

## August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 12”

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### Luke 11:1-4

As Jesus finished praying one day in a certain place, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

So Jesus said to them, **“When you pray, say, ‘Father, may Your name be held in awe. May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us the bread we need each day. And forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who sins against us.**

**And do not allow us to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.’ ”**

Thank you very much for coming to hear the message for today. Before we begin our next lesson, let us reiterate our reason for attending Church.

We attend Church to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so that we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

We left our last lesson making the point that we have a similar responsibility to the unsaved that the Good Samaritan showed to the Jewish man that had been robbed, beaten and left for dead. Using the text of Johnston Cheney’s book, Jesus Christ, the Greatest Life, **Luke 10:30** says:

**Accepting the challenge, Jesus said, “A man once took a trip from Jerusalem down to Jericho. Along the way robbers attacked him, stripped off his clothes, and beat him, then went away, leaving him half dead.**

The beaten man was a Jew, indicated by the fact that the text says that he started his journey from Jerusalem. **Luke 10:31-32** continues:

**“Soon a certain priest happened to take the same road. When he saw the man, he crossed to the other side and kept going. Not long afterward a Levite came to the same place, saw the man, and also passed by on the other side.**

The priest and the Levite declined to help the man because the Law of Moses instructed them that touching a dead body would make them ceremonially unclean, and the beaten man was clearly in danger of dying. If the priest or Levite had decided to help the man and he died, they would have had to purify themselves by washing in water for seven days after they touched his dead body to become ceremonially clean again. The hero of the story is depicted in **Luke 10:33-35**, which says:

**“But then a traveling Samaritan came by, and when he saw the man, he was filled with pity. He examined him and dressed his wounds, applying wine and oil to them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and brought him to an inn, where he took care of him.**

**When he left the following day, he took out two days' wages and gave the money to the innkeeper. 'Take care of him,' he instructed, 'and I'll repay you for whatever else you may spend.'**

The fact that, in the conclusion of the episode, Jesus told the lawyer to 'act in the same way' as the Samaritan that helped the man makes the almost intuitively obvious point that helping a man in need is clearly more important than ceremonial cleanliness.

Among some highly religious people, there seems to be a certain priority on ceremonies, rituals and the technical minutiae of worship. On the one hand, periodic rituals can be a good thing, as they consistently remind us of our responsibilities to behave in the way that God proscribes. The potential problem is that the observation of rituals has a tendency to take on a life of its own so that rather than the ritual reminding people of their obligation to God, the ritual becomes an end in itself. Members of some denominations go so far as to associate the performance of a ritual with salvation itself, which is entirely inaccurate. I can remember a preacher that used to tell converts that being baptized did not guarantee that a person was saved. His line was, "The ritual of baptism won't save you. If you get baptized but you are not really saved, you go into the water a dry devil and come up a wet one".

The priest and the Levite were ritually oriented people, as were the men that arrested Jesus, tried Him and sent Him to Pilate for execution. They were in the Temple every time the door was open. However, they really didn't know the God that they were worshipping, because when He came to town, in the person of Jesus Christ, they did not recognize Him.

It is interesting that the Bible records that virtually everyone that interacted with Jesus recognized His abilities and His Divinity except the Jewish religious leaders. Tax collectors and sinners, the people whom we would consider "unsaved" and who were considered the dregs of society by the religious leaders, socialized with Jesus and recognized His divinity. **Matthew 9:10-13** records:

**10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.**

**11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"**

**12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**

**13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."**

Since these "sinners" did not spend time in the Temple keeping up with the rituals, the Pharisees questioned Jesus, a man considered a rabbi, or teacher, and a man that travelled around Palestine preaching about the Kingdom of God, about having anything to do with such sinful people. But Jesus recognized that although these particular sinners were not devotees of Temple worship, that they, unlike the Pharisees, would agree to hear the truth. I use the words "these particular sinners" because I recognize, unlike the scribes and Pharisees, that although I am not a tax collector, I am a sinner as well, and when I look at my own sin, I find that I have no reason to look down on anyone.

That is the real problem. The scribes and Pharisees were not receptive to the ministry of Jesus Christ because Jesus came preaching a baptism of repentance. The beginning of Jesus'

ministry is recorded in **Matthew 4:12, 17:**

**12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee.**

**17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

Of course, before you can repent, you have to recognize that you are a sinner. Without your own acknowledgment of your own personal sinfulness, you have nothing for which to repent. The scribes and Pharisees did not acknowledge their sinfulness, which is why they could intellectually differentiate between themselves, the “righteous” and the “sinner” people with whom Jesus was eating.

Now, I would grant you that an objective observation of the situation would reveal that the scribes and Pharisees were the people in the Nation of Israel that most closely observed the letter of the Law of Moses, and so, from that perspective, they were the best people in the land. But they were the best people in a group of people that weren’t very good. Their position was analogous to that of the baseball team that is going to win the Little League World Series which is now being played. That team is probably the best baseball team of young people fourteen years of age or younger in the entire world, however, they probably aren’t one quarter as good as the worst team in the major leagues. And as far as being godly is concerned, we are strictly playing in the Little League. **Romans 3:23** tells us:

**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Even if we could objectively prove that we are the best people in the world, our proof wouldn’t be worth much to God, because we would only be the best of a bad lot. If you were buying bananas in the store, and all of the bananas had brown, rotten spots on them, would you pick out the bananas with the most yellow skin, or would you just go to a different store in which the bananas weren’t rotten?

My point is that to truly be a good Christian, to accept the gift of salvation from Jesus Christ, we have to first acknowledge that we need to be saved and humble ourselves to acknowledge our own rottenness. At the same time, we should also acknowledge our unworthiness to look down on others. When we see that homeless person eating out of the garbage can, we ought not turn up our nose and say, “tsk, tsk”, but we ought to thank God and recognize that “there, but for the grace of God, go I”.

Our success in life, either spiritual, secular or financial, is not primarily due to our own hard work, regardless of how hard we have worked. Listen to the testimony of a man who knows, Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, as recorded in **Daniel 4:28-37:**

**28 All this came upon King Nebuchadnezzar.**

**29 At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon.**

**30 The king spoke, saying, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?”**

**31 While the word was still in the king’s mouth, a voice fell from heaven: “King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you!**

**32 And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses.”**

**33 That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.**

**34 And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation.**

**35 All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven And among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"**

**36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.**

**37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.**

**Proverbs 16:18-19** tells us:

**18 Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.**

**19 Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, Than to divide the spoil with the proud.**

We ought to re-evaluate any religious ritual that leads us to pride in our religiosity rather than repentance and recognition of our reliance upon Jesus Christ for our very being. We ought to re-evaluate any status that we accord ourselves or title that we give ourselves that leads us away for the recognition that we are only rank sinners that have been blessed to be saved by the grace of God. We ought to re-evaluate any activity that we perform that builds us up in pride.

The perspective that we should properly have is given to us in **Ephesians 2:8-10**:

**8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,**

**9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

**10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.**

As Nebuchadnezzar found out, we are God's workmanship; it is He that made us, and not we ourselves. We certainly may have contributed to our own good fortune, but we should recognize that our contribution is like that of a child working with his father as he builds a shed out behind the house. When we say to Dad, "Daddy, I want to help", Dad may give us a piece of wood in which to hammer a nail or let us bring him His tools, but Dad is really doing the building. We are probably more hindrance than help, but Dad lets us hang with him because he loves us. If we are old enough for Dad to teach us how to build, we should apply ourselves and learn, but we should always recognize that Dad is the builder and we are the helper. **Psalm 127:1** tells us:

**1 Unless the LORD builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the LORD guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.**

Moving on. Now, Jesus Christ was known for His great teaching. **Matthew 7:28-29** tells us:

**28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at**

His teaching,

**29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.**

After the great teaching of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus went on a little vacation, in which he ran into a conflict between two sisters. **Luke 10:38-40** records:

**As they continued their journey, Jesus entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus and kept listening to what He said.**

**Martha was distracted with all the details of serving her guests. Finally she approached Jesus and said, “Lord, does it not bother you that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? Tell her to help me!”**

Now, let’s think about this for a minute. The greatest Bible teacher in the history of the world has come to your house. He sits down, pulls out His Bible, and starts teaching. Do you listen? No, you go into the kitchen and start preparing food. Now, maybe you are known as the hostess with the mostest, but understand that this little session with the Master Teacher is not about you impressing Him with your hospitality, but about you learning how the Word of God applies to your life from Him.

Martha has a perspective much like that of the scribes and Pharisees. She wanted to do something to prove herself worthy, to look good, to earn Jesus’ admiration. But, she couldn’t earn Jesus’ admiration by her cooking if she tried. Let me explain. There was a day that Jesus was teaching, and he taught the people all day. The episode is recorded in **Matthew 14:15-21: 15 When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.”**

**16 But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.”**

**17 And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.”**

**18 [Jesus] said, “Bring them here to Me.”**

**19 Then [Jesus] commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.**

**20 So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.**

**21 Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.**

Jesus could prepare food on short notice for five thousand men, not counting women and children, from two fish and five loaves of bread. How impressed do you think that Jesus is going to be with Martha, who spends all day preparing food for this small party?

We’re back to the child helping Dad build the shed again. Martha’s effort is insignificant, and even worse, it is misplaced activity. When the Master Teacher comes to your house, you should spend your time listening to Him, not in the kitchen fixing food. Jesus tells Martha as much, in **Luke 10:41-42:**

**“Martha, Martha,” Jesus answered. “You’re anxious and worried about many things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good part, and it won’t be taken away from her.”**

When we exhibit a propensity for minoring in the majors and majoring in the minors, we should realize that to do so is generally based upon a suggestion from the devil, who doesn't mind us working for the Lord as long as we don't do that which is necessary to promote our spiritual growth. The devil loves it when good Christians are absorbed in busy work and irrelevant activities in the name of God, like the scribes and Pharisees and their rituals.

I remember that when Paul was little, I was an associate minister at a church, and I brought Paul to church and sat him in my lap in the pulpit while the service went on. Just before the pastor got up to preach, I would lean over and whisper in his ear, "Okay, Paul, the pastor is about to preach now. Be quiet and listen." Paul would sit there and look up at the pastor just like he understood what the pastor was talking about. Finally, he would go to sleep, but he was quiet, not crying or making noise in the pulpit. People were astonished that a little kid could sit through the entire service and not make a fuss, but Paul, like Mary, had chosen the good part.

One Sunday, a slim woman of my acquaintance decided that Paul was too young to be in the pulpit, and came up to take him away from me before the service, telling me that she would take care of him for me. She was so persistent that I gave in and let him go, but when the service started, I watched as Paul squirmed in her lap and wouldn't sit still. Fortunately, lady that had Paul was sitting next to the wife of one of the other associate ministers in the church, and she was physically constructed more like Paul's mother than the lady to whom I gave Paul. The minister's wife took Paul, and when Paul recognized that this lap was more comfortable and that he had something soft upon which to lay his head, he settled down and was quiet for the rest of the service. Of course, Paul stayed with me during the service after that so that we could both concentrate on the preaching.

It is important to understand the point of that which we are doing when we go into worship. I call my sermons "lessons" because the Biblical tradition of the gospel ministry is to teach. Jesus left us with the command to teach, as **Matthew 28:18-20**, in the King James Version, tells us:

**18 And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

**19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:**

**20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.**

This passage of Scripture is known as the Great Commission, and is the intellectual foundation upon which the Gospel ministry is founded. You notice that there is no mention of stirring the emotions of people, causing them to get happy or to shout and fall out, but to teach them to observe the things that Jesus commanded.

It is a suggestion from the devil that the church major on feelings, but Jesus specifically tells those that are ministering to teach His commands to His people. A good show is a wonderful thing, but in our Scriptural example, Martha is rebuked for trying to put on a good show, while Mary praised for being interested in Jesus' teaching.

Moving on. Our text for today is a restatement of that which we call the Lord's Prayer originally given in **Matthew 6:9-13**, which is actually our model for prayer. This particular restatement of the model prayer leaves out the declaration of the Kingdom, because impending

crucifixion of Jesus Christ is Israel's rejection of God's Kingdom. **Romans 10:21-11:5** explains: **21 But to Israel [Isaiah] says: "All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people."**

**1 I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.**

**2 God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying,**

**3 "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"?**

**4 But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."**

**5 Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant [of Israelites] according to the election of grace.**

As in the case of Elijah and Ahab, the King and his four hundred fifty prophets rejected God in favor of serving Baal, the current religious leadership is rejecting Jesus in favor of secular society. **John 19:14-16** records:

**14 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And [Pilate] said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"**

**15 But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"**

**16 Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.**

In this act, the leadership of Israel rejected the Kingdom of God, but there was a remnant of the Jews that accepted Jesus Christ, and became the foundation of the New Testament church. The church, not the Jewish Temple, is now the human organization through which we come to the Kingdom of God.

But back to the prayer. Every tenet of the model prayer is consistent with the teaching that God is really in control and we are simply sinners that are totally dependent on the grace of God for sustenance and salvation.

**Father, may Your name be held in awe.** The model calls for us to pray to God, our heavenly Father, giving reverence to His name.

**May Your kingdom come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.** We are calling for the coming of His Kingdom in our lives, as we are declaring ourselves to be God's sons, cooperating with His will as His ambassadors on earth and future inhabitants of heaven.

**Give us the bread we need each day.** We recognize that our very survival is dependent on the continued grace of God. Even with our best cooperative efforts, all we do is worthless unless God blesses our efforts to give us the outcomes that we seek. At best, we are hammering our one little nail while He is building the house.

**And forgive us our sins, for we forgive everyone who sins against us.** This is both our acknowledgement of our own sinfulness and our recognition that our sins against God are so much greater than the sins of others against us. God teaches us that if we accept His forgiveness for our many sins, we are obligated to forgive the few sins that others sin against us.

**And do not allow us to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.** We need the counsel and strength of the Holy Spirit to keep ourselves from following the deceitful

temptations of the devil. We need the Holy Spirit to protect our minds and awake our spirits when we face the potential to act in evil ways.

I have, as you know, taken up ballroom dancing, which gives me an opportunity for a positive testimony of Jesus Christ to those that participate along with me, as many of them are unchurched, but I have a character flaws that hamper my testimony. One flaw that I have recently discovered is the fact that I become intensely uncomfortable when people with whom I am not familiar get too physically close to me, so much so that I get almost violently irritated when other dancers dance into that which I perceive to be my area. This was not a great problem when we first started dancing, but recently, I have observed a peculiar phenomena that people dance closer to Marie and I because we present such a unique presence in this venue; a married couple dancing romantically with one another.

But the assault on my personal space upsets me, and I have to just leave the dance floor to avoid aggressively confronting someone, which would not be the best exhibition of decorum for the pastor of a church. I have a most difficult time even being civil, much less enjoying the evening of dancing with my wife when I am as irritated as this invasion of personal space makes me.

Marie and I discussed the situation the other evening, and Marie mentioned to me that the way that she overcame the feeling of claustrophobia that she felt in elevators and airplanes was by prayer. When she told me that, I realized that this situation is not a social one, but a demonic attack on my ability to witness. If the devil can get me to either withdraw from the dance venue or to behave in an unseemly manner because of my discomfort, he wins. Being a sinner, I have a limited amount of power to deal with the situation, but I am blessed to have the ear of my heavenly Father and my Savior, Jesus Christ, whom I can ask for strength.

So, after prayer, I came to the conclusion that I need to talk, in a Christian manner, to the people that persistently get too close to me. **Matthew 18:15** says:

**15 “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.**

I also concluded that I needed to pray for strength to not be so uncomfortable, as my discomfort is really irrational. The people that dance close to me weren't actually doing anything bad to me, so I just have to control myself and focus on enjoying my dancing while ignoring the irrational discomfort.

When we went out last Thursday, we had a much better time, even though the dance floor was crowded. I was uncomfortable at first, but after I focused on my objective and called on the Lord, I found that I was blessed with the ability to relax myself and enjoy the evening rather than to become tense, irritable, and take my irrational frustration out on the other people dancing.

It is a great blessing to be able to pray the “b” portion of **Luke 11:4**:

**And do not allow us to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

We need the intercession of the Holy Spirit in our lives to help us control our emotions and maintain our decorum, because the adversary is going to do everything that he can to cause us to stumble. But, forewarned is forearmed, and Paul tells us, in **Ephesians 6:13-18**:

**13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.**

**14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of**



righteousness,

**15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;**

**16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.**

**17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;**

**18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—**

Paul instructs us to wrestle against our emotional immaturity, to fully utilize our objective intellect, to keep the Scripture, the Gospel of Salvation, truth, righteousness and faith foremost in our mind, and then to cover all of these objective truths with believing prayer, which will also us to quench the devil's darts. And James warns us, in **James 4:7-8, 10**:

**7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.**

**8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.**

**10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

Humility allows us to recognize that the devil is stronger than we are, but that we have access to the Holy Spirit as a resource upon which to call that will enable us to submit and draw near to God and resist the irrational fears and discomforts which the devil uses to deflect us from our mission to represent God in every venue in which we find ourselves. In every situation, we need to call on the Lord, as **Luke 11:4** says:

**And do not allow us to be led into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

Let us remain constant and steadfast in prayer, and so gain the victory over the devil and our sin nature through the practical, powerful, penetrating presence of the Prince of Peace.

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