

**CALVARY BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH (PANDAN)**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 19

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

INTRODUCTION

Jesus spared no effort to ensure that the Twelve knew who He really was — the Messiah, the Son of the living God. Jesus too had to teach them that the Son of man must first suffer and be killed before the kingdom of God is established. When the disciples were arguing about who should be the greatest, Jesus had to teach and caution them. Once again, Jesus demonstrated His supernatural power over the devil and his cohorts. There are great lessons for us in this study. Let us be diligent in learning them.

OUTLINE

1. The Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36)
2. Deliverance of the Demonised Boy (Mark 9:14-29; Matthew 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-43)
3. Christ's Second Prediction of His Passion and Resurrection (Mark 9:30-33; Matthew 17:22-23; Luke 9:43-45)

4. Return to Capernaum: Money in the Fish's Mouth (Matthew 17:24-27)
5. Teaching on Humility (Mark 9:33-50; Matthew 18:1-9; Luke 9:46-50)

COMMENTARY

The Transfiguration of Jesus

Jesus took three of His disciples, Peter, James and John to a high mountain. The name of this mountain is not reported. Most Bible scholars would identify it as Mount Hermon, which is the highest in Palestine (as against the traditional view of Mount Tabor). Nevertheless, this is not an important point. The fact is that they went to a high mountain to pray. As Jesus prayed, while the three disciples were asleep because of their weariness, His whole appearance was transfigured or changed. His face shone as bright as the sun, and his clothes were shining as white as snow, even as light, and it was shining. Then Moses and Elijah appeared "in glory" before Jesus and the disciples. Moses and Elijah had a conversation with Jesus. The topic of their conversation was about the impending death of Jesus when He would go to Jerusalem. The disciples then awoke and saw the transfigured Jesus, Moses and Elijah talking to Him. How the disciples could recognize Moses and Elijah is not explained. We can safely surmise that either they recognized them through the conversation, for Moses represented the

Law, and Elijah represented the Prophets, or that God gave them a special gift for them to know the two men — the Law Giver and the Prophet of Fire. As the two men departed from Jesus, Peter suggested that they built three booths to commemorate the incident, when a voice out of the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” When the disciples heard the voice, they fell prostrate on the ground and were very afraid. The cloud was the “shekinah cloud’ which symbolized the presence of God. The voice must have been very commanding. The disciples sensed that they were in the presence of God, and that explains why they fell face down on the ground, for that is the appropriate posture to be in the presence of God. Or, it could be that at the mention of “the Son of God” every knee would automatically bow! It seems that Peter’s suggestion was ill thought. Although Peter had confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, perhaps his suggestion puts Jesus on par with Moses and Elijah or that he thought that the millennial kingdom was about to be established. Hence, the instant testimony from Heaven that Jesus is the Son of God, and they ought to hear Him! This testimony was a further confirmation of the Deity of Jesus. The disciples by now would know assuredly that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God.

Jesus then touched them and assured them not to be afraid. So when they got up on their feet and lifted their eyes, they saw only Jesus. These three

disciples were given a preview of the glorious state of the coming kingdom of God. That three of them were given this special privilege and they fulfilled the requirement that their experience must be supported by two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:16; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1).¹ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone what they had seen until after He had risen from the dead. Jesus gave them the reason why this transformation and this glorious state would be delayed. Jesus must first lay down His life and then resurrect before the kingdom of God is established. The disciples, who were thinking on the natural plane, could not understand what Jesus meant by the mention of His resurrection. They then asked Jesus why the scribes (guardians of the Law) said that Elijah must first come?² Jesus answered that Elijah had already come in the person of John the Baptist. Jesus did not mean John was the incarnation of Elijah. John demonstrated the spirit of Elijah! With

¹ Deuteronomy 19:15 One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.

Matthew 18:16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

² 2 Corinthians 13:1 This is the third time I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

² Malachi 4:5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: This was a reference to the Second Coming of Christ and not the first. The messenger that will come before the first coming of Christ is found in Malachi 3:1.

this explanation, the disciples understood Jesus that He was speaking about John the Baptist.

This glorious transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ shows us what it will be like when all those in Christ will one day be transformed, so that our bodies would be like unto His body. This will happen when Jesus returns for His people. In the meantime, it is the earnest and blessed hope of the born-again Christian. The appearance of Moses and Elijah demonstrated one of the marvellous truths of the Christian Faith. Moses and Elijah had already died many hundreds of years before Jesus. Yet, they appeared in human recognizable form, and could talk, and converse intelligently! That establishes the teaching that when a person dies, it is not final. There is life after death. And for a Christian, his life after death is with God. One day all people on earth shall be resurrected, some to eternal life with God in Heaven, some to eternal torment with Satan and his cohorts in the Lake of Fire.

Deliverance of the Demonised Boy

The next day, Jesus and Peter, James, and John came down from the mountain. Jesus saw a great many people crowding around His other disciples, and the scribes were arguing with them. When the crowd saw Jesus, they ran to Him. They greeted Jesus. But Jesus asked the scribes what they were arguing with His disciples. The scribes did not answer. Neither did His disciples answer. But one who was from

the crowd answered instead. He came and knelt before Jesus. He told Jesus that he had brought his son who had a dumb spirit that tormented him because sometimes he threw himself into the fire and at other times into the sea. He begged Jesus to have mercy on his son for he was his only son. The evil spirit would also cause his son to suddenly scream and tear himself. He would foam and be afflicted by him. When he brought his son to Jesus' disciples, they could not cure him. Once again, we see the evil intents of the devil and his cohorts. Jesus had already warned that the devil and his cohorts desire to rob men of their blessings, to kill and to destroy. One should not have any dealings and communication with evil spirits even though they might promise great rewards through their human agents. One must not give the devil and his cohorts a foothold in our lives. That would definitely spell disaster.

Jesus exclaimed, "*O, faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring thy son hither unto me.*" They brought the boy to Jesus. Jesus asked the father of the boy how long he had been in this condition. The father replied that he had the condition since he was a child. He said to Jesus, "But if thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." This man's request had a trace of doubt concerning Jesus' ability to heal. He had tried Jesus' disciples and they could not. It might be that Jesus also was not able to heal. However, he was desperate,

and if Jesus had the power, he begged Jesus to be merciful to him.

Responding, Jesus said, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” There was no question that Jesus was able to heal. The problem lay in the boy’s father. He had a problem of believing whether Jesus could heal or not. Jesus’ answer to the boy’s father was significant. If he had faith in Jesus’ ability to heal, nothing would be impossible. With tears in his eyes, the boy’s father confessed that he believed and pleaded for help for his unbelieving heart. It was an admission of his imperfect faith, and therefore his plea for help. Jesus looked at the boy, and charged the unclean spirit to come out of him and never to return to him. The unclean spirit made a last attempt to destroy the boy, and left the boy seemingly dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up; and he got up and was cured that very moment. Then Jesus “delivered him again to his father.” What a beautiful scene! The devil destroys and separates the father from the son. In a sense, the father had lost his son. Now, Jesus brought his son back to him, and father and son could enjoy once again the close relationship and fellowship that should be.

Jesus’ disciples witnessed the whole episode. They came to the Master privately when they were in a house. They asked Jesus, “Why could not we cast him out?” It was a good question. Jesus explained to them that it was because of their unbelief. Jesus had

already given the twelve apostles authority and power to cast out evil spirits and to heal all manner of sickness and disease (Matthew 10:1).³ The disciples could not deliver the boy because they were unbelieving. Jesus then declared that if they had “faith as a grain of mustard seed”, they could move mountains. Nothing would be impossible unto them! It is clear by this declaration that it is not the quantity of faith that possesses power, but the quality of a person’s faith. The source of the power is Jesus, not in the faith. Faith is the means in appropriating the power that Jesus gives. However, Jesus warned that this could only come about by prayer and fasting. A close and deep relationship with God in prayer will produce stupendous results.

Christ’s Second Prediction of His Passion and Resurrection

Jesus was still with His disciples. Once again, Jesus reminded them that He would be betrayed and delivered to men, and they would kill Him, and after He died, He would rise from the dead on the third day. Jesus emphasized that they must know this. They were very sad. Although they could not comprehend what Jesus meant, they understood that Jesus would be killed. Peter, James and John would be more deeply sorrowful because they had seen the glory of Jesus up on the mountain.

³ Matthew 10:1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. {against: or, over}

They had hopes of the establishment of the millennial kingdom. Therefore, the prediction of Jesus' death was incomprehensible – was not Jesus the Messiah, and the Son of the living God? Did not Jesus demonstrate that He had all power and authority over man, nature and the spirits? Jesus willingly submitted Himself to the evil deeds of man, and to the divine plan of God the Father.

Return to Capernaum: Money in the Fish's Mouth

Jesus and His disciples came to Capernaum. The Temple tax collectors asked Peter whether Jesus paid the tax. Every Jewish man must pay a temple tax as required by the Law. The yearly tax was half a shekel (2 drachmas) per person.⁴ Peter answered without hesitation that Jesus did. But when they entered into the house, before Peter could ask Him, Jesus said to him, "*What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or strangers?*" In those days, the kings did not collect taxes from their own children or family members. Jesus was saying that since the Temple was where the presence of God was (the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies), He was exempt from the Temple tax.

Nevertheless, Jesus told Peter to go to the sea and fish out a fish, and in the mouth of the fish, he would find a

⁴ Exodus 30:13 This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.

shekel which he was to take it and pay the Temple tax for Jesus and himself. This was another miraculous act of Jesus. Peter obeyed and did according to what Jesus had told him. He must have been surprised to see the shekel in the mouth of the fish as Jesus said. But that was not the lesson which Jesus was teaching Peter, and probably all the disciples. Jesus was teaching that they were obligated to submit to the government of the day instead of evading the tax lest they should "offend" (be a stumbling block to) them. In other words, their not paying the tax would cause others to do the same, which would be wrong.

Teaching on Humility

The disciples now understood that Jesus was the Messiah, and the Son of the living God. They then argued among themselves which one of them should be the greatest. The fact that they argued among themselves concerning who should be the greatest, shows that they were still thinking on an earthly plane. They expected their Messiah to overthrow Rome and set up the promised kingdom. Jesus knew what their secret agenda was. They were ashamed to answer Jesus when He asked them what they were arguing about. So Jesus called the Twelve, and began to teach them.

Jesus said, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." In other words, anyone who wants to be the greatest must be the lowest or the servant of all. Jesus

gave them an object lesson. He took a little child (a toddler) and carried him in His arms. Jesus continued that unless they “be converted” and become as little children, they would not enter the kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who humbled himself as this little child, the same would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. This is a hard truth. Of course, Jesus did not mean that they must literally become little children again, nor did He mean that they must behave childishly (compare 1 Corinthians 13:11).⁵ Jesus saw in the Twelve the opposite of what the child was. The little child was too young to be ambitious for power and authority, but rather trusted those who cared for him.

Jesus saw that the Twelve were ambitious and they were jostling for power and authority in the coming kingdom. Jesus’ prescription for greatness was to be the humblest – this was hard to take. Humility was not a virtue sinful man wants to have. In Jesus’ days as it is today, the world applauds those who exalt themselves and boast of their own achievements. They looked with contempt on the humble and meek. Jesus’ teaching that the meek would inherit the earth was unacceptable. The disciples were not ready to accept the principle.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. {thought: or, reasoned} {put away: Gr. vanish away}

Jesus further explained that if anyone received a little child “in His name”, he was actually receiving Him, and by extension, receiving God the Father who sent Him. Such a person would be great. To receive “in His name” is to do it for His sake and for the love of Him. The importance was not in the child nor in the apostles, but in Jesus and in God the Father who sent Jesus, His Son. That means the least of them if they did anything in the name of Jesus was great. No one can be greater than Jesus and God the Father!

John then said to Jesus that he saw someone casting out devils in His name. This man obviously was not of the Twelve, but was a disciple of Jesus. John said that he forbade him to do what he was doing. John’s forbidding the man to cast out devils in the name of Jesus Christ was motivated more by jealousy than zeal. Jesus exhorted him that a person who did work in His name would not speak evil of Him, and therefore was not against them but was on their side. There is a good lesson to be learned here. Christians should be understanding and tolerant of other Christians who may not belong to their particular denomination. Although their methods may not be the same, but if they are doing the work of Christ, they should be received into their fellowship as well.

Jesus continued His teaching on doing work “in His name.” To do something as insignificant as giving a cup of water to a Christian to drink “in

His name,” that giver of the cup of water would not lose his reward. The fact that Jesus conveys this message in a negative way emphasizes that the person would certainly be rewarded. This is a wonderful truth and blessing to all those who serve others in the name of Jesus. It does not matter how small the service may be.

Next Jesus addressed the multitude about a very important and serious matter. If anyone should be guilty of offending or becoming a stumbling block to little children who believe in Him, it would be better that a millstone be tied to his neck and he be cast into the sea and drown. Jesus also declared that in the world, it is inevitable that people will stumble others, but “woe” be to the person who stumbles another. This was a serious warning to the disciples. They must be careful what they say and do lest they stumble someone, especially little children. So Jesus exhorted that if the hand, or the feet, or the eyes needed to be cut off so that someone might not be stumbled, it would be best to do so, rather than have his whole being cast into hell. Jesus was not teaching that they should literally cut off their hands, feet and eyes because that would not solve the problem of sin. Jesus was speaking figuratively. If there is something that a person likes to do that will stumble others and his own self, it is better that he denies himself of that sinful thing, that is, repent, and enter the kingdom of Heaven, than to be cast into hell (*Gehenna*). This was the Valley of Hinnom which was situated around the

southwest of the Kidron valley on the east of Jerusalem. It was the garbage dump of the city. Fire burned incessantly to incinerate the rubbish. *Gehenna* became the symbol of the fires of hell.

Jesus concluded His teaching with a reference to salt. Jesus said, “salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltiness, wherewith will ye season it?” We all know that salt is an agent for preserving and preventing decay or corruption. But salt is also being used to draw out the flavour of food. Jesus had taught His disciples that they were the salt of the earth. Christians ought to have salt in themselves, and have peace one with another. Jesus, again speaking metaphorically, is teaching that His disciples should not be morally corrupt and at the same time, be a good influence in society.

PRACTICAL VALUE

The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain assures us of the hope that He gave to us, that one day when He returns, we will be like Him. When we read of the account, we are greatly encouraged in our faith and love for Him.

The fact that Moses and Elijah are still living, even now, in heaven, teaches a fundamental truth that life does not end at death. Life continues in the spiritual world. The departed souls are still conscious. What a glorious truth. In other words, when we die, we have no need to fear for we have Christ in us.

We will also be with Moses and Elijah, and with Jesus Christ, and many others who have gone to Heaven before us. How should we live our life here on earth?

Resist the devil and he will flee from us. The world would like to caricature the devil as a funny and stupid figure. But he is far from it. He can appear as an angel of light but beneath that beautiful mask lays wickedness and evil. The devil seeks whom he may devour and destroy.

The lesson of faith is once again taught. It is not how great a faith one might have, but rather how faith is exercised. Faith must be in Jesus Christ, the source of all power. It is not faith *per se* or faith in itself. All our petitions and prayers must be directed to God. It is not prayers in itself, but prayers that are directed to God in faith that moves mountains. It is not long prayers, or many prayers, but the prayer of faith in Jesus Christ, believing that all things are possible with Him according to His Will.

There are times we are like the Twelve seeking earthly honours and gains. Often times we seek earthly glories instead of seeking the glory of Jesus Christ. We sometimes forget the words of the Lord Jesus Christ teaching us to be humble and be a blessing to others. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Be warned for pride comes before a fall.

Be an influence for good, but before we can be an influence for good, we must watch ourselves and do the

things that God wants us to do. Be the salt of the earth. AMEN

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36

TUESDAY: Mark 9:14-29; Matthew 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-43

WEDNESDAY: Mark 9:30-33; Matthew 17:22-23; Luke 9:43-45

THURSDAY: Matthew 17:24-27

FRIDAY: Mark 9:33-50; Matthew 18:1-9; Luke 9:46-50

Discussion Questions

1. In the light of what Jesus said to His disciples earlier (Mark 8:31-38), why did Jesus reveal Himself so gloriously?

2. What marvellous truth do we learn about the appearance of Moses and Elijah talking to Jesus?

3. Why did Jesus forbid Peter, John and James to tell the others about what they saw happen to Him on the mountain?

4. Why were the disciples unsuccessful in casting out the demon from the boy?

5. What can we learn about faith or believing from the conversation between the man, whose only son was demon-possessed, and Jesus?

6. How does prayer and faith relate to one another?

7. Why were the disciples afraid to ask Jesus the meaning of His betrayal, death and resurrection?

8. What is the principle underlying Jesus' action in paying the tax?

9. Why did the disciples argue over who should be the greatest? What was their idea about Jesus and His mission?

10. Why did Jesus use the child as an illustration to put across His point?

11. Does Jesus mean a person must literally cut off his hand, or foot, or eyes so that he can enter Heaven? If not, what does Jesus mean?

12. What principles of Christian living have you learned from the study?
