The Lord Jesus must have picked that ear up off the ground when He healed the severed ear and said, "No more of this." Then turning His attention to the leaders of the arresting group, He challenged their illegal action - but told them this dark hour of human history was theirs. Darkness reigned, not only the natural darkness of that night, but the moral and spiritual darkness when Satan controlled the actions of men. In the course of our remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Garden of the presses, we are caused to pause and remember the "Dark night the Lord passed through, e'er He found the sheep that was lost." We are out of our realm of thought and experience if we try to go beyond the words of the scripture. There are times in our fellowship and communion with God when we have to stay where we are and worship at the fountain of the truth we know, lest we speculate and go where our finite minds would fumble about in areas of truth and experience that are limited only to those who are infinite.

I can understand Peter's action with the sword. To see the betrayer, kiss the One he betrayed, and to see the crowd of armed men gathered to take your best Friend and Master away in bonds, stirs the blood to boil in passion against such injustice. But then to hear the Lord tell them, "This is your hour," and surrender to them without any attempt to justify Himself in words, or take action using infinite and divine power - would cause one to think, "We are done. It's all over. The kingdom is not coming. The King has surrendered." Disappointment in the outcome of events in the garden would be intense. And yet Peter followed afar off. Perhaps he remembered vaguely some of what he had been told and was waiting for the Lord to take action later. We cannot determine how and what God is going to do in His own will and time. But we can be loyal to Him and trust His word to be accomplished. Our faith is not to be placed in the outcome of events but in the One who brings everything to pass according to His will and in His own time.

The denial of Peter cuts very close when I call to mind all the of my own life. A quick denial of association with the Lord Jesus Christ may happen because of embarrassment at being associated with One who is bound, condemned and standing before a council of leaders. One denial leads to another that is more emphatic when each challenge comes quickly after another. But as time passes and one gets more comfortable with his surroundings and seems to be accepted by the crowd, and the trial of your friend goes on and on - and He doesn't seem any closer to freedom than at the beginning, then you have a tendency to let your guard down. Satan had desired to sift Peter as wheat and make him out to be only chaff, and it seemed like it was working.

In the normal course of life there are not a lot of challenges against our faith. But when you cut a man's ear off and it was healed, you can become a person of note before you know it. When those challenges come it is much easier to deny an accusation than to stand up and be counted for what is right, when everyone else is united against what is right. From there it is not far to go before denial has a tight grip on us. The effects of denial increase the farther it is allowed to go. One thing about Peter though - he was still looking at the Lord and when the Lord turned to look at him, their eyes met. He may have failed in his courage but he did not fail in his love and faith. Our hope and courage may fail, but because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, tears of repentance will turn our hearts again to the God of our salvation.

The Lord Jesus knew well from previous experience what was behind those who asked the question as to Him being the Christ, the Messiah of Israel. He refused to give them a specific answer and told them the reason why He would not answer their question. They wouldn't believe Him because He would give them an honest answer, and because they were dishonest, they wouldn't answer Him at all. The answer He gave to their second question, "Art Thou the Son of God?" He answered clearly and simply, "What you say is true. That is who I am." They had answered their own question. "These things are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." That is who He is, who He was, and who He always will be. The Son of the Living God is who we worship and serve.

To venture into Gethsemane even in my thoughts and mind,
Seems to be too intrusive as to what in that place I would find.
Some places are too sacred to define the meaning of what happened there.
The Father and His unique Son had things only they could share.

I can identify with the tired disciples who were weary in the service of the Lord.
They had gone back and forth to the city and heard new things in His words.
By the time the Passover was done and the Lord Supper introduced to them -
It was hard for them to stay awake and watch and pray with Him.

We give in to our perceived limitations far too often and use as an excuse
The pressures on us are so great we really have to pick and choose
As to what is most important, and often communion with God is what suffers.
There is a very real tendency to pay less and pay attention to others.

Peter was not the only one who was embarrassed by his identification
With the One who was despised and rejected of men, and the cost of separation
Unto Christ and away from the world whose attraction to our flesh appeals.
Denial is one of the avenues open when our commitment to him we conceal.

When the pressure is on to join the crowd and blend in with what is accepted.
Wise is the person who walks away at the first even though by the rest he's rejected.
Far better to be rejected and despised than to join those going to down to hell.
By God's grace we will be preserved from failing faith and given His story to tell.

In faith let us step forward and be counted as those who have counted the cost.
Refuse to associate with the short hour darkness reigns or join with those who are lost.
Our Savior and Lord is the promised Christ no matter what others may say.
He is the Almighty Son of God and by His side let us loyally stay.

"Our Father in heaven, the challenge of each new day brings new pressures to conform to the world. Please grant to Thy servant this day the wisdom to stay away from that which is of the world, and gladly submit to Thy call and Thy guidance. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 23

v.1-12. THE CHARGES AGAINST THE LORD JESUS: Pilate/ Herod.

Three false charges:

Perverting the nation: His accusers charged He was promoting discontent in the people.

Forbidding to give tribute: He had taught they were to give tribute to whom tribute is due.

Challenging the government: He was rejected because He didn't overthrow the Romans. He made clear to Pilate His kingdom was a spiritual one.

Pilate recognized the false charges for what they were.

Herod wanted his curiosity satisfied by seeing a miracle. Poor beggars that wanted relief were granted miracles, but miracles must never be made cheap. Omnipotence is never at the beck and call of an earthly king.

Herod and his men of war were abusive. He didn't listen to John the Baptist, the messenger, so that was enough rejection that the Master/King would not speak to him: no John, no Jesus.

Knowledge without grace leads to mockery and abuse. Agreeing between themselves was the result of uniting against Jesus.

v.13-25. THE COMPARISONS AGAINST THE LORD JESUS: The people/ Barabbas.

Characteristics of men under Satan's control:

Chief priests and rulers: liars and deceivers.

Pilate: without integrity; self-serving; afraid of the people; not willing to assume responsibility (sent Jesus to Herod); compromising (chastised Jesus); morally weak; a people pleaser; cowardly (afraid of losing Caesar's favor).

Barabbas: rebellious; a terrorist; a murderer; dangerous.

The people: unjust; unreasonable; easily manipulated; clamorous; fickle; sensation-seeking; blood-thirsty; furious; hateful; cruel.

v.26-31. THE COMPASSION OF THE LORD JESUS: Simon/ daughters of Jerusalem.

On the road to Calvary:

- The Lamb of God being led to the slaughter.
- Simon: going against the crowd; of a different culture; bearing the cross after Jesus (perhaps the long end of the cross).
- Mourners: great multitude; women who valued Him; wept for Him and for what would happen to Him.
- Daughters of Jerusalem: a general reason to not weep for Him – the death of Christ was unique and ultimately a victorious death ending in His resurrection. A particular reason for them to weep for themselves was the coming destruction of Jerusalem. They will even wish themselves to be childless and buried alive. He had wept over Jerusalem and now tells them to do the same. If the Jews would do such a thing to Him (a green tree); what will happen to them in whom is no life (Jewish nation)?

v.32-43. THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE LORD JESUS: Rulers-soldiers/criminals.

The observers:

- The malefactors (thieves): began mocking Him as the Son of God [Mat.27]; one was impudent and hardened right to the end; one is humbled, is softened, repents and calls on the name of the Lord. *"Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."*
- The soldiers: mocked Him as a King. There is an ignorance because of a lack of knowledge. They picked up this refrain from the rulers.
- The rulers and the people: mocked Him as a pretended Messiah.

The Intercessor:

- Christ prayed for their forgiveness because He was dying to purchase forgiveness of sins. Christ intercedes for all who repent and believe.
- Christ to the thief: the word of assurance was to him alone. It was the word of the King of the kingdom. It was a word of far greater blessing than he had ever expected.

v.44-49. THE CONFESSION OF THE LORD JESUS: Centurion/acquaintances.

- The centurion: "saw what was done..."; sun darkened for three hours; veil rent; the loud voice of triumph; glorified God; testified as to who Christ was – "...a righteous Man."
- The spectators: disinterested at first; now afraid; conscience awakened; stopped speaking; smote upon their breast as evidence of wrong; returned home; were not really changed.
- His acquaintance: afar off; kept their distance for fear of being identified with Him; not willing to act in faith.

v.50-56. THE CARE FOR THE LORD JESUS: Joseph/ the women.

"He was brought into the dust of death." Ps.22:15.

Joseph: a man of character; a man of unspotted reputation; a man of courage (not consented); not a man of outward show; a man ready to do real service; a man of conviction (begged the body); a man of determination (took it down); a man of generosity (his own tomb).

The women: at the funeral of the Lord Jesus there was Joseph, Nicodemus and the women from Galilee. It was apparently a silent funeral. These women were led to the grave by their affection for the Lord Jesus. They prepared spices and precious ointments because of the honor they wanted to show Him. Yet they kept the word of the Lord on the Sabbath.

LUKE 23:1-25

NO FAULT IN THIS MAN

The religious leaders had already made their decision that they wanted to kill Jesus, no matter what the truth was regarding His Person. How like that group that led Jesus to Pilate are those today who don't want to be "confused by the truth." It often happens that there are those who have their minds made up about a matter or person, and look for some way to justify what they intend to do or say. These men of the Sanhedrin, were not satisfied with their own religious decision and condemnation. They wanted Jesus dead. The only way this could come about was through a political decision that would demand the death sentence. The office of

the procurator would be such that Pilate, as the official representative of the Roman government was the only one with power to execute political prisoners. It was on this premise the religious leaders charged the Lord Jesus Christ with saying He was a King. In the Gospel of Luke there is no lengthy account of the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate. Pilate had heard Him say, "My kingdom is not of this world..." So the first verdict Pilate made was, "I find no fault in this Man." Three times he gave the same verdict and also said, "No, nor yet Herod..." The innocence of the Lord was well documented.

Pilate's reputation was that of antagonism toward the Jews and of not caring at all about what was in their best interests. In the course of our life and witness for the Lord, we will come across people who are disinterested in the Gospel. They are very self-centered individuals who may have never experienced kindness and gentleness themselves. The dignity and calmness of the Savior in front of Pilate impressed him in spite of his reputation. The Lord Jesus "witnessed a good confession before Pontus Pilate." We do well to consider every human being of value to God, even if their reputation precedes them and they are known as bitter antagonists against the Gospel. No man or woman is too hard for the Holy Spirit of God to convict of their sin. We need to always remember that "Christ died for the ungodly," and "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

As far as the written accounts in the Gospels record, Herod is the only man the Lord Jesus wouldn't speak to. This evil, dark-hearted man was known for his careless cruelty. One man previously had gotten to his conscience. John the Baptist had charged him with his guilt in an adulterous relationship with his brother's wife. The outcome of that was the messenger of God was imprisoned and beheaded. When people hear the message of God preached, whether it be warning or entreaty, and deliberately reject it, they have made a serious decision. In the appearance of the Lord Jesus before Herod, there was no exchange of words. There was only mockery and scorn from Herod and those who attended him. We learn from this the impact of the presentation of the Gospel when we preach it. To not pay attention to the messenger is taken personally by the Master who sent him. No John - no Jesus. This should make us take very seriously what we are doing when we speak for the Lord. Herod found no fault in "this Man." "No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him."

A third man is spoken of in this account of the trial of the Lord. Barabbas was in prison for insurrection, the same crime they were trying Jesus for, and on top of that he had committed murder while doing it. This man truly deserved to die. From his prison cell Barabbas probably heard his name being shouted and the repeated word, "Crucify, crucify" attached to it. He would have figured out this was the day of his death. How surprised he must have been when his cell door was opened and he was free to go. Whatever happened to him after that we don't know, but we know he would not have forgotten that the One who died without fault had died in his place. We may never know the outcome of our work for the Lord or the results of proclaiming the Gospel publicly. But we do know what our responsibility is and we must leave the results to be revealed in a future day.

All of those people associated with the perversion of justice that took place in Jerusalem that day remind us that when we present Christ in the Gospel, we are telling people of a man in whom is no fault. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter..." Pilate, Herod and Barabbas all were affected by their brief encounter with the perfect Son of Man. What ever happened later in their lives in regard to the Lord Jesus, we know that now they know who He is and what they could have, and should have done with Him then. There was no valid reason for rejecting the One in whom "is no fault at all."

May we always be urgent in presenting God's Gospel in kindness and gentleness, and yet be firm in declaring the consequences of accepting or rejecting the Savior. The names - Pilate, Herod and Barabbas are names that are used for vicious dogs - not for those who are righteous, honorable people known for their integrity.

Stop, and listen to the egregious words that they say -
Deceptive spiritual leaders accused Him of not being willing to pay
What was owed to Caesar, and of setting up a throne
That would make Him king of a nation of His own.
But they would not admit the kingdom of God was here,
And the One they were condemning the diadem would wear -
When righteousness will sometime spread to every place -
In the kingdom when the One they condemned would reign in peace.

Look, and watch this self-important man use his authority
To question the Son of Man who answers his questions quietly,
"My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight."

But in spite of his verdict of "no fault" Pilate refuses to right
A wrong he knew was being propagated, and goes along instead
With this perversion of justice when this innocent One was led
As a lamb to the slaughter and in faultlessness He stands
In dignity and grace before Pilate, that sinful, spineless man.

Listen, and you will hear shocking words and scorn
Come from Herod and his men, but none from Jesus come
To a man who despised and rejected warnings given to him
When John made it clear he was condemned by God for his sin.
The refusal of the Gospel and the one God uses to tell -
Is the same as refusing the only One who can save you from hell.
In that setting there was no blame, Herod found Him faultless too -
That testing time left them all more guilty when their mockery was through.

The sound of a door opening would spell doom to that murderous man.
Insurrection and murder are capital punishment in every land.
But in this case, it meant freedom, because another One would die.
Barabbas must have wondered who He was, and also wondered why.
We know behind all of this was a redemptive price to pay -
By the "determinate counsel of God," the Lord was crucified that day.
But no one is exempt from guilt when this faultless Man
Met the requirements we could not, to fulfill God's righteous plan.

"Father, I praise and thank Thee that the Lord Jesus Christ did not turn aside from that which was set before Him. Thy word was truly fulfilled when He was willing to be led by feeble, sinful men to be condemned by a cowardly governor like Pilate. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 23:26-45

VIA DOLOROSA

"The path to the cross He was willing to tread" was a road of sorrows. Pilate had submitted to the pressure of those who wanted Christ crucified when he heard them say, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Caesar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar." There was no fault, no guilt of any kind that all of the people put together could use to condemn the Lord Jesus Christ. But "Pilate, willing to content the people," "gave sentence that it should be as they required." It is not unknown today that some choose to do what they know is wrong under the pressure of job security, peer pressure, or just simple lack of courage and commitment to do what is right.

"Never soul in hell shall burn
Who has not had a chance to turn;
Whether it be a pagan wild,
Or born a Christian's favored child,
God will not suffer them to go
Unwarned to everlasting woe;
For nothing but rejected light
Will doom a soul to endless night."

In our minds we can follow the steps of the Lord bearing His cross to "the place which is called Calvary." Every step He made in that journey through those streets of Jerusalem to the place of the skull, was a testimony to the willingness of the Lord Jesus to "seek and to save that which was lost." He "who was numbered with the transgressors" did not make use of His authority or infinite power to alleviate His suffering in any way. Nor did He lighten the load of the cross in any way. He was truly a Man among men even in the sorrowful journey to the place of crucifixion. As "the green tree," life-giving and full of blessing, He comforted the women of Jerusalem who were weeping in pity for Him. He was not looking for pity for Himself. He pitied them as He looked at them in the "dry tree" of a nation of people who had forsaken the God of their fathers and had turned to religious formalism and rejection of their Messiah.

That mournful procession is a reminder to us that here in our day, we too as a nation have rejected the God of our fathers. We have set aside the moral compass of the Word of God and have substituted it with anything that brings us financial profit and increases our worldly pleasure. Forms have taken the place of truth in our religious gatherings. Pleasure, or at least that which gives a feeling of comfort, has taken the place of faithful preaching and warnings to those who persist in following their own chosen course in life rather than God's. Whether we like to admit it or not, we have started down the road of our own Via Dolorosa and the sorrows of sin will soon overtake us - and we will have no one to blame but ourselves.

With Simon carrying the cross (probably the end of the main beam) behind Jesus, the public humiliation of the Savior caused a variety of responses by those who followed Him in that great crowd. There would probably have been disciples interspersed with the crowd, who were sad and grievously disappointed in the outcome of the trial. There were exultant enemies who would think they were rid of a false Messiah. They were not looking for the suffering Messiah the prophets wrote about. Pilate would have remained where he was, guiltily relieved the "King" of the Jews was now gone, even though his conscience would disturb him. Soldiers going about their duty without fear of a battle would make mockery and laugh at the difficulty the condemned prisoners would have carrying crosses through the streets of sorrows. Reactions to the preaching of the cross, the preaching of the Gospel and the preaching of Christ crucified still vary when people hear the message. Some mock and turn away. Some are awakened to their sin and need but go no further for a variety of reasons. Some weep under conviction of sin but go no further. Thank God for those who follow all the way to Calvary and see there "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." That convicting path of sorrow leads to the place of forgiveness and mercy.

It would be inappropriate to try to put into words what the Spirit of God does not say when it comes to the act of Christ's crucifixion. "There they crucified Him" is sufficient to impress us with the importance of what was done. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." Everyone has a sense of their own need and sin. Everyone who seeks the Lord will find Him. There is no formula for the act of salvation. Mercy is there and available to every person who seeks for God with all their heart. Every testimony of God's saving grace is different because every person comes individually as a sinner to Jesus. The forgiveness the Lord prayed for on the cross was that judgment would not fall on those who were there who crucified Him. What lost sinners need is mercy. The soldiers who gambled over His clothing, the watching crowd, the mocking leaders and the two thieves all needed mercy for salvation, but they needed the forgiveness for the evil done to the Lord in order to survive the wrath of God. The prayer of the Lord Jesus was answered and judgment was withheld. Forgiveness for what they did to Him was then granted. We may never know what has been withheld from happening to us because of the intercessory prayers of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit on our behalf.

The written accusation over the Lord Jesus Christ may have been the testimony about Him that awakened the conscience of one thief. Words coupled with attitude and actions often speak truth to hearts awakened by personal guilt. There were no struggling or harsh words from the Savior when He was nailed to the cross. "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." There were no bitter cries of hatred, no evidence of animosity in the Savior. The meekness and lowliness of Christ was there to be seen even when He was crucified. As the one thief took the yoke of Christ upon him, he found rest to his soul. The greatest test of character ever put upon a person was put upon the Lord Jesus when He was at Calvary. There was no deceit, no wrath, no guile in Him. There was grace, mercy, gentleness and forgiveness obvious to those who were there. In spite of being despised and rejected, mocked and humiliated, wounded and hated - He maintained the dignity of His Person and demonstrated His love. The thief was assured of paradise as the Lord spoke peace to His soul. Some may wonder where they went that day. The scriptures say that paradise is up, and is where God is.

Luke's account of the events at Calvary are abbreviated in a sense, because the point of his Gospel is to give an account of the Person of the Son of Man. The overriding darkness that covered the earth was a testimony to the immensity of the work the suffering Savior accomplished when He suffered to bring us to God. Some things are best left hidden lest our speculation lead us into imagination. Whatever happened was enough because the Lord Jesus knew when "all things were now accomplished." When that was done, visible and audible testimony happened miraculously to show us the way to God is opened. The veil was rent from top to bottom. We are now "able to come to God by Him." Thank God for being "accepted in the Beloved."

Follow those footsteps - see where they lead
Hear those feminine cries - learn what they mean
Watch the faces of those who observe - what do they show
One man is turned to follow - sharing the load

Watching from afar - reddened, tear-stained, remorseful eyes
Watching from nearby - curiosity in those standing by
Watching from close up - curled lips and human sneers
Watching from the foot of the cross - ones who Jesus endears.

Listen to the sounds - nails piercing human flesh
Listen to the voices - cursing the One who blessed

Listen to the words - "Father, forgive ... they know not what they do"
Listen to the plea - "Remember me" ... hear words of comfort too.

Follow the hardened - they gambled for His clothes
Follow the haughty - in mockery they lift their nose
Follow the fearful - they still are far away
Follow the loyal - at the cross they intend to stay.

Determine what to do - follow in spite of fear
Choose who you will serve - the place to serve is here
Commit to obey - the Lord who died now lives
Follow Him - all glory that results are His.

"Father, I am not wanting to intrude into places I should not go. So, I will read and meditate on what is written and seek to avoid paying attention to dramatic imaginations when it comes to the place called Calvary. 'There they crucified Him' is enough for my meditation to focus on for a long time - particularly the word. Him" in whose name I pray. Amen."

LUKE 23:47. *"Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous man'."*

A RIGHTEOUS MAN.

"Led Him" [v.1]: just like the prophet said, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter."
"This fellow" [v.2]: just like the prophet said, "He was despised and rejected of men."
"Christ a King" [v.2]: just like the woman at the well said, "When Messiah comes..."
"King of the Jews" [v.3]: just like David said, "The Lord said unto my Lord..."
"This man" [v.4]: the only man holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners.
"He stirreth up the people" [v.5]: The Word was made flesh... full of grace and truth.
"A Galilaean" [v.6]: can any good thing come out of Nazareth.
"Miracle done by Him" [v.8]: Herod had his chance with John – no John, no Jesus!
"Set Him at nought" [v.11]: when we shall see Him, there is no beauty...
"Mocked Him" [v.11]: He was the song of the drunkard.
"Arrayed Him" [v.11]: a stranger to his mother's children.
"Sent Him again" [v.11]: rejected
"One that perverteth" [v.14]: false accusations
"No fault in this man" [v.14]: in Him is no guile, neither was there deceit...
"Away with this man" [v.18]: this Man receiveth sinners...
"No cause of death in him" [v.22]: He has the keys of life and death.
"Bewailed and lamented him" [v.27]: a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
"They crucified him" [v.33]: they pierced My hands and My feet.
"Then said Jesus, 'Father forgive them'" [v.34]: who can forgive sins but God only.
"They parted his garments and cast lots" [v.35]: prophecy was fulfilled.
"Derided him" [v.35]: numbered with the transgressors.
"If he be Christ" [v.35]: his own received him not.
"The chosen of God" [v.35]: "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."
"King of the Jews" [v.37]: he came unto his own.
"Written over Him" [v.37]: that all might see the reason we, forevermore must love Him.
"King of the Jews" [v.38]: My kingdom is not of this world.
"Railed on him" [v.39]: blasphemed the Son of God
"If thou be the Christ" [v.39]: questioned his person and nature.
"This man hath done nothing amiss" [v.41]: in him was no sin... knew no sin... did no sin
"Lord" [v.42]: Christ both died and rose and revived that He might be Lord.
"I say unto thee" [v.43]: the promises of God are "yea and Amen."
In every way, men tried to deny Him, denigrate Him, demean Him, despise Him and destroy Him – but in every way He proved He was a "righteous Man."

"O Holy God, who in boundless grace allowed Thy Son to be humiliated by men and put to an open shame: I never cease to worship when I come to places like Luke 23 where the Lord Jesus Christ is so openly displayed to the view of men. He pleased Thee in the carrying out of justice; in the offering of Himself without spot; in fulfilling all righteousness; in fully dealing with all the claims that were against me. I thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 23:46-56

HE GLORIFIED GOD

The sun was darkened that day, not some cloud cover over the sky to separate the light of the sun from the face of the earth. No reflected light would come from the moon. The planets in their orbits around the sun would have been darkened as the Lord Jesus Christ for those three hours endured what we would have had to bear for eternity in "outer darkness." No wonder there was a change in the people as some made their way in fear to their homes and those at Calvary remained standing in the darkness except for those who "sitting down they watched Him there." But doubtless they came to their feet with all the others when they heard the loud cry from the darkness, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" come in strength of voice from the Lord Jesus. The Jewish thief who was recently saved, the Gentile centurion who watched Jesus, the kinsfolk of the Lord Jesus including James and Jude, the women waiting for the end at the foot of the cross, the disciples watching from a distance - all would hear the cry of the Lord from Psalm 22. We know the reason this was fulfilled - that we could come to God through Him and never have to be in outer darkness for ever.

He knew everything had been accomplished when the call, "I thirst," came from His lips and He drank from the sponge filled with vinegar as evidence there was nothing left to do. All was done. The payment for sin was made. He could cry with a loud voice, "It is finished!" With a calmness and quiet assurance, the Lord Jesus Christ said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." What He had been sent to do was done - He knew it, God knew it and we know it. Nothing of any kind can be added to what he accomplished when He was on the cross. It would be out of order for us to try to fathom all He accomplished in those dark hours. It is enough for us to know that He knew everything a Righteous God demanded was finished, and fellowship with the Father was strong even as the Lord Jesus dismissed His spirit from His body.

The loud voice of the Savior, the darkness now lifted and the setting sun was again able to be seen; the great earthquake was so strong the rocks were breaking. The watching centurion was convinced testifying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man," and in so confessing glorified God. He wouldn't have known at the very time the veil of the temple was torn from the top to the bottom giving visible evidence of access to God, thus glorifying God. The finished work of the Savior glorified God. The conversion of the thief, the centurion and the Lord's brothers glorified God. The silent changed crowd of people who were being readied for the preaching of the Gospel 50 days later, glorified God. Every time the Lord's people gather today to remember the Lord and show the Lord's death, we glorify God. Every new-born soul who comes to the cross confessing, "Jesus died for me," glorifies God. There has been glory for God from the cross-work of Christ continually since the time the centurion and those that we with him said, "Truly, this Man is the Son of God."

The watching people reacted in many different ways to the conclusion of the sacrifice Christ made that day. The women from Galilee and those kinsmen of the Lord stood watching from a distance to see what would happen next. Two men who had prepared for this event and must have believed He was going to die as He said, stepped out and identified themselves as disciples of Jesus. Joseph went to Pilate to get permission to take the body of Jesus from the cross and give it a proper burial. Nicodemus who had a huge store of myrrh and aloes and cloth came forward. Those watching people saw two men who really cared for the Lord but had not made it known, now come forward to do what needed to be done.

It is always a blessing to see those we least expect step forward and boldly act for the Lord at just the right time in just the right way. We may never think there are such people around who are just waiting to serve God, and God keeps them waiting until they can fulfill His purposes in His time. "He was with the rich in His death." The gentle, kind, quiet men of means were there for God to use when the time was appropriate to meet the need others could not. How wrong it is for us to pass judgment on, or ignore those who aren't as active as we think they should be.

The body of the Lord Jesus Christ was only a corpse to Pilate, but to those two men it was as precious as it was to Mary who had previously anointed His body "to the burying." The Lord had begun as a young boy to be about His "Father's business," and now finished the business in a way that brought glory to God. All who believed in Him then and now have a work to do whether in preaching, praying, laboring, serving or, as Joseph and Nicodemus, burying One in dignity and honor. Joseph had prepared the tomb, Nicodemus had prepared myrrh, aloes and cloth. Now the women returned to their places before the Sabbath to prepare spices with the good intention of coming on the first day of the week to add their testimony of appreciation to what was already done. It is possible to have good intentions after the fact. That is not a bad thing. It is just too late. It is better to be like Mary with her spikenard, Joseph with his new tomb and Nicodemus with the abundance of myrrh, aloes and cloth, prepared in advance by acting in faith on what the Lord had said would happen. We need to be ready to do what is needed in God's time - and we won't be too late.

They were common people from different walks in life

Who God was prepared to use.
Some acted in faith, and others only by sight,
But each, because of Christ had to choose
To step out in public and make themselves known
As those who were impacted by Him.
Each in different ways to all of us have shown
What the Lord Jesus means to them.

The centurion who was watching glorified God
And spoke aloud about what he saw.
What was in his heart he expressed in words
As faith from his spirit did draw.
He was awakened to testify Jesus was a righteous Man
And said, "Truly, this is the Son of God."
He challenges us to publicly state when we can
That Jesus is our Savior and Lord.

Joseph may not have said much but with reputation intact
Boldly made to Pilate and all men most clear -
When the time came, he was fully ready to act
And let everyone know who were there
That he was a disciple and had prepared for this day
By having a tomb ready to receive his Savior.
Both he and Nicodemus each in his own way
Were identified with Christ by their behavior.

We can learn from those people who appear
On the pages of scripture just once -
That God is able and willing to use even those who fear
The disfavor of men of great consequence.
But when the time came, they stepped out in faith -
And we really need to do the same.
There are people and events here who we must face
When we are identifying ourselves with Jesus' name.

"I know Father, there have been times when I should have been much more public about my faith than I have been. In Thine own way open doors for Thy servant to be able to glorify Thee by identifying myself with the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 24:

v.1-12. THE TOMB AND THE TESTIMONIES:

The women who came: Mary Magdalene; Mary the mother of James; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, steward of Herod [8:3; 24:10]; Salome, mother of James and John [Mat.27:56; Mk.16:1]. They had expected to see a body to cover with spices, but instead saw two men and an empty tomb. Their message to the 11 and the rest was not believed.

- The angels: giving positive affirmation of His resurrection; reminding them of the words of the Lord.
- Peter (and John): ran in haste; saw clearly for himself the evidence of resurrection; meditated on the events.

v.13-35. THE WALK AND THE WORD:

• Cleopas and the other person: looking for the kingdom; considered His death a tragedy; only aware of the present; forgot the teaching a lesson of the past; didn't recognized the reality of prophecy; were emotionally let down (sad); were taught from two of the three divisions of scripture; learned to see Christ in the Word of God; wanted more of the scripture and fellowship; heart was stirred and understanding enlightened.

- The Lord Jesus: He wanted them to see truth from the Word of God; He wanted them to see Christ from the Word of God; He wanted them to learn to know Him personally from the Word of God; He wanted them to see what they had in the scriptures of truth.

v.36-49. THE APPEARANCE AND THE ASSURANCE:

- Jesus Himself: a resurrected body of flesh and bones; a visible presence; a physical presence able to be touched; proof of reality in eating before them; verbal words that here include all three divisions of the scripture (the Psalms are mentioned here).
- The disciples: He was in the center of the group; they heard Him speak audibly; He invited physical touch; they could see the evidence; their understanding was opened to comprehend the scriptures; they are commissioned to witness.

v.50-53. THE BLESSER AND THE BLESSED:

He led them'
He lifted up His hand in blessing; He conferred upon them what they needed.
He was parted and carried up into heaven.
They worshipped Him.
They returned with great joy.
They were committed to the work of God in praising and blessing others.
They were affirming their faith publicly as does the whole book of Luke.

LUKE 24:1-12

THEY REMEMBERED

Perhaps we have gotten so used to the word "resurrection" that we forget what it really means and how the "firstfruits of resurrection" took place. Even though we read the words easily, "Now is Christ risen," the actual event of His resurrection needs to be reviewed often so we will be reminded of the uniqueness of Christianity among all the false teachings of the world that are limited by human experience and imagination. The women who arrived at the gravesite of Jesus at first light with the spices they had prepared, certainly loved the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though they had sorrow and their love for Christ had not diminished, and their faith in Him had not failed - yet their hope was gone and, like Martha, they were resigned to waiting for "the resurrection at the last day." They were not expecting the Son of Man to be the Victor over death then. The fact that He who died on the cross as the Conqueror of sin, death and hell had not really entered their minds.

During the time Christ was here on earth, angels who had not sinned, must have watched with amazement and awe as the Sovereign of the universe lived among a lesser form of created beings as the perfect Son of Man. They had on occasions come to earth to participate in various ways to His life and service here. The announcements of the births of John and Jesus was given to one of them to make. The Lord Jesus Christ was ministered to by them in times of His extreme stress. They had listened to His words in Galilee when He told His disciples of His death, burial and resurrection. Now they came to minister to His people. We don't know much about their visible and invisible characteristics, nor do we need to. It is enough to know they were witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, the persecution of God's people, the furtherance of the Gospel and are occasional visitors at the homes of those who show hospitality. We know when they speak, they are easily understood, and have a clear understanding of what the scriptures teach about the future.

"Two men in shining garments" (most likely angels), reviewed the teaching of the Lord to those women who entered the tomb with full hands and no place to put what they had prepared. "Remember" is a word of quiet rebuke to those who love the Lord but haven't actually processed His word clearly because they sift them through the limits of their own experiences. This is a very common problem among people of faith even now. We expect God to work in a certain way, and in spite of our faith in Him, limit His powerful and victorious working to what we have seen and experienced ourselves. The blazing light of God's grace and power is not limited to our expectations. He who was raised from the dead by the Spirit, the Father and His own power, can do "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think."

Illumination of the minds and spirits of those seeking, loving women changed everything they had been thinking about. When we don't "remember His words" confusion takes over. When we do remember His words, foggy thinking becomes clear. Misunderstanding is clarified. The dark things become light. What we never even dreamed could take place becomes reality. What we may have thought was figurative turns out to be real and tangible. How much have we heard that we really never understood? To what degree have we limited God's working in our life because of our own unbelief? The real significance of God's truth often never comes to us until we are in extreme situations. When truth dawns on our soul, our spirit is so enlightened that we think we are living in a totally new dimension, and in a sense we are. There is no question: Christ is alive! "He is not here. He is risen as He said!"

There are many different responses to the actual, physical resurrection of Christ. To most it is impossible because they have not seen Him for themselves. They cannot and will not believe the testimony of others. They do not accept the fact that "without faith, it is impossible to please God." Such people may "confess with their mouths the Lord Jesus," but if they don't "believe in their heart that God has raised Him from the dead," they are not saved and never can be until they repent and believe the Gospel. Others believe there was a spiritual resurrection as opposed to a literal, physical resurrection of Christ in His body. He dealt with this idea the second Lord's day after His resurrection when He told Thomas to put his finger into the hands the nails pierced, and put his hand into His side where the spear pierced it. He had told the other disciples earlier that a spirit "has not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." He also ate some fish and honey to testify as to His physical resurrection.

No matter what people may say about the resurrection of Christ, whether they be doubters, skeptics, or openly rejecters of the fact. It has been well attested to by hundreds who saw Him, heard Him speak, ate with Him and traveled with Him over a period of forty days - the time of testing. Mary Magdalene, Peter, John - all were at the sepulcher and saw visible evidence of the resurrection of Christ. There is a dimension of which we have had no experience yet in which the physical part of our humanity and the spiritual work together to accomplish a specific purpose. The Lord Jesus in His resurrection was not limited by physical obstacles even though He was in a physical body. He could leave the grave clothes empty without having to unwind them. He could enter a room without having to use the door. He could be speaking one moment and in the next be gone without the normal process of making an exit. Christianity has as a central fact the resurrection of Christ. On this fact lies the faith of billions of people who over the last centuries have lived holy lives and died violent deaths with quiet confidence and peace in spite of the pain and humiliation. Those who died in testimony to Christ at the hands of their tormenters did not die for a lie. With sure faith in One who literally died for our sins and rose again for our justification, we live our lives and die in sure hope of our own literal, physical resurrection when we see our Savior face to face.

Because Christ has been raised from the dead, we know the kingdom of God is real and lasting. Because Christ has been raised from the dead, we know death is not the end of our existence. It has been conquered and those who are in Christ now, will be in Christ forever. Because Christ has been raised from the dead there is supreme authority given to the Gospel we preach. It is not a religion of mans' making but has divine authority only God can give to a message. Because Christ has been raised from the dead those who die in the Lord can pass on into eternity in confidence beyond death into the presence of the Lord. We are assured of the future of blessing and the peace yet to come on earth that was prophesied at the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our lives have meaning and a positive purpose now and in the future because of His resurrection. All true Christians believe in the resurrection of Christ and that unifies and inspires us in spite of a variety of practices and life-styles that are affected by different languages, cultures and places we live.

The resurrection of Christ has produced thoughts that have been made into spiritual hymns and songs. Whenever God's people meet in remembrance of Christ and show His death, we are reminded that this is "until He come." In the journeys of God's people from one part of the world to another, even though we can't communicate in words, we can rejoice together with uplifted eyes and hearts as we unite in our Risen Lord. The women remembered His words and so do we. Our Lord Jesus Christ is alive and well, and we shall see Him - in His physical, resurrected body.

One after another the proofs do appear
Not just evidence that the Lord Jesus was here
But that after His death and victory over sin was won
He rose from the dead; the Son of Man is God the Son.

Soldiers lay prostrate like dead men on the ground
In predawn darkness brilliant light shone around
On the rolled away stone and in the dark tomb
Light revealed life, that lifts the shadows of gloom.

Early morning visitors their scented parcels are bringing
When they entered the tomb, they couldn't believe what they were seeing
No body was there, to anoint it was the reason they came
Angels said, "Ye seek Jesus," they too reverence His name.

The news was too important, they had to go quickly and tell
Others who waited in fear lest vengeance on them also fell
Peter and John also saw for themselves Christ was risen
Though they wondered in themselves how this could happen.

Not everything we believe can we fully understand
But by faith we can see beyond the experiences of man
We believe and can fully trust in the testimony of those
Who were there when it happened that morning Christ arose.

When we believe in our heart God raised the Lord from the dead
It changes a meaningless life into a purposeful one instead
There is no question that when the Lord Jesus died for our sins
He rose from among the dead ones, and He is coming again.

"I thank Thee Father, for giving us faith to believe what so many do not. There is no question in my mind that the resurrection of Christ is true and because He lives, I

shall too. What a glorious hope is ours who know we shall see Him and be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 24:27. *"And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself."*

CONCERNING HIMSELF.

ON EARTH

"He made Himself of no reputation" [Phil.2:7]
"He humbled Himself" [Phil.2:8]
"Christ glorified not Himself" [Heb.5:5]
"Christ pleased not Himself" [Rom.15:3]
"Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" [Mat.8:17]
"He Himself hath suffered being tempted" [Heb.2:18]

IN DEATH

"He offered up Himself" [Heb.7:27]
"Put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" [Heb.9:26]
"Who gave Himself for our sins" [Gal.1:4]
"Himself purged our sins" [Heb.1:3]
"Who gave Himself a ransom for us all" [1Tim.2:6]
"Who gave Himself for us" [Titus 2:14]
"Loved the church and gave Himself for it" [Ep.5:25]
"Loved me and gave Himself for me" [Gal.2:20]
"Himself He cannot save" [Mat.27:42]

IN RESURRECTION

"Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them" [Lu.24:36]
"Jesus shewed Himself again unto His disciples" [Jn.21:1]
"This is now the third time that Jesus shewed Himself" [Jn.21:14]
"It is I, Myself" [Lu.24:39]

IN ASCENSION

"Jesus Christ Himself, the chief cornerstone" [Ep.2:20]

COMING AGAIN

"The Lord Himself shall descend" [1Thes.4:16]
"That He might present it unto Himself" [Ep.4:27]
"Come again ... receive you unto Myself" [Jn.14:3]
Acts 1:11 – "...same Jesus"
Phil.3:10 – "... may know Him"

"Father in heaven, this morning I am rejoicing in the closeness of the Lord Himself. He was here among people like me in close proximity with them in all the aspects of human life. In the death of the Lord Jesus, He so identified Himself with me that I am free in Him, from the guilt of sin. I would love it if He was to come today. I would be able to see Him with new eyesight. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

LUKE 24:13-53

UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES

How limiting are our expectations by nature. Things we touch, taste, smell, see and hear limit us to acting only in the physical areas of life. It is very difficult to find peace in our soul and spirit unless we go beyond what is normal to natural man. The Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection opened a whole new kind of life to those who knew Him then and believe on Him now. From the opened tomb we know our Savior who died for our sins is alive. Jesus is not dead! He was, when He "died for our sins according to the scriptures." Then He "was buried and rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Those same scriptures were opened to the two walking to Emmaus, beginning with the promised "seed of the woman" in Genesis and going through each book of the Old Testament with testimonies of the Lord Jesus Christ is until He reached the "Messenger of the covenant" in the book of Malachi. In every book of the Old Testament there are written testimonies as to who the promised Messiah was to be. One of the reasons for teaching from the Old Testament is so we learn from the "opened scriptures" truths that God intends to be communicated to us. When one's eyes are opened, we truly recognize who the Lord Jesus is. There is a spiritual illumination and

insight that doesn't go away and it affects everything we do from that time on.

I have wondered in what setting I will first see the opened wounds of the Savior. Will His hands be outstretched toward us when we are welcomed at the Rapture? When the last breath is taken on earth, will there be a hand with nail prints in it to touch me as I move into heaven? Watching people leave their bodies on occasion, has impressed me that some have a startling view that opens their eyes wide and the lines on the face seem to disappear. I wonder if they have seen the opened wounds and know who He is and where they are now?

For now, it is enough for me to have an opened understanding of written things like those the Lord Jesus taught when He appeared in that upper room with the closed door. The two who had heard the whole unfolding of Christ in the Old Testament as they walked the road into joy, Peter who had met the Lord some place that day and things had gotten straightened out between them, John who was caring for Jesus' mother, the women who had seen Him and Mary Magdalene whose tears were now dry - these all were there. Before this time, they all had expected the redemption of Israel to have followed the course they were expecting of a Kinsman-Redeemer. Maybe they had expected some conference with Roman authorities to have been held. Perhaps they thought the Lord was going to deliver them by the use of power, and force the occupying military presence of Roman soldiers to retreat and submit to His authority. Now they could understand the scriptures as God intended. Now they would know the meaning of the rituals and types written in the books of Moses. They could follow the course of God dealing with His people all through the books of their history as they understood the scriptures and began to comprehend them. Not just two on the road to Emmaus but now all those who believed on Him would know He is David's King, the One who is altogether lovely, the Servant of Jehovah, Emmanuel, the Branch, the Plant of Renown, the Stone cut out without hands and all the other ways Christ was foretold of in the scriptures. What a blessing divine illumination is!

When joy comes from God, we are always amazed at the outpouring of grace that overcomes our doubts and fears. Unbelief when replaced by wonder and joy, embarrasses us and brings us to repentance for our questioning of God and His ways of blessing us. Our expectations are so often based only on our perceptions, but when God speaks to us, our souls are restored, our joy returns, and our resolve to love and serve Him becomes a passion to us. The call to "be witnesses unto Me," is welcomed and we are anxious to see how God works in us and through us to bring blessing to others and glory to Him. We cannot do this in the energy of the flesh. The Lord Jesus knew we needed "power from on high." After the journey to Galilee and back and all that happened in those forty days, again He went with them to the Mount of Olives.

Some things cannot be done in the hubbub of business, social pressure, religious forms or even family life. The challenge of divine service is one that has to be responded to personally. A witness and a martyr are similar. In each case the point of their experience and life is focused on another One, not themselves. There is the blessed privilege of paying a price to be able to be a witness for the Lord. The same Holy Spirit who enables us to understand the scriptures, also enables us to open our mouths in witness and testimony to the world around us. Those who watched the Lord ascend and heaven opened to receive Him would never lose sight of the reality of a Living Savior and Lord who is alive at God's right hand. The impact was worship right on the spot and joy as they returned to praise God in the temple. Their mouths were opened and from then until now, opened mouths have been testifying to the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Luke presented Christ as the Son of Man right from His birth to His ascension into heaven. He is not presented as a phantom moving mysteriously across the span of His life, but as a real man who linked the physical and spiritual parts of humanity in a sanctified body. He knew the physical needs as well as the spiritual ones and met them both. We now as believers in Him are to testify for Him in linking these two parts of our personhood so others can see and believe on Him by faith.

He is and always was the Holy Son of God
Who for a specific reason, here became a man;
Not hidden or mysterious, He was the Living Word
And responded right to every pressure as only he can
Because in His perfection in character and life
He brought a new dimension to living life by faith
Never once did He question the Father's will, always in the light
Every act of His life on earth had the motivation of grace.

The words He spoke, the things He did, the people who He blessed
Were done in such a gracious way everyone had to know
There was in Him, the Son of Man a nature He possessed

And testified to His divinity which in many ways did show
From the miracle of His birth, through His life, death and resurrection
God was here living among men, Emmanuel in a body
He had been prophesied of long before the immaculate conception
All through His life and work that He was the One God Most Holy.

Divine revelation through God's Word leaves no misunderstanding
There was a purpose and a plan the Lord Jesus came to meet
Opposition from Satan and religious leadership not withstanding
He would not dismiss His spirit until redemption was complete
Now from that Holy Person there are blessings brought to us
Who did not deserve anything from Him, not even a second look;
In Him and in God's Word we read, we have placed unreserv`ed trust
And know we are accepted forever in the One who our place took.

“Father, may I this day be very conscious of being involved in those things which are directed entirely by Thy will. In this upcoming interview may Thy servants say the right things in the right way. May the questions I ask and comments I make be consistent with the mind and ways of the Lord Jesus. May the outcome bring much glory to God. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”