

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian Church,
10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 23
THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

INTRODUCTION

Jesus continued His ministry in Judaea. In this lesson, we learn many more precious truths from Jesus. His enemies were relentless in their attempt to ensnare Him so that they could charge Him for any breach of the law and sentence Him to death. Jesus' encounter with the Pharisees and scribes concerning His healing of the dumb man teaches us how to respond to people who are prejudiced against and criticized our Christian faith. We are also instructed that these people in their critical attitude towards the Christian faith might be in danger of reaching a point where they forfeit their own chance of ever being saved. On the other hand, as the disciples of Jesus, we need to learn the extent of our allegiance to Jesus Christ our Lord. Today, many young people need to realize that being born of Christian parents, and brought up in a Christian environment does not make one a Christian. They may think that they are saved and that they are in God's blessing. The truth will be clearly seen in Jesus' conversation with a woman.

Many people today expect miracles to happen whenever evangelists of Jesus Christ proclaim the gospel message. They expect supernatural things (especially healing) to happen because in the days of Jesus' ministry, Jesus performed many miracles. Did Jesus perform miracles every time when He preached concerning the kingdom of God? We will know the answer when we study this lesson. The expectation for miracles to be done or happen today whenever the gospel message is preached is not the norm for Christian evangelism.

Christians who profess belief in Jesus must demonstrate that they are totally loyal and faithful to Him. There is no middle road, which is a much popular stance nowadays. Today, the prevailing spirit is love at all costs even at the exclusion of faith and truth in Jesus Christ. Related to this sentiment are the priorities of our value system. Whose criteria evaluate the priorities and values of life – God's or man's? These are important things that need to be addressed, and there is no greater authority than that of the Bible where we can find the true answers to our problems.

OUTLINE

1. A House Divided Will Fall (Luke 11:14-28, Matthew 12:43-45)
2. An Evil Generation Seeks a Sign (Luke 11:20-32)

3. Parable of the Lighted Candle (Luke 11:33-36)
4. Condemnation of the Pharisees (Luke 11:37-44)
5. Warning Against Hypocrisy (Luke 11:45-12:12)
6. Warning Against Covetousness (Luke 12:13-34)

COMMENTARY

A House Divided Will Fall

Jesus cast out a devil from a dumb person, and the man spoke. The miracle resulted in different kinds of response from the people. Some were amazed. Some charged that Jesus cast out the devil by the authority of the chief of the devils. Some were sceptical and wanted a greater sign from Jesus to prove His power and His claim of Messiahship.

Jesus addressed the charge that He cast out the devil in the name of Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. Beelzebub was a popular name at that time for the prince of the devils. Jesus argued that the charge was illogical and absurd. Why would Satan weaken and destroy his own kingdom by allowing his demons to war against one another? A nation that is divided will not be strong and eventually will be destroyed by others. This miracle was not the only one which Jesus did in casting out the demons or unclean spirits. Jesus had done many such cases. Were all the cases in the name of Beelzebub

(Satan)? If they were so, then there are divisions in Satan's kingdom and that does not say much about the kingdom – in disarray, and heading for destruction. Jesus further argued that if I cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub then by whom do the disciples of the religious leaders cast out devils? They will be your judges was Christ's judgment on His enemies. The first argument was based upon *reason*. This second argument was based upon *experience*. It is known to the enemies of Christ that their disciples also practiced demon casting but not with the kind of success of Christ. If mine, Jesus says, is by the power of Beelzebub as you say, [remembering that these were healed] then your disciples' demon casting [which is weak and impotent] would come from which source? On the other hand if mine is of God, then God's kingdom is now among you!

Jesus used a simple parable to illustrate that the source of His power in casting out devils was God. When a strong man guards a person's home, his goods are safe and secure. It would take a stronger man to overcome the strong man and take all his goods. Hence, Jesus taught the important truth that the Spirit of God that is in the citizen of the kingdom of God is greater than Satan, who has no choice but to vacate the person. A disciple of Jesus will agree with this truth, whereas a person who does not follow Jesus not only disagrees but he is an enemy. There is no middle ground in following Jesus. How can a true Christian serve Jesus and Satan

simultaneously? There is no compromise. It is either black or white.

Having taught with power and authority, a woman in the crowd said to Jesus in a loud voice, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked." This woman was saying that whoever was Jesus' mother was most blessed. Then Jesus replied the woman, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it." Jesus said that if one is to be blessed by God he must hear and obey the Word of God. Physical relationship does not guarantee a spiritual relationship with God. The blessedness which comes from God that is more superior and greater comes from hearing and obeying the Word of God, or doing the Will of God.

In this regard, even Mary, who was espoused to Joseph, and being the mother of Jesus, needed to hear and obey the Word of God to be saved and blessed of God. The teaching concerning Mary the mother of Jesus that she is sinless has no Scriptural ground and is dangerously erroneous. Similarly, the fact that children born of Christian parents are automatically saved and blessed of God is also without Bible support. While it is good that they are born into a Christian family and they enjoy the privilege of being taught by their parents about Jesus, they must still "hear the Word of God believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and obey God's Word" in order to have that

personal blessed spiritual relationship with God.

An Evil Generation Seeks a Sign

Some people demanded that Jesus perform a sign from heaven. Obviously they were thinking of a greater miracle than the casting of the devil out of the dumb man. Jesus denied their request. There is nothing wrong for Jesus to perform sign-miracles. Indeed, Jesus had performed many sign-miracles. The reason why Jesus denied their request was not that He had no power to perform another sign-miracle. Rather, the problem was with the people. Jesus described the generation of His day as "an evil generation." They sought a sign from heaven and their request was not for genuine reasons. They wanted to tempt Him. Jesus already performed a miracle before their eyes. However they refused to accept it as proof of Jesus' claim of who He is – He is the Son of God and consequently God Himself in the midst of sinful men. If Jesus were to perform another miracle, it would make no difference. They would still reject the moral and spiritual significance of the miracle. In fact, if Jesus had acceded to their request by giving another sign, Jesus would be seen by them as admitting that their scepticism was reasonable and valid. It was an evil generation and no sign would be given.

The only sign that Jesus gave was "the sign of Jonas the prophet." Jonah was "a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this

generation.” While Matthew drew a parallel between Jonah’s three days and nights in the belly of the great fish and the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, Luke did not clearly draw this parallel. Just as Jonah was sent by God to preach repentance to the Ninevites who were under God’s judgement and condemnation, Jesus too was sent by God to a people who are also under God’s wrath and judgement. Jonah was a reluctant messenger. But Jesus was willing and came from Heaven. Jesus was greater than Jonah. If the Ninevites could rise up, they would chide this evil generation. The queen of Sheba travelled a long distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Yet Jesus’ hearers rejected Him although He spoke with so much more wisdom and truth, and Jesus was more superior than Solomon. Similarly, if the queen of Sheba could rise up, she would condemn this “evil generation” for their hard-heartedness.

Parable of the Lighted Candle

Jesus spoke a parable to the people. A person who lights a candle does not hide the candle but places the candle on a stand so that people who come into the house may see the light. This is obviously true, for no one would light a candle and then hide its light. In a dark place, it is absurd for one to light a candle, and instead of putting it on a high place to light the place, one goes and hides it. The purpose of lighting the candle was to give light. The light of man as Jesus described is his eye. If his eye is “single” meaning honest, sincere, uncomplicated by prejudices and ulterior

motives, the person will have light. In other words, the person whose eye is single will admit the light of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus into his mind and heart. But if the “eye is evil”, it is full of darkness. Jesus cautioned us that we should take heed that the light which is in us is not darkness. Having the light of Jesus, we should not hide the light but let it shine that others might be able to see and benefit from it too.

Condemnation of the Pharisees

After Jesus completed His teaching on the response to God’s Word, a Pharisee invited Jesus to his home for a meal. Jesus accepted the invitation. Jesus was being watched by the Pharisee who was surprised that Jesus did not wash His hands first before eating. This was a tradition added to the Law by the Pharisees as a sign of piety. This brought a rebuke from Jesus who broadened the issue to include the washing of cups and plates. Jesus taught that cleanliness of things outside a person is less important than cleanliness of things inside a person, which the Pharisee ignored.

In the first pronouncement of “woe”, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for emphasizing on the tithing of money and rue (a certain kind of herbs that was known to have medicinal values) and other herbs, and neglecting the more important things like justice and the love for God. The second “woe” Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for was their desire to seek attention and honour in the synagogues. The final woe on the

Pharisees and scribes was direct. Jesus rebuked them for they were “as graves which appear not (that is, unmarked),” and caused people to unknowingly come into contact with a dead body. According to Jewish law, coming into contact with a dead body was unclean. The thrust of Jesus’ rebuke was that people who followed the Pharisees and scribes would unknowingly come into contact with things that were unclean, thus leading people to death. The Pharisees presented themselves as pure but in reality they were leaders of spiritual uncleanness. Their teachings had a destructive influence on others. Instead of leading people to keep the Word of God and to heaven, they were leading them to the grave.

Warning Against Hypocrisy

A scribe then spoke up. He remarked that Jesus’ rebuke would include the scribes also. Jesus’ rebuke of the scribes was as strong as those against the Pharisees. Jesus gave a threefold rebuke of the scribes. The first “woe” rebukes their hypocrisy. They imposed on the people heavy burdens of the law which they themselves did not observe. The next “woe” rebukes them for reflecting the spirit of their ancestors who rejected and killed the prophets whom God sent. They claimed that their building of the tomb stone in memory of the prophets whom God sent, but they reject those who inherited their message. Therefore the tombs which they built were now become memorials of their rejection of the teachings of Jesus, just like their fathers. Their act

which seemed to be honourable, in fact, showed the direct opposite. Jesus explained that they were as guilty as their fathers who rejected the message of the prophets and killed them and the apostles whom God sent. Jesus referred to a whole line of prophets from Abel (Genesis 4:8) to Zachariah (2 Chronicles 24:20-25).¹ The third “woe” rebukes them for taking away “the key of knowledge.” They were obstructing people from knowing God. As scribes they were supposed to lead people to

¹ Genesis 4:8 And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

2 Chronicles 24:20 And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you. {came...: Heb. clothed} 21 And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD. 22 Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon it, and require it. 23 And it came to pass at the end of the year that the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus. {at the...: Heb. in the revolution of the year} {Damascus: Heb. Darnesek} 24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash. 25 And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.

have the knowledge of God, but instead they led them away from knowing God. The scribes had failed to enter into a true understanding of God, and had become a hindrance to others trying to gain such knowledge. The scribes joined by the Pharisees began to provoke Jesus to say more things with the evil intent of trapping Jesus.

Jesus now turned His attention to the multitudes. He addressed His disciples first of all. He exhorted and warned them of the teachings of the Pharisees. They were hypocrites. Nothing could be hidden for all things would be revealed and made known. Jesus called on them to fear and trust God. They should witness the Son of man before all people. They should not fear man who can only destroy the body and who has no power after that. But rather they ought to fear the One who has the power to cast man into hell. Jesus continued and called on His disciples to trust in God for He cares for them just as He cares for the sparrows. They are much more valuable than the sparrows.

Jesus pointed and warned them that there are two kinds of sin. A word that is spoken against the Son of man can be forgiven, but any word spoken against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. In the former one can find that person and make an apology and make whatever earthly restitution is needed to pay for his sin. But in the latter, this sin against the Holy Spirit is very serious. The Holy Spirit is He that convicts and

converts the world of sin and righteousness. If any person were to sin against the work of the Holy Spirit, there is no other greater power that God can use to convict him of his sins and be led to his conversion. If a person rejects the conviction of his sins by the Holy Spirit, there is no other person or means that he can ever realize his need of Jesus as his Saviour. He damns himself to hell. He has rejected the only way of salvation that is able to deliver him from the bondage of sin and the eternal punishment in Hell's fire.

Warning Against Covetousness

Jesus was asked by someone to settle a family dispute concerning inheritance. This man recognized Jesus as a rabbi, for it was natural for the Jews to ask a rabbi to arbitrate their disputes. However, Jesus refused to do so. Instead Jesus spoke on the danger of covetousness. A man's wealth or worth is not measured in terms of his wealth and material possessions. Jesus illustrated it with a parable. There was a man who prospered greatly as a result of his farming business. He pulled down his smaller barns and built new ones to store the abundance of his fruits and goods. After that he said to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." On the surface, what this rich man did seems natural and legitimate. There is nothing wrong in increasing his wealth. There is nothing wrong in pulling down old barns and building new ones. There is nothing wrong in enjoying the fruit of his labour.

However, on closer examination it shows the man lived selfishly, without caring for the needy, the widows and orphans. He cared only for himself. He displayed that degree of self-confidence and ability that left God out of the picture completely. In other words, his wealth became his idol and god. According to Jesus, such a person is a fool. He fails to realize that his life can be unexpectedly cut short by God, who has power over his life. He lives selfishly without thought for others who are needy. God rejects his covetousness. God takes action, calls him a fool, and requires his soul. Jesus then remarked: "Then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" The man, who had amassed his wealth, could not take anything with him to the grave. Such will be the person who lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Jesus then turned his attention to His disciples. Jesus exhorted them: "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body what ye shall put on." Jesus called on His disciples not to worry about the provision of their food and clothing. The life of a person is more important than food, and the body is more important than clothing. What is the use of anxiously caring and worrying over the material things of life on earth and neglect the issues of eternal life which are more important. Jesus encouraged His disciples to consider the birds and the lilies. The birds do not sow and God feeds them. The lilies last only for a day,

and yet God made them more beautiful than the glory of Solomon's clothes. Worrying does not improve one's condition and circumstances.

So stop worrying, but have faith and trust in God! Increase one's faith in God. Trust God for the necessities of life. To the one who seeks to do God's will, God promises that the necessities of life will be added to him. It is God's desire to give His disciples the kingdom of God, which is the ultimate destiny of man. The kingdom of God is far more beautiful and wonderful than the kingdom of man! Jesus then called on His disciples to sell their possessions and give charitably to the caring of others rather than to indulge themselves. By doing so they would be rewarded by God in heaven, and the reward would be permanent where it will not corrupt and perish. This decision is a matter of the heart. Where the treasure is, there the heart will be also. If our treasure is in terms of God and His kingdom, we would consider God and His kingdom more important and precious. We will then set our heart and mind on things above and not on things below.

PRACTICAL VALUE

A house divided cannot stand. This is the truth which Jesus teaches us. We can apply this truth to ourselves as individuals, to our family, and to the church. If we as individuals are not single-minded but divided in our mind and heart, wavering all the time, we

become weak and make very little progress in our life. If divisions happen in a family, the family does not stay together, it will be broken and unhappiness rules. If the church is divisive, it will become weak and will not be strong to fulfil the purpose for which God had intended it. It will be weak in its evangelistic and educational programmes. Eventually it will become like a club existing for the sake of existence.

When Jesus comes into our life, we have to make a choice. Jesus demands that we are to be His totally. We have to make a choice between Him and the rest of the world. We are either for Him or against Him. There is no middle ground. There is no compromise. Jesus divides people, He divides the good from the bad, and He divides truth from error. If we profess to believe in Him and are called by His name as His disciples, we must be completely loyal to Him. We hear His Word and keep it.

As Christians who have the Light who is Jesus, we are called to let our light so shine among men that others may see and give glory to God. We must not be afraid and be ashamed to let the light, which is in us, shine. We cannot be a secret Christian.

Jesus' condemnation of the Pharisees and the scribes for being hypocrites should strike a serious note in our hearts. We must never be hypocrites. A Christian hypocrite is self-righteous and is capable of plucking verses out of Scriptures and applying

them to others while he does not obey them himself. We must never be guilty of this sin. At the same time, we must be discerning and must not be deceived by Christian hypocrites who outwardly appear to be "angels of light" but inwardly ravaging wolves. They speak fair with their mouth, but they scheme foul in their heart, from such keep away.

God's intended final destiny for man is His kingdom. All those who believe in Jesus have a part in His kingdom. His kingdom is pictured in many portions of Scripture, chiefly in the book of Revelation (chapters 21, 22). If that is so, we should not live covetously and selfishly while we sojourn on this earth. God cares for the furtherance of His kingdom and the needy who are not cared for. As Christians who have been much blessed by God, let us reflect the heart of God by stretching ourselves and our resources to advance His kingdom by winning souls and to help others who are in need. AMEN

Matt 7:21-23;

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

2 Timothy 2:19

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. {sure: or, steady}

CAN YOU FACE THE MUSIC

The expression "face the music" is said to have originated in Japan. According to the story, one man in the imperial orchestra couldn't play a note. Being a person of great influence and wealth, he had demanded that he be given a place in the group because he wanted to "perform" before the emperor. The conductor agreed to let him sit in the second row of the orchestra, even though he couldn't read music. He was given a flute, and when a concert would begin, he'd raise his instrument, pucker his lips, and move his fingers. He would go through all the motions of playing, but he never made a sound. This deception continued for two years.

Then a new conductor took over. He told the orchestra that he wanted to

audition each player personally. One by one they performed in his presence. Then the turn of the flutist came. He was frantic with worry, so he pretended to be sick. However, the doctor who was ordered to examine him declared that he was perfectly well. The conductor insisted that the man appear and demonstrate his skill. Shamefacedly he had to confess that he was a fake. He was unable to "face the music".

In the realm of Christian service, many professing believers go through the motions, but they are only pretenders. Someday they will be called upon to stand before the Judge of heaven and earth, and their deception will be revealed. God will then separate the "phonies" from the real Christians. No one will be able to hide in the crowd. Each will be made to "face the music."

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Luke 11:14-28, Matthew 12:43-45, Hebrew 2:14-15

TUESDAY: Luke 11:29-32; Luke 11:33-36

WEDNESDAY: Luke 11:37-44

THURSDAY: Luke 11:45-12:12

FRIDAY: Luke 12:13-34; John 17:3

Discussion Questions

1. How unreasonable was the charge against Jesus that He cast out devils in the name of Beelzebub, the chief of the devils?

2. In what way was that generation of Christ evil? How about the generation of today, are they any better?

3. Why did Jesus not do a miracle in their midst and then say that he will give them only the sign of Jonah?

4. What was the sign of Jonah, the prophet?

5. In what way would the queen of the south rise up in judgement against the people during Jesus' time?

6. What modern day parallels do you find today which emphasize the external over and above the internal? Does the external have its proper place in the Bible?

8. In light of 12:1-12, what should the believer take to heart that he would not be afraid?

7. What three charges did Jesus level against the lawyers? What is the meaning of "woe"?

9. What does a man's life consist of?

10. What did the rich man do that was so wrong? Do you know of such a person? Are you like him? Explain.

11. Can one's devotion to Christ and life of faith be measured in terms of time? Explain your answer. Is 12:33 for all of us today?
