

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
[Adapted from Bethel Bible-
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Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 26A

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

Jesus continued His ministry in Perea before He re-entered Judaea when He was summoned to heal Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. Jesus' enemies, the Pharisees, always looked for ways to criticize Jesus. In this encounter, Jesus had to rebuke them for their covetousness and the dangers that the love of money can put a person into. We live in an imperfect world and offences may be committed against us. Jesus teaches us how to resolve offences done against us in order to keep the unity of the bond we have in Jesus. The raising of Lazarus of Bethany from the dead reveals many precious lessons concerning life and death and how we can be comforted and overcome the grief we experience in such circumstances.

There are many theological truths and practical lessons that we can learn and be encouraged in our Christian walk in the passages which we are going to study. Let us read and examine them carefully and prayerfully.

UNDERSTANDING

GOD KNOWS THE HEARTS OF MEN:
LUKE 16:14-18

When Jesus had eaten and drunk with the publicans and sinners, the Pharisees criticized Jesus for being lax. Jesus had just taught His disciples and the people the proper attitude and use of money. They were told to use money to make for themselves eternal friends and lay up treasures in heaven. Now, the Pharisees who were "lovers of money" criticized Him for being too strict. They derided Jesus for His teaching on serving God and mammon. They had prided themselves for the standards that they had set for themselves, and justify themselves before men that they had done the right thing by observing the Law. However, Jesus told them that God knew their hearts, and what they esteemed highly concerning the Law and their traditions was an abomination in the sight of God.

The ways and manners of the world are an abomination to God. It is not only a matter of wrong but one of abomination. Self righteous men find their acceptance and justification in the face of man. They do that by pleasing man. They obey man made rules and criteria for acceptance. They dance to the tune of sinful men. How sad to find these religious leaders dancing to the world tune of

wicked men. They were men pleasers. They have their reward.

But God sees beyond the external. The trappings of sinful man cannot cover their sin stained hearts. Their hypocrisy is like a mask that they wear for man to see but God sees through them as if they are not there. God examines the motive behind every word spoken and deed done. What is HIGHLY esteemed [lit. lifted skyward] by sinful men God regards them as abomination. Man's Nobel peace prizes, academy awards, president scholarships, title of world's richest man, etc. are detestable in the sight of God! What a contrast! The standard of God and the ways of man are incompatible. Isaiah 55:8-9, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."*

Jesus explained that the Law and the Prophets existed until John. [The Law and the Prophets refer to the entire OT.] And since the time of John, the kingdom of God has been proclaimed. What it means here is that what the OT had been preaching and emphasizing has finally come to pass. The OT has been focussing on the first coming of the Messiah. Now He is here. Where the King of kings is, the kingdom of God is said to have come. Every man presseth into the kingdom of God even as the Pharisees remain outside. Both the OT and the NT saints will be found in the Kingdom of God but not the enemies of Christ.

The preaching of the gospel of the kingdom of God does not mean that the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament have been rendered obsolete and ineffective. Jesus

explained that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one "tittle of the Law" to fail. Jesus' words established the permanency and power of the Law and the Prophets. Every diligent student of the Law and the Prophets would be able to prepare himself for the coming of the promised kingdom, and to be faithful before God and man. The ushering of the new era of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of God does not negate the power and the authority of the Law and the Prophets. Jesus then cited the Pharisees' lenient observance of the law concerning marriage. They had easily permitted divorce, and Jesus declared that a man who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. Any man who comforts himself with a loose view of God's law is in grave danger of God's judgement.

Today, the marriage covenant has come under constant attack. These attacks come from the world of entertainment and this is all around us. Our desire to keep our marriage vows until death parts us has dipped drastically. Divorce seems to be a very viable option for some people including some professing Christians. "Christians who have a low view of God's Word must check their salvation to see if they are really born again. They manipulate God's Word to suit their sinful habits."

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS:

LUKE 16:19-31

Touching on the dangers of the love of money, Jesus proceeded by telling them the "parable" of a rich man and a beggar, named Lazarus. Before we continue to consider the main point of this "parable", it would be useful to ascertain whether this is a parable technically. There are some significant features in this story

that differentiate it from the other parables of Christ. This is not introduced as a parable like many other parables of Christ. The use of “like” or “as” is not found here. Parables are always true accounts with spiritual meanings. Likewise this is a parable where the places are real and the people are also real.

Jesus gave this account of the rich man and the beggar in order to illustrate the grave dangers of the love of money. The account moves in three parts: the rich man and Lazarus in their lives on earth (vv.19-21); the rich man and Lazarus in their lives in the world after physical death (vv.22-23); and the rich man’s plea to Abraham (vv.24-31).

There was “a certain rich man” (not an imaginary person), who was dressed in “purple and fine linen,” the most expensive materials. Every day he “fared sumptuously,” having his meals in grand banquets. He lived a life of extreme comfort and opulence every day. The omission of his name is significant for it can refer to any rich man whose behaviour fits this particular rich man.

There was “a certain beggar, whose name was Lazarus (an abbreviated form of the Hebrew name “Eleazar” which means “God’s help”). This is interesting. Conscious of the meaning of his name, Lazarus must have daily looked up to God for help. He “was laid” at the gate of the rich man’s house. The passive tense indicates that he was crippled and had to be carried. Some one must have carried him to where he sits daily. In addition to that, his whole body was covered with sores causing him to suffer. This would also include the smell that these sores would emit. Lazarus was not a pretty sight. His daily hope was that he could be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich

man’s table. His pitiable state was compounded by licking of his sores by dogs.

We must imagine that as the rich man daily went in and out of his house, he must have noticed Lazarus but did not care for him, otherwise, Jesus would have mentioned it. This rich man’s love for money was so consuming that he became insensitive to the needs and sufferings of others. This is a very sad scene but not an uncommon scene, even in today’s standard.

“And it came to pass” that the beggar died. It is mentioned that the beggar died first for obvious reasons. His physical health was not good. He did not have enough food to eat daily. When he died, he was carried by the angels into “Abraham’s bosom.” Although he was not recognized by man or may even be despised, Lazarus was known by God. Now, the rich man also died. This was inevitable and inescapable. He could take nothing with him. Naked he came, and naked he went. He was also buried. There were no angels to carry him to Abraham’s bosom. In fact, he instantly found himself in hell (Gk. *Hades*). He was in torment. He saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. All will end up in death. Ecclesiastes 9:2-3, *"All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath. This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."*

Death is not the end of life. Life continues in another sphere—the spiritual. Lazarus, who was poor and suffered alone, was in Abraham’s bosom—a blessed place of comfort, where Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel and of all saints, received him into his bosom! *“Abraham’s bosom was a common expression among the Jews for the rest and bliss of heaven. Good men and bad must die. But their souls will live after death, in heaven or hell, according to their character. An impassable barrier will divide them. Those in heaven cannot help those in hell, and none from hell can ever ascend to heaven.”* [Taken from **Family Bible Notes**]

Why was Abraham cited here and not any other prophet? What is the significance of mentioning Abraham’s name? The Jews had always regarded that they were of the descendants of Abraham. They regarded him very highly. The poor Lazarus was in Abraham’s bosom which represents the most affectionate and tender relationship between two individuals. Whereas the rich man which the Pharisees would assume to be found in heaven because of his wealth, was found in Hell, a place of extreme torment. Abraham’s bosom would probably be seen as a synonym for paradise. *“Abraham’s bosom was a phrase taken from the practice of reclining at meals, where the head of one lay on the bosom of another, and the phrase therefore denotes intimacy and friendship. . . . The Jews had no doubt that Abraham was in paradise. To say that Lazarus was in his bosom was therefore the same as to say that he was admitted to heaven and made happy there. The Jews, moreover, boasted very much of being the friends of Abraham and of being his*

descendants, Mt 3:9. To be his friend was, in their view, the highest honour and happiness. Our Saviour therefore showed them that this poor and afflicted man might be raised to the highest happiness, while the rich, who prided themselves on their being descended from Abraham, might be cast away and lost for ever.” [Taken from **Barnes**].

Death reduced the rich man’s stature to nothing. His money could not prevent his death. It could not count for anything at all. He found himself in hell where he was tormented. He pleaded with Abraham to “dip his finger in water, and cool his tongue” for he was tormented in fire. Moreover, there is no way the rich man can cross to Abraham’s bosom — paradise.

This graphic description of hell and paradise shows us that there is no relief for those who are tormented in hell, and that there is no way in which a person can ever cross from hell to paradise or heaven, not even at a future date. The idea of a halfway-house where a person could be purged of all his sins and eventually be cleansed and be transferred to heaven, is totally unscriptural and erroneous. The rich man then turned missionary. He pleaded with Abraham to send Lazarus back to earth in order to testify to his five brothers that they would not end in hell too. Abraham replied that if they did not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they would not be persuaded even if one was resurrected. Therefore, it was futile to send Lazarus back. The power of the preaching of the gospel exceeds that of raising someone from the dead. If they would listen to God’s Word no miracle will move them!! Keep on preaching the complete and pure gospel, brethren.

A good question which we can ask is: Why did the rich man end up in hell? Is it because of his wealth? Is it because of the way he lived, having no compassion on Lazarus? Is it because he did not do good works for the poor? The fact that the rich man did not care for Lazarus could be partly the reason why he was in hell. This needs further explanation because this is not the only reason why he was in hell. If it is so, then salvation is by good works, helping the poor and needy.

Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ and not by works (Ephesians 2:8). The reason why the rich man landed in hell was because he knew the Scriptures but he did not heed its teachings. Like him, his brothers had "Moses and the Prophets" and if they would not hear or heed and do God's will, they too would find themselves in hell when they died. This teaches us that before death, there is still a chance to do God's will and be delivered from hell eternally. So it was not because he did not do good works that he was sentenced to hell. The reason was that he did not do God's will. He lived a life of self-reliance and self-righteousness without God. God is totally out of the picture. That is why he was in hell.

God calls on all men to repent of their sins, and to believe in Jesus Christ, whose death and shed blood on the cross can wash away all their sins. This is the will of God who has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, and who desires that none should perish but that all should come to repentance and to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we may enter into His glorious kingdom. They had the Scriptures and they ought to heed its teachings. Lazarus was in heaven

because he believed in God's Word and he obeyed it.

There is no second chance after death. If you have loved ones who died without knowing the Saviour, do not allow this pain and sorrow to prevent you from believing in Christ. Some feel that they must go to the same place where their loved one has gone before even if this place is Hell. But like the rich man who was in hell, he does not wish his brothers to be where he is, Hell. He became the most fervent evangelist in hell but it was too little too late. This message is for you if you are struggling with this dilemma. Your departed loved ones want very much for you to believe in Jesus Christ.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Money is a valuable commodity but the love of it presents many dangers. Like the Pharisees, because of their covetousness and love of money, they were lax in the interpretation and application of Scriptures. Paul says because of the love of money, many Christians have fallen into temptation and unnecessary loss and hurt. For some unbelievers, it cost them eternity. This is illustrated by the account of the rich man and Lazarus. A Christian must live his life in constant trust and dependence on God. It is not wrong or weak to trust and depend on God. Such trust and dependence on God does not mean that we do not do what we ought and can do.

Christians should heed Jesus' command to rebuke a brother who sins against them, and if he repents to forgive him. James, in his letter to his readers, also instructed that we should confess our faults one to another. We have been lacking in performing this responsibility and

duty. If we all understand and obey the commandments of God, we should not be afraid to carry out what God requires of us to do. This duty as required of us to do should cause us to think before we act foolishly.

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LESSON 26A

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Luke 16:14-18.

TUESDAY: Luke 16:14-18.

WEDNESDAY: Luke 16:14-18.

THURSDAY: Luke 16:19-31.

FRIDAY: Luke 16:19-31.

Discussion Questions

1. The Pharisees justified themselves before men by boasting of their keeping every detail of the Law, but what part of the Law were they breaking?

2. What “abominations” do you possess or long to have in the future?

3. How well do you know the Law of God?

4. What steps have you taken to know God’s law better?

5. Can a person who is divorced ever marry again? Give reasons for your answer.

6. Was the rich man sent to hell because he was rich? Support your answer with Bible verses.

7. Is it correct to say that a person who wilfully has a low view of Scripture might not be born again?
