

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 24

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

CONTENTS

- 1. The Imminence of Christ's Return: Luke 12:35-59.**
- 2. Sin, Punishment, and Repentance: Luke 13:1-9.**
- 3. Healing of the Hunchbacked Woman on the Sabbath: Luke 13:10-17.**
- 4. More Parables of the Kingdom of God: Luke 13:18-21.**
- 5. The Feast of Dedication: John 10:22-39.**

INTRODUCTION

How do the disciples of Jesus live in the light of His absence and His return? Jesus taught His disciples the attitude that they should have, and the kind of character and conduct that they should develop in themselves while they live on earth and await for His return. Jesus also spoke about the timing concerning His return. Every disciple is a steward of God, in particular, the leaders. How should they conduct themselves while waiting for the return of the Master? How would one interpret the horrific atrocity which brought the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York causing the

sufferings and deaths of thousands of people? Are victims more sinful than others? This question would be answered by Jesus. How can we be sure that we are genuine sheep of our Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ? This lesson touches these pertinent issues.

UNDERSTANDING

The Immanency of Christ's Return:

Luke 12:35-59

This pericope (a passage extracted from the Bible) emphasizes on being ready for Jesus' return. There will be blessings for those who are ready and watchful for Jesus' return. On the other hand there will be punishment for those who do not respond accordingly. Jesus gave three brief parables imaging the preparedness of His disciples relating to His return. The first image: "Let your loins be girded about," pictures **readiness**. The second image: "and your lights burning," pictures **watchfulness** on the part of the disciples to be ready even in time of darkness. These two images call on His disciples to be ready and watchful for His return at any time of the day or night – in good or bad times. The third image: "ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately," is a short parable, picturing the disciples' **ever watchful readiness** to open the door when the master returns. Clearly these three parables teach that the

disciples of Jesus should be **ever ready and watchful** for His return whether in the day or in the night. And all His disciples who respond accordingly, being ever ready and watchful, will be blessed. Jesus promised that they will be seated with Him at His banquet table, and He will serve them. In reference to the timing of His return, Jesus stressed that it is not revealed. Jesus exhorted that His coming might happen at an hour when they least expect Him. So, be ever ready and watchful because the timing of His return is not known. It is imminent.

Jesus' answer to Peter's question concerns the character and conduct of stewards and leaders. Jesus pronounced blessings to all His servants who carried out the will of the Lord. The blessing is for the faithful and wise servants or stewards who know that their Lord is coming and they were ready and waiting.

But Jesus also spoke of the unfaithful steward. This servant is not interested in His Lord's return. Moreover, he abuses his authority, and engages in self-indulgence literally and figuratively expressed the expression "begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken." And when his Lord returns at an hour in which he least expects, he would look him up and assigned him a portion with the unbelievers. This judgement is rejection of this steward. This steward in the first instance is not a true steward of the Lord, for a true steward will love his master and obey and do his will. Such stewards are no different from the hypocrites, who have a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.

Another steward or servant who knows the will of his Lord, and does not prepare himself, he will be severely punished. But the steward who does not know the will of his Lord and did not prepare himself to receive His Lord, he will be punished to a lesser extent. We see that the basis of the judgement of the steward is based on knowledge. The one who knows more, the greater would be his responsibility. As the disciples of Jesus, we would want to know more and do His will, and be blessed by the Lord.

Then Jesus turned to speak concerning His desire to complete His mission. His allusion to sending "fire on the earth" was a reference to His preaching and teaching. Jesus said that He came to judge and divide people. Jesus' message demands that people make a decision to repent, believe and be saved. Not every one who hears will repent, believe and be saved. Therefore, division will occur. It is, therefore, a serious matter how one responds to Jesus' message. It is not a game. It has temporal and eternal consequences. A person is either for Jesus or against Jesus. There is no middle ground, one foot for, and the other foot against. It is either for salvation or perdition, for heaven or hell.

Jesus then turned to the people. He chided them for being hypocrites who were able to discern the weather, but were not able to discern that judgement against them was near. They could tell a storm was imminent, but they could not see the moral and spiritual storm that was blowing up around them. In spite of the many sign-miracles that

Jesus performed before them, the Pharisees and the scribes failed to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah. They even charged Jesus for being in league with Satan. Judgement upon them was imminent. God was against them and the earlier they came to terms with Jesus the better it would be for them.

Sin, Punishment, and Repentance:
Luke 13:1-9.

Some people told Jesus about certain Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Jesus, knowing their thoughts, asked them whether they were thinking that the Galileans suffered such things because they were more a sinner than others. Jesus answered them unequivocally in the negative, and enjoined them to likewise repent. The other incident which Jesus brought concerned eighteen who died when the tower of Siloam collapsed upon them. The lesson Jesus was teaching was how they should interpret these things. In those days (even today) people believed in God's providential government in the affairs of men. Therefore they were of the opinion that these victims must have committed some dreadful sins that God allowed these kinds of sufferings to befall them. Jesus said that their interpretation was wrong. Jesus told them that except they too repent, they would all likewise perish. It is true that some disasters and atrocities may be allowed by God to happen to certain people or nations as a punishment for their particular heinous sins. There are enough examples in the OT to support

this. The fact of the matter is that all have sinned and all are under the wrath of God. All deserve to be punished. The wonderful thing about this is: not that some people are allowed to suffer atrocities and accidents because of their sins, but that any one could be spared. Jesus repeated it twice that unless we repent, we shall all perish, not necessarily in some terrible accident or calamity, but under the wrath of God eternally.

Jesus stressed again the need to repent or else perish. Jesus spoke a parable about the owner of a fig tree vineyard. The owner had come every year for three years to look for fruit on the fig tree, but he found none. He ordered the tree to be cut down. But the gardener interceded and asked the owner to give the tree another one year, and if the tree did not bear fruit, then cut it down. Three major points stand out: (1) Jesus was telling his hearers that if they did not produce fruit to God's satisfaction they could not be spared indefinitely. There is a cut off time; (2) if not for the fact that the gardener interceded in behalf of the tree, the tree would have been cut down. People should not deceive themselves that judgment against them was not final and uncertain; (3) that the sinner is spared for the moment not because of his own merits but because of the intercession of the gardener. The understanding of the parable is not complicated. The execution of sentence of sinners is delayed because of the mercies of Jesus so that they may have an extended opportunity to repent and be saved.

***Healing of the Hunchbacked
Woman on the Sabbath:***

Luke 13:10-17.

On a Sabbath day, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. There was a woman who was afflicted with a physical deformity in which her posture was bent and could not stand up straight. She had this infirmity for eighteen years, and Satan was the cause of it.

Jesus saw her and called her to Him. Jesus then healed her by laying His hands on her. She was immediately healed and could stand up straight. The ruler of the synagogue was indignant and began to teach the people that they should work only for six days and on the seventh they should not come to the synagogue to be healed because it was the Sabbath day. Jesus responded by exposing the hypocrisy of the ruler of the synagogue. Jesus pointed out that they had let loose their herd and taken them to water on the Sabbath day. Should not the woman who was a daughter of Abraham, who was a friend of God, deserve to be freed from the bondage of Satan for these last eighteen years? When the people heard Jesus' words they rejoiced, and Jesus' adversaries were ashamed. Once again, the principle of keeping the Sabbath holy unto God is reiterated: it is lawful to do acts of kindness, mercy, and necessity on the Sabbath.

***More Parables of the Kingdom
of God:***

Luke 13:18-21.

The healing and liberation of the woman who was bound by Satan for eighteen years,

demonstrated the power and authority of Jesus over Satan and his cohorts. That explained in a way Jesus' previous declaration that the kingdom of God is at hand. Here Jesus explained the idea of the kingdom of God with two parables: the parable of the Mustard Seed (vv.18-19), and the parable of the Leaven (vv. 20-21).

Jesus revealed some qualities and nature of the kingdom of God. The first parable of the mustard seed is simple. The kingdom is like a small mustard seed and it grows to a big tree enough for the birds to nest. Two significant features bear out about the kingdom. First, Jesus was saying that the kingdom would start small but it would gradually grow and end up big. The second significant feature is that the birds found a resting place and nest in the tree. If Jesus spoke to Jews, then the tree would symbolize the kingdom of God starting with the nation of Israel, and the various other Gentile races or nations will find shelter and rest in the tree, These other races are believers not unbelievers.

Jesus presented another parable about the kingdom of God. This parable pictures the kingdom of God as that of a woman who added leaven into her bread-dough and the leaven permeates it through and through. Leaven is used by Jesus in this parable as having a positive effect. Usually leaven is used to symbolize a negative effect. The thrust of this second parable is that the kingdom of God will **imperceptibly** and eventually permeate the world. As it is right now, it is only within the boundaries of Palestine. In the

aspect of growing larger it corresponds with that the parable of the mustard seed. Putting the two parables together, we see the kingdom of God **starting small and gradually and invisibly grow so big that it permeates the world and becomes a haven for believers of many races and nations!**

The Feast of Dedication:

John 10:22-39.

The Feast of Dedication was celebrated by the Jews (and even today, called **Hanukkah**) in commemoration of the purification and rededication of the temple by Judas the Maccabee in the year 165 B.C. on the 25th Kislev (late November or December). The temple was desecrated by the wicked Syrian Antiochus Ephiphanes in 167 B.C. The Feast of Dedication lasted for eight days.

Jesus was walking in Solomon's porch. It was winter time and the rainy season. This explains why Jesus walked under the shelter of Solomon's Porch. Some Jews saw Jesus and they gathered round Him. They said to him, "How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Was their question sincere? No, it was not because these Jewish leaders wanted to ensnare Jesus. If Jesus answered directly that He was the Christ (the Messiah) they would report Him to the Romans. To the Jews, the Messiah or the Christ was a military revolutionary leader. The Romans would come and not tolerate Jesus. They would see him as a threat to the Roman Empire. Jesus answered that had

He told them, they would not believe.

Jesus further added that the reason they would not believe was because they were not His sheep. Jesus again used the analogy of the shepherd and his sheep. Jesus remarked that His sheep hear His voice. Jesus would know them, and they would follow Jesus. He gave them eternal life, and they would never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of His hand. Jesus continued and revealed that His Father is greater than all, and the sheep He gave to Him would be safely secured because no man was able "to pluck them out" of His Father's hand. In addition, Jesus also held them securely, and no one could pluck them out of His hand. Note that the eternal security of believers lies in the hands of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus then declared that He and His Father are one. On hearing this last statement, the Jews stooped to pick up stones to stone Jesus to death. They wanted to stone Jesus to death because they charged that He had blasphemed God by making Himself equal to God. Jesus quoted Psalm 82:6, in which the Psalmist had called them "gods". They are "gods" because they received and proclaimed the Word of God. Should they not call Jesus the same, One who came from heaven and who gave them the Word of God? If they were not satisfied, Jesus called them to believe the stupendous works that He had done so that they might know, and believe and be saved.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Jesus spoke again of the kingdom of God and that means that it must have a king who must return to establish his kingdom. Jesus counselled His disciples to be ready and watchful while they wait for His return. The hour of His return is not known because it was not revealed. Nevertheless, Jesus said that it would come suddenly and surprisingly. So His disciples must daily be ready and watchful. Moreover, the will of the Father is that we, as the disciples of Jesus, should occupy ourselves by doing His will. As God's stewards or servants by taking care of the flock, we need to be faithful and diligent. Christ warned that all who would follow Him and do His will would have to face opposition and even division within their family.

We must be very careful to interpret those accidents or atrocities that happen to persons do not necessary mean that they are punished for their sins. Jesus taught us the right attitude when we witness such happenings: repent or we too will perish. We have all sinned too and we, like those who perish, deserve the same. The fact that we are still alive should move us to serve Him, as believers. For non-believers they are to repent, believe and be saved.

The question of keeping the Sabbath holy unto God was brought up again. Jesus was charged for healing the woman on a Sabbath day. Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. We learn the principle that deeds of mercy, kindness and necessity may be done on the Lord's Day,

and that we should not behave ourselves like hypocrites do.

As we are looking forward to the return of Jesus, and the setting up of the kingdom of God, we need to exercise patience. It takes a process of time for the growth of the kingdom of God. The kingdom grows gradually and eventually it will encompass the world. It will come, but we need to wait, and while waiting, we need to occupy ourselves in serving the King.

Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." This is one way we can examine our profession of faith in Jesus. Are we a true sheep of Jesus, our great Shepherd? Do we hear His voice and follow Him? This is a good test of the sincerity of our belief in Jesus and our commitment to Him.

These are precious lessons that God gives to us so that we might know how to live on this earth as we wait for His return, ever ready, watchful, and faithful that He might have the pre-eminence, the praise, and the glory. AMEN

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965)

Giving is the secret of a healthy life. Not necessarily money, but whatever a man has of encouragement and sympathy and understanding.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (1874-1960)

Have you ever stopped to think that Christ never gave anyone money? The riches of the world were his for the taking and his to

give away, yet when the poor and the hungry came to him, he didn't give them money, and he rarely gave them food; he gave them love and service and the greatest gift of all-himself.

The world asks, "How much does he give?" Christ asks, "Why does he give?"

John Raleigh Mott (1865-1955)

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LESSON 24

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Luke 12:35-59.

TUESDAY: Luke 13:1-9; Romans 1:18-20; 2:1.¹

WEDNESDAY: Luke 13:10-17.

¹ Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. {in them: or, to them} 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: {so...: or, that they may be}

Romans 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

THURSDAY: Luke 13:18-21.

FRIDAY: John 10:22-39.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspect of readiness and un-readiness relating to the Lord's return is shown in Luke 12:35-36?

2. How do we be "watchful" and "ever ready" in this age and time?

3. Suggest some ways where the church can be ready and watchful?

4. What warning did Jesus give to His disciples and the crowd respectively before His return?

5. The Jews looked at victims of tragedies as people who deserved to die. Are we like them today? Why do people normally feel this way?

6. What does the parable of the fig tree teach us about God's character, Jesus' mission, and the response that is expected of us?

7. In what way was the ruler of the synagogue a hypocrite? Are you a hypocrite?

8. What principle can we formulate about keeping the Sabbath? Does it have to do with following a list of do's and don'ts?

9. How is the kingdom of God like as a mustard seed?

10. How is the kingdom of God like leaven?

11. Is the doctrine of the assurance of salvation and abused or misunderstood doctrine?

12. How do the leaders interpret Jesus' claim to be one with God? What difference does it make whether Jesus is God or just a man?
