

October 4th, 2008 “The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 18”

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis

Luke 12:4-5

“My friends, I’m telling you not to be afraid of those who kill the body but can do nothing worse. I will tell you whom to fear instead: fear the One who can both kill you and throw you into hell. Yes, be afraid of Him!”

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.

In the last two lessons, I have pointed out the fact that we cannot please God by substituting strict adherence to technical, ceremonial tenets of the law for the proper application of the spirit of the law. We need the wisdom to understand God’s purpose in giving us laws, and how to apply the law properly. I used the example Jesus’ healing of the man who was born blind, which was certainly an act of kindness and charity that showed the love of God for His people. Jesus anointed the man’s eyes with mud and told the man that when he went to the pool of Siloam and washed his eyes, he would be able to see. Jesus’ words came to pass, and the man’s incredulous friends brought him to the religious leadership to get their opinion on the healing. After listening to the testimony, the leaders were of two opinions. **John 9:13-16** reads:

13 They brought him who formerly was blind to the Pharisees.

14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, “This Man [Jesus] is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them.

Jesus gave us God’s perspective on the subject of the Sabbath in another episode, **Luke 14:1-6:**

1 Now it happened, as [Jesus] went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely.

2 And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy.

3 And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”

4 But they kept silent. And [Jesus] took him and healed him, and let him go.

5 Then [Jesus] answered them, saying, “Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?”

6 And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

God's perspective is that we ought always do that which we can to help one another when we are able, because we are not promised that we will have a chance to intervene in the situation tomorrow. God's real plan, in this case and in all of the cases of the healings of Jesus, was to change the focus of religion from adherence to ceremonial rules and regulations to actually displaying the love of God. **1John 4:7-8** tells us:

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

However, love calls for discernment, because in some cases, it is not love to just do that which someone else wants us to do. Love is also discerning that which someone else needs and giving it to them, and sometimes that which people need is something that hurts, but that ultimately has benevolent effects, as in a vaccination or a dose of medicine. Jesus showed love in the case of the man with dropsy by healing his hurts, and in another case, Jesus showed love by inflicting sadness on a man, as in **Mark 10:17-22**:

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

18 So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

19 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"

20 And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

According to verse 21, Jesus loved the man, but Jesus made the man sad in verse 22 by telling the man to do something that the man absolutely did not want to do. The man ran after Jesus with the desire to join Him, but when the man understood that which joining Jesus would cost him, he went away sadly. The man was willing to renounce all of his sin and even confessed that he did not have much sin to renounce. The man would have gladly and generously supported the cause of Christ and provided for the Master and His disciples; he would have obtained whatever they needed that money could buy. The man's problem was that there was nothing that he could buy or otherwise obtain that Jesus needed. So Jesus in effect told the man, "I don't want your money or what it could buy; I want you. Relying on God rather than your money will be a great benefit to you; give up your wealthy lifestyle and follow Me."

But the man wouldn't do that. **Mark 10:22-27** records:

22 But [the man] was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"

24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!

25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the

kingdom of God.”

26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

27 But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

Jesus did not tell the man to give up his possessions because of the law; there is nothing in the law that says that we have to give up our possessions. As a matter of fact, the law tells us that God will bless us to acquire possessions. **Deuteronomy 8:11-19** says:

11 “Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today,

12 lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them;

13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied;

14 when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

17 then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’

18 “And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

19 Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish.

So, according to the law, God gives us wealth and commands us to hold it with thanksgiving to Him in our hearts. God does not want the acquisition of possessions to cause us to substitute our possessions for our relationship with Him. He does not want our hearts lifted up to the point that we forget, as **Psalms 95:7** tells us, that:

7 He is our God, And we are the people of His pasture, And the sheep of His hand.

So Jesus tells the rich man to sell his possessions so that he can regain the proper perspective. Is that the spirit of the law in the New Testament? Is it a sin to be rich in this New Testament dispensation?

By way of answer, let me digress for a moment. I heard the account of an interesting counseling session this week. A woman called a counselor because of a problem in her relationship with her husband. “I’m forty-five years old, and I was sexually molested as a child”, she began, “I have never had a satisfying relationship with my husband because of the way that I feel about intimacy.”

“Did you marry the person that molested you?” the counselor asked.

“Oh, my heavens, no”, said the woman, “he was a distant relative that was...”

The counselor cut her off. “Well, if you didn’t marry the person that molested you, and the molestation happened at least two decades ago, why do you have a problem with your husband now?”

“Well”, the woman said, “I guess my problem is not really with my husband. I doubt that I could have a satisfying relationship with anybody.”

“What did your parents do when you told them about the molestation?” asked the counselor.

“They reported him to the police”, said the woman, “and he was never in our house again.”

“Okay”, said the counselor, “I’m glad about that. So let me see if I understand. When you were molested, your parents took care of business and protected you. You were a child at the time and it’s been over twenty-five years since it happened. Now you are an adult, and so you are not in any danger of being molested again. Your husband didn’t have anything to do with your molestation, and you voluntarily took vows to be his wife and to love him. So what exactly is your problem now?”

“When you put it like that”, said the woman, “I can see that it doesn’t make any sense, but when I am in an intimate situation, I always think back to the molestation. Intimacy scares me, and I don’t seem to be able to help myself.”

“I want you to listen to me carefully”, said the counselor, “and pay attention to that which I say. I’m going to talk about electricity, which has nothing to do with intimacy. Did you know that if I go up on a metal ladder and touch the electric line coming into my house, I will be electrocuted?”

“Uh, yes”, said the woman.

“And if I throw an electric switch inside of the house, that same electricity will give me light and heat. Are you aware of that?” asked the counselor.

“Yes”, said the woman.

“Here’s my question. We both know that electricity can either kill or give light and heat. So, is electricity good or bad?” asked the counselor.

“Electricity is good”, said the woman.

“Even though it can kill me? People get accidentally electrocuted quite often.” said the counselor.

“Well”, said the woman, thinking, “maybe electricity is bad.”

“How can it be bad if it allows me to have lights and heat in my home?” asked the counselor.

“Okay”, said the woman, “electricity is good, but sometimes can do bad things.”

“I don’t agree with you”, said the counselor, “let me tell you what I think. Electricity is neither good nor bad. Electricity just is. I can use electricity for good or for bad, but the electricity itself is neither. The good or bad is in me. The electricity just is.”

“I see your point”, said the woman.

“That’s true of almost everything”, said the counselor. “Take sexual intimacy, for instance. Did you know that your husband’s body is designed so that his climax releases seed, but your contribution to procreation and your climax are totally separate from one another. God designed your body for pleasure. But, the same God that designed your physical body for pleasure put certain psychological and volitional restrictions on you. You can only really enjoy that pleasure within the context of a committed marital relationship. God uses your conscience and consequences to take away your enjoyment if you use sexual intimacy in other than the way that He ordains. So sexual intimacy is neither good nor bad; it just is. The good or bad is in us.”

“I guess that’s true”, said the woman.

“But”, said the counselor, “You have decided to not allow the good to come into your life. You are cutting off the lights and turning off the heat in your house because someone tried to electrocute you once. It was a long time ago when you were a child, and now you’re an adult; they didn’t electrocute you, and they didn’t get away with it, but you still don’t trust electricity. Your husband doesn’t want you to go up on the roof and touch the electric line; he just wants you to turn the lights on. And you won’t do it, because you don’t trust electricity.”

“I never thought about it that way before”, said the woman.

“So now”, said the counselor, “Understand that the fact that you choose to not turn on the lights is your choice. It’s not because of something that happened when you were a child, because you are making the choice today as an adult. As an adult, you can choose to turn the lights on, or you can choose to continue sitting in the dark, but let me tell you, men tend to not want to sit in the dark forever. You promised to turn on the lights on your wedding day before God and all of your friends and relatives, and if you fail to keep your promise, you are being just as unfaithful as he would be if he sat under someone else’s light. If he decides to break his vows, remember that he is not the bad guy here; he bought the fixtures and the bulbs on your wedding day and he’s paying the electric bill every month; you are the one that won’t turn the lights on.

Now, if you decide that you really don’t want to turn on the light, that’s your choice, but if you don’t intend to keep your vows, you should really let him go, so that he can find someone to marry that actually does want to keep their vows. Doesn’t that seem fair?”

“Wait a minute”, said the woman, “I don’t want him to leave me.”

“You just want him to sit around in the dark?” asked the counselor. “Isn’t that kind of self-centered? You want him to keep paying for the electricity, but you refuse to give him any light. Suppose the electric company cut off your service and then sent you a bill. How would you feel about that? Would you pay the bill?”

“No”, said the woman, “but it’s not the same thing.”

“How is it different?” said the counselor.

“This is more personal”, said the woman.

“What about his personal feelings and desires?” asked the counselor. “Isn’t he entitled to have a marital relationship with a wife that will keep her vows? Or are you the only one that is entitled to anything? Are you saying that he has a personal responsibility to you but you have no personal responsibility to him because you don’t want to do what you promised? If you feel entitled to shirk your personal responsibility because you don’t want to do it, why isn’t he entitled to do the same?”

“Well”, said the woman, “I think that because of my past...”

The counselor cut her off. “Okay. You’ve been using the past since you got married. How long you are going to continue to use the past to keep you from doing the right thing today? Another year? Two years? Five years? At some point, you are going to have to decide let the past go. You are going to have to make a decision, because there is no magic wand that anyone can wave to make the past go away. Nothing is going to just happen; you’re going to have to make a decision. So, just give me a number as to when that is going to be. It’s been over twenty years, so how much more time do you think you need?”

“I can’t say”, said the woman. “I just don’t know.”

“Well, whatever day you decide, I hope your husband is still there”, said the counselor. “I think that I’ve made the situation clear, and I hope that you make your decision soon. Thank you for your call.”

And the woman went away sorrowful, because she desired greatly to hold on to her avoidance of intimacy, as did the rich man has a great desire to hold on to his riches.

Riches, like electricity and intimacy, are neither good nor bad; riches, electricity and intimacy just are. The good or bad is in us.

I have no clue as to what is ultimately going to happen in their circumstance, but I do know that we all have this kind of choice to make. When Jesus Christ points out the truth of the error of our ways to us, we have to decide whether or not to repent, as did the Jewish religious leaders that failed to recognize Jesus as their healer because of the trivial technicality as to the day of the week upon which the healing was done, or as did the wealthy man whose wealth meant more to him than his relationship with Jesus. There is no magic to help us make the decision. There is also no escaping the consequences of our decision, as the text for today, **Luke 12:4-5**, says:

“My friends, I’m telling you not to be afraid of those who kill the body but can do nothing worse. I will tell you whom to fear instead: fear the One who can both kill you and throw you into hell. Yes, be afraid of Him!

There is no escaping the judgment of God. **Luke 12:1-3** tells us:

As the crowds grew so large that people were trampling each other, Jesus began saying to His disciples, “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. There is nothing covered up that won’t be uncovered, and nothing hidden that won’t be revealed. Everything you have said in the dark will be broadcast in broad daylight, and what you have whispered in private rooms will be shouted on the housetops.

Jesus made it clear that there is no hiding from God. The counselor that the woman called was experienced, and was able to bring the woman’s problem to light and point out the fact that she was self-centeredly breaking her marital vows. God is also experienced, and when we stand before Him at the judgment, we will not be able to argue successfully with His impeccable logic that will display both our actions and our motives.

Jesus knew that the real source of the Pharisees’ problem with Him was the fact that they were jealous of His power and His position with the people. The crowds following Jesus were so large that people were trampling over one another just to get near Him, and the Pharisees never commanded a crowd like that. So they decided to lie on Jesus just to try to cut down His influence with the people, and their lies were hypocritical. They criticized Jesus for working on the Sabbath because He healed a man, but they did not criticize themselves for working on the Sabbath when they tried to save an ox or donkey.

They were just like the woman that wanted her husband to keep his vows as she avoided keeping hers. Yes, we may make those kinds of rationalizations, but Jesus wants us to know that we ought not deceive ourselves into justifying our hypocrisy, because when we stand before God, He will point out our hypocrisy and judge us, just as the counselor pointed out the woman’s shortcomings.

To avoid hypocrisy is an awesome job, and none of us, left to ourselves, are up to the task. However, it is possible for us to avoid the condemnation to which our sinfully hypocritical

human nature would lead us though a relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus tells us, in **Luke 12:6-9**:

“Aren’t five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet God doesn’t overlook a single one of them. Even the hairs on your head are all numbered! So don’t be afraid; you’re far more precious than many sparrows.

“I must tell you that everyone who acknowledges Me before others will also be acknowledged by the Son of Man before the angels of God. But the one who denies Me before others will be denied before the angels of God.

Despite our sin natures, God considers us precious, and God has made a way for us to overcome our sin nature through the ministry of Jesus Christ. For our part, however, we have to be on Jesus’ side.

When we are asked about our affiliation with Jesus Christ, we have to boldly confess our allegiance to Him. If we choose to deny Him, He will deny us on the Day of Judgment.

However, there is even a way to receive forgiveness if we deny Jesus. **Luke 12:10** says:

“While there is forgiveness for everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, he that blasphemes the Holy Spirit shall never be forgiven.

Jesus will allow us to repent of denying him, but what does it mean to blaspheme the Holy Spirit? Let me explain.

There are many great things that men can do in their own power. We can build manipulate the elements in this world to make great and wonderful things. We have skyscrapers that go a thousand stories in the air, and we have rocket ships that can put men on the moon. In surgical suites, we have robot assisted surgery that allows us to fix the most intricate of physical organs and lengthen the life of men by replacing damaged organs; our technology has allowed us to actually find out the physical formulas that God used to create the organs and, given the correct type of stem cell, we can grow organs for people that need them. The technological feats of man are impressive, and some engineer or some doctor can take credit for developing the techniques that allow our society to continue to flourish into the next century.

However, there is still some power that the Spirit of God reserves for His own use. The Spirit of God does not use technology; He simply speaks things into existence. The Spirit of God does not heal with a natural process, but He heals supernaturally. The Spirit of God bestows capabilities upon men for which there is no other explanation than the direct intervention of God. Jesus gives us an example, in **Matthew 12:22-23**:

22 Then one was brought to [Jesus] who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and [Jesus] healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, “Could this be the Son of David?”

The magnificent power displayed in this healing did not faze the jealous hearts of the Pharisees, as **Matthew 12:24** records:

24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, “This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.”

This statement clearly shows that the Pharisees recognize that this demon was cast out by spiritual power. The statement is blasphemy because the Pharisees credit the spiritual power by which this healing is done to demons, rather than to God the Holy Spirit. The spiritual power cast

the demons out of the man, and there is no logic or precedent that would explain demons casting themselves out.

Suppose you have a loved one in the hospital whom is given no chance to recover from their malady, so you put them on the prayer list and we begin praying for them. When they make that which appears to be a miraculous recovery, you ought not chalk it up to good luck or good doctors. You certainly ought not say that their illness left them because of the ministration of the devil. Unexplained healings after prayer is the signature sign of the Holy Spirit, not the devil, and, as Jesus says, in **Matthew 12:25-33**:

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.

26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand?

27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

31 “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.

32 Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

33 “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit.

Giving credit to anyone except the Holy Spirit for supernatural healing is incorrect, but giving credit to demonic forces for the work of the Holy Spirit in supernatural healing is unforgivable blasphemy. God not only knows that which we say, but He also knows our motivation for saying it, and God will judge us if we ascribe that which is clearly His work to the devil. We ought not be intimidated into blasphemy by the crowd, but we ought to watch our tongues in every situation, as He tells us in the text, **Luke 12:4-5**:

“My friends, I’m telling you not to be afraid of those who kill the body but can do nothing worse. I will tell you whom to fear instead: fear the One who can both kill you and throw you into hell. Yes, be afraid of Him!

It seems intuitively obvious that we ought not blaspheme the Holy Spirit, but when the devil takes control of our situation, that is exactly that which he is going to demand that we do. Those who are saved by the grace of Jesus Christ cannot be plucked out of Jesus’ hand, but the devil is going to do all that he can to make us jump out on our own, and the only way that he can do that is by intimidating us into blaspheming the Holy Spirit. And, we may be called upon, one day, to stand up against the wiles of the devil, and be willing to go to both judgment and death for the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul tells us, in **2Timothy 2:8-13**

8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel,

9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.

10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the

salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.

12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

I thank God that we live in a Christian country, and we are not currently suffering under religious persecution, and I continuously pray that our country remains that way. There are many popular movements that we can see in the news every day that wish to erode our Christian values and replace them with those that are demonic. Let us be vigilant to oppose such encroachments upon our freedoms from both within and without, let us hold fast to the principles of the Word of God, and let us hold fast to our confession of Jesus Christ, who gave His life on Calvary's Cross, and then rose from the dead physically, to give us the example that we need to hold fast to the Word of God even to the end. He says, in **Matthew 16:24-27**

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

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