

Following Jesus In Everyday Life

Memory Text: “And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’”
(Luke 17:5)

Setting The Stage: Have you ever met someone who claimed to be something, but acted another way? Have you ever encountered someone who contradicted what they said they believed? Think of a person who claims to be a huge fan of a certain sports team, but then turns on the team when they lose several games in a row. Think of a more serious example. We often hear stories of women who are abused by men who claim to love them. If one’s actions contradict one’s words, which is true?

“Therefore by their fruits you shall know them.” (Matt. 7:20). In Christ’s eyes, it is our actions that speak to what we believe. “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’” (John 8:31)

“The Word became flesh - and then through theologians it became words again.” – Karl Barth Christ came to redeems us not to speak a lot of good words but to glorify His name by doing good works (Eph. 2:10).

Someone said, “Christian discipleship is the process by which disciples grow in the Jesus Christ and are equipped by the Holy Spirit, who resides in our hearts, to overcome self, sin, and Satan and become more Christ-like.” Discipleship is to walk with and imitate Jesus.

Sunday – Flee Pharisaism

Luke 11:37-54

The gospels reference the Pharisees 80 times. 25 of those are found in Luke’s account. Who were the Pharisees? The conquest of the ancient east by Alexander the Great was followed by a more permanent cultural invasion by Greek language, customs, ideas, and religion. Eventually Antiochus Epiphanes sought to Hellenize the Jews but this met stiff opposition. Later there was a tendency among the upper crust of Jewish society living outside of Palestine to adopt Greek culture. However those inside Palestine clung tenaciously to the custom and religion of their forefathers.

In opposition to Greek influence a conservative movement arose names the “Hasidim,” meaning “pious ones.” The Pharisees, whose name means “separatists,” owed their origin to the Hasidim, and first appeared as a political part in the 2nd C B.C. The Pharisees were the popular, orthodox, majority party. They were known for rigid adherence to the law and for reluctance to be involved in civic duties. They

believed that if the Jews would rely on God He would work for their deliverance. As students of the law they were the party of the scribes, or theologians, and were the popular spiritual guides. They were successful proselytizers.

When we think of Pharisees we think of a legalistic view and practice of religion, one that says that salvation comes by obedience to the law.

Luke 11:37-54. There's no reason to not consider that these woes were given at a different time than the ones mentioned in Matthew 23. These were given in a Pharisees house (3 months before the close of His ministry), the others in the courts of the Temple in Jerusalem.

What is Jesus warning about, how is this same principle manifested today, and how we can avoid making the same mistake? This is a joint call to avoid a superficial religion that relies on externals and to embrace true religion that doesn't just look good but has asked God to change the heart also.

Clean cup (v. 39) – Jesus isn't referring to the habits of the Pharisees in cleaning cups but to the Pharisees themselves. They were meticulous in keeping things clean on the inside and outside, but they didn't apply this principle to themselves. They lived to be "seen of men" but didn't realize God was looking at their hearts. Hypocritical motives prompted their outward piety.

Give alms (v. 41) – Jesus seems to be suggesting that generosity toward the poor is a better way of avoiding defilement than scrupulous ceremonial cleansing of the containers in which food is kept.

Tithe (v. 42) – Meticulous care was given in tithing as it was a part of the Mosaic law (see Lev. 27:30, Deut 14:22). The Mishnah (the first major written redaction of the Jewish oral tradition) reflected this when it lists in detail those foods that need to be tithed upon. "Mint" – not listed in the Mishnah; "Anise" – or dill, seed, plant, and pod, except the roots; "Cummin" – eaten as spice or relish with food. Jesus didn't remove their obligation to tithe, but reminded them that greater care should be given to the way people are treated.

Key of knowledge (v. 52) – The key that open the door to the knowledge of salvation. The religious leaders had made it impossible for the true in heart to find their way to salvation by 1) making religion a burden, and 2) by their own hypocritical example. They treated heaven as a club that only the elite could be a part of.

While discipleship involved obeying God's will, we should never think that meticulous obedience might secure a place for us in heaven. True obedience comes from a heart that has been transformed by the grace of God. This is true discipleship.

Monday – Fear God

Luke 12:4-21

Fundamental to discipleship is fearing God. The wise man said, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Prov. 9:10) The 1st angels message of Revelation 14 invites the world to “fear God.” To fear God does not mean to be afraid of Him but rather to know that He is holy and love and deserves our reverence, respect and allegiance.

Luke 12:4-7. By obeying Christ you might incur the wrath of man, but denying Him will incur the wrath (judgment) of God on sin. It is better to die and know that you will rise again than to die and not rise again. “Hell” – “Gehenna,” a place of burning. Ultimately, God’s love leads Him to destroying the cancer of sin in the lake of fire after the 1,000 years – a time dedicated to the demonstration of God’s justice and mercy combined.

Luke 12:8-12. Discipleship involves the bold confession that Jesus is Lord irrespective of the circumstances. The promise is given that the Holy Spirit, Whom we do not push away, will give us the words to silence our accusers when we need them the most. Here is terrific incentive to not throw in the towel when the going gets tough.

Luke 12:16-21. The rich man had an “I” problem. He thought everything revolved around him. Covetousness and greed were His problem. If you know the difference between hoarding and saving, you’ll be glad. True discipleship involves putting the kingdom of God first and not living for the present.

By the time Rockefeller was fifty-three his life was a wreck. Throughout his business career he said, “I never placed my head upon the pillow at night without reminding myself that my success might only be temporary.” He was the richest man in the world and yet he was miserable in every sense of the word. He was sick physically, mentally, and emotionally. There was no humor, balance, or joy in his life.

Then a transformation occurred. He determined to become a giver rather than an accumulator. He began to give his millions away. He founded the Rockefeller Foundation, dedicated to fighting disease and fund education around the world. He lived to be ninety-eight years old and apparently was a happy man in those years because of his new and revitalized definition of success – giving, not gaining, sharing, not accumulating.

Tuesday – Be Prepared & Watchful

Luke 12:35-53

Christian discipleship is not a state of ease, especially when we give consideration to the hour in which we live. Luke records the words of Jesus in Luke 12:35-53 (cp.

Matt. 24:42-25:13) which deal with the issue of waiting for His return. This is the first time Jesus publicly addressed His return.

Luke 12:35-40. Jesus first addresses the need to watch (anticipate) while waiting for the Lord's return because we don't know the hour He will return. This watching involves being aware of our own spiritual condition and to ensure our "calling and election" is sure. It also involves knowing the times. While we cannot know the exact day and hour we can know when Christ's coming is near.

Luke 12:42-48. Jesus next addresses the need to be busy working for the salvation of others. Our lack of interest in this area may indicate that we believe Jesus is delaying His coming. This is different from denying His coming. But those who have greater light, more will be required of them. The only way to shake off any lethargy is to spend time in the presence of Christ and let His passion for souls rub off on us.

Wednesday – Be A Fruitful Witness

Luke 8:4-15; 18:24-30; 19:11-27

Luke, in the book of Acts, records the words of Jesus, "You shall be My witnesses," (Act 1:8) or those who confirm those things they have seen, heard, experienced to others. Luke uses the word "witness" 13 times in the book of Acts. Jesus final commission recorded in Matt. 28:18-20 underscores the imperative to represent God and testify of His saving grace to all.

Luke 8:4-15 (cp. Matt. 13:3-23). There are three lessons we can learn from this parable. 1) God desires His Word to be shared. 2) We cannot produce life, only God can do that. 3) We are not responsible for the type of response given to the Word shared. We can only do our loving part.

Luke 18:24-30 (cp. Matt. 19:16-30 – Matthew adds the words, "But many who are first shall be last" and shares the parable of the eleventh hour worker). The reward we receive in this life consists of the blessings of Christian fellowship and in the more exceptional satisfaction of Christian service. Paul writes that he had nothing yet possessed all things (2 Cor. 6:10). Both the temporal and eternal reward God bestows is given, not because of what we have done, but is a reward of grace.

Luke 19:11-27 (cp. Matt. 25:14-30). "Mina" – a pound or 100 drachmas (drachma = a piece of silver). Christians have the God-given responsibility of investing their time, talents, and treasures into the service of God. There is no release in giving our best to our Master, Jesus.

Thursday – Be A Servant Leader

Luke 22:24-27

Luke 22:24-27 (cp. Matt. 20:25-28). While there is direct instruction given in these verses to the leaders of the church, there is also instruction for each of us with

regard to how we view and treat one another.

“Lordship” – earthly kingdoms function on the basis of power. “Not so among you” – Men in positions of authority tend to lord it over those under them, but in the church power, position, talent, and education are to be devoted exclusively to serving others, and not used as levers to dominate others. In Jesus we see the example of true servant leadership: “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt. 20:28)

John 13:13-16: “You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.”

It’s important to recognize that in His teaching about servant leadership Jesus doesn’t obliterate gospel order. His teaching is not about whether or not there should be leaders, but rather His teachings address what the characteristics of true, Christ-centered leadership looks like. It is assumed that there is authority and corresponding submission, but that authority is Christ-given and is love driven.

In Eph. 5 Paul delineates an order in the home that asks the husband to spiritually lead his home as Christ leads His church. This is not a call to blind submission on the part of the wife and mother, a servile obedience, but voluntary, loving support to the husband that is fueled by the honor he continually places on her. In 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, Paul, writing about the qualifications of an elder in the church family, connects the loving leadership given in the home by the father to that given in the church by the elder. Peter, in 1 Peter 5:1-3, write of elders being overseers, and encourages them to do so not as lords but as examples.

Romans 12:10: “Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.” (cp. Eph. 5:21) Submission, humility, and subjection are essential characteristics of the believer. Is there room in our lives for self to be brought low before God and men? Is there room in our lives to show more love and respect toward others? Do we struggle with submission to our elders or those who are in authority? How do we treat those who may be considered inferior in position? Can we do better at giving consideration, love, and respect in this area as well, and by doing so express Christ-like submission?

Appeal: To be a Christian means to be like Christ. To be a disciple of Jesus means following Him and obeying His will completely, and whole-heartedly. It means belonging to Him fully, because if we are not, then we are not His at all. Won’t you continue to abide in His word and thus be Christ’s disciple?