

## **March 8<sup>st</sup>, 2009**

### **“The Last Year of the Life of Christ, Part 37”**

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis

**Luke 18:28-30 (Matthew 19:27-28, Mark 10:28-30)**

Then Peter began saying to [Jesus], “Look how we have left everything and have followed You. What will there be in this for us?”

**“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “at the renewal of all things when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, all you who have followed Me will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.”**

**[Jesus] said to them, “I tell you the truth, no one has ever left house or parents or brothers or sisters or wife or children or property for the sake of My name and the sake of the good news and the kingdom of God, who will not receive in this age a hundred times as much—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and property—and persecution. And in the age to come, you will inherit eternal life.**

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.

This lesson is out of sequence, as it should properly have been taught immediately after the lesson of the Rich Young Ruler that I taught three weeks ago, which should have been taught after the lessons on the Resurrection of Lazarus and the events following rather than before. In the episode three weeks ago, the Rich Young Ruler was consulting Jesus on matters of everlasting life, as recorded in **Luke 18:18-23**:

**18 Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”**

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

**20 You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ ”**

**21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”**

**22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”**

**23 But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.**

From this passage of Scripture I made the point that we are all sinners. As Jesus said, in the “b” portion of **Luke 18:19**

**19 No one is good but One, that is, God.**

As we discussed in our last lesson, our most serious sinfulness may not be in our breaking of the physical commandments, but in our universal characteristic of self-centeredness. Self-centeredness can cause us to sin without breaking the physical law of God, as Jesus explains to us in **Matthew 5:27-28**:

**27 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’**

**28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

Lust in the heart does not necessarily cause one to commit any physical sin, but it takes away from the devotion in marriage of a husband or wife, whether the lust is caused by the sight of an attractive individual, by viewing pornography, or by reading a romance novel or watching a sexual soap opera or television program, which is the equivalent of pornography for women.

It is important, but elementary, to keep the physical commandments. Spiritual maturity builds on the foundation of the physical commandments, and is the practice of continuously behaving in a way that reduces our self-centeredness, whether our actions are physical or intellectual. Our spiritual maturity can most accurately be gauged by our ability to devote ourselves to and sacrifice ourselves for someone else, as Jesus says, in **John 15:12-13**:

**12 This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

**13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.**

It is interesting to ponder that Jesus sacrificed Himself for people who really didn’t deserve it. Jesus sacrificed His life for us although we are sinners, rank sinners, intentional sinners, hell-bound sinners, sinners with no right to call upon the mercy of God. One of the disciples is a prime example. After spending three years with Jesus, Peter became Jesus’ right hand man, and one of the disciples whom Jesus most trusted. When Jesus was arrested, Peter was one of the two disciples that did not immediately forsake Jesus, but followed Jesus to His trial before the Sanhedrin. The other disciple that followed Jesus to trial was known to the High Priest, who was presiding over the trial, so he was allowed into the trial, but Peter waited outside with the rest of the people surrounding the Temple to find out the verdict of the Sanhedrin’s deliberations. As the trial continued inside, people on the outside began to recognize the fact that Peter, when he spoke, spoke with a distinctly Galilean accent. Some of the people that had seen Jesus ministering in Jerusalem recognized Peter as one of the men who was part of Jesus’ entourage. People began asking Peter about his association with Jesus, and Peter, knowing the negative mood of the crowd, decided that it would be best to be discreet about his allegiances. Peter denied knowing Jesus. But the people to whom Peter was speaking in the crowd knew that Peter was lying about his association with Jesus, and they became more focused on Peter, as they continued to question him. The end of the episode of Peter and the crowd is recorded thusly in the Jesus Christ the Greatest Life, the harmony of the Gospels developed by Johnston Cheney, combining **Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:56-62 and John 18:26-27**:

**Then one of the servants of the high priest (a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off) said, “Didn’t I see you in the garden with [Jesus]?” The others standing there came close to Peter and said, “Certainly you’re also one of [the men with Jesus]! You’re a Galilean—your speech betrays you!”**

**But Peter denied it again and began to curse and swear. “I don’t know this fellow you’re talking about,” he shouted. “I don’t know what you’re saying!”**

**While he was still speaking, a rooster crowed a second time, and the Lord [Jesus] turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered what the Lord had told him: “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times,” and, “Before it crows the second time, you will deny Me three times.”**

Peter, you should have been on your guard. Jesus told you that the devil was on your case, and that you were going to deny Jesus. Peter, forewarned is forearmed, and since Jesus told you about the test in advance, you should have been ready.

Once Jesus turned and looked at Peter, and Peter remembered that about which Jesus warned him, the Bible records that Peter felt a great deal of remorse for his faithlessness. In the last verse of this selection, the Bible says:

**Peter went out and wept uncontrollably, with bitter tears.**

Peter did not deny Jesus to avoid being killed. Peter was not actually being seriously threatened. Peter was a strong Galilean fisherman, and he was being questioned by women and servants of the high priest, all of whom he could probably have taken in a physical confrontation, whether or not he decided to use the knife that he was carrying with which he gutted fish and cut off ears. Peter was not in any physical danger from the crowd, as the guards had had the chance to arrest him after he cut off the high priest's servant's ear, but they did not do it. But, rather than pulling his knife, Peter used profanity on the crowd, thinking that cursing them would be enough to make them leave him alone. Once Peter saw Jesus looking at him, the Bible records that Peter remorsefully went out, which tells me that Peter could have gone out earlier had he wished to do so, leaving the situation around the fire even if he had admitted that he was a disciple of Jesus.

When the deal came down, Peter, that great minister, Bible author, disciple and friend of Jesus, lied and denied that he even knew Jesus to a crowd of people who knew otherwise because Peter determined that denying Jesus was a more expedient thing to do at that time. That self-centered catering to expediency is sin, just as it was sin when the high priest decided to have Jesus executed for expediency's sake.

The fact that Peter betrayed Jesus was just as self-centered and sinful as was the high priest's plot to have Jesus executed, but Jesus' plan for the salvation of man did not change because the people for whom He was sacrificing Himself denied Him.

Jesus' response to Peter's sin was only to look at him, and then, despite the unfaithfulness of Peter and the disciples, to sacrifice Himself, dying on the Cross as a sacrifice for the sin of Peter and the other disciples. One of the disciples betrayed Jesus to the Sanhedrin, nine of the disciples forsook Jesus and fled when the guards showed up to arrest Jesus, and Peter denied Jesus in the very shadow of the Cross. The only disciple that followed Jesus all the way to the end, and was there to comfort Jesus' mother and the other women that followed Jesus was John, and John was able to stay because he was friends with the high priest. But before we start ragging on Peter and the boys, we need to realize that, had we been in Peter's place, we would probably not have been any more loyal than was Peter. As I said, Jesus sacrificed Himself for people who really did not deserve it.

But Jesus Christ is an example, an exhibit and an extension of God the Father, who is aware that we are all a group of unworthy sinners. Although we are sinners, we are also His children, and He loves us so much that He wants to bring us all to a place of repentance. **John 3:16-17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

God wants us saved from our self-centeredness. He wants to forgive us and then to put us in an environment that will give us the opportunity to develop spiritual maturity so that we can be like Him, lose our self-centeredness, and actually develop the type of relationships with one another in which we can share the true and everlasting riches associated with the Kingdom of God, rather than building up the tawdry, temporary kingdom of self. **2Peter 3:9** tells us:

**9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**

Our self-centeredness is our problem, but repentance is the solution. It will take time, effort and energy, but the Lord is giving us the task to change our focus from ourselves and our preoccupation with the mundane things of this world, and to focus, rather, on our intellectual preparation for making management decisions in the coming Kingdom of God.

To this end, Jesus, in the preamble to our text, tells the ruler to divest himself of his possessions, give the proceeds to those who are less fortunate than himself, and become a disciple. Jesus' proposal to the ruler and the response of the ruler and the disciples is recorded in **Luke 18:22-27:**

**22 So when Jesus heard these things, He said to [the ruler], "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."**

**23 But when [the ruler] heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.**

**24 And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!"**

**25 For 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 those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?"**

**27 But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."**

Rich people tend to have difficulty with salvation because they are preoccupied with the acquisition of worldly possessions. God puts abundance in the world so that we can focus on the development of character rather than the acquisition of possessions. **Proverbs 6:30-31** tells us:

**30 People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving.**

**31 Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; He may have to give up all the substance of his house.**

Proverbs tells us that the avoidance of starvation is a mitigating motivation for theft, although the thief has to suffer the consequences of his crime regardless of his motivation. God wants to forestall any motivation that we might have to become a thief, and so He has placed us in a world of abundance, one in which the resources are so abundant that no one has to starve.

Jesus, being the Son of God, demonstrated God's plan for the abundant life. When a scribe came to Him to volunteer to become a disciple, Jesus revealed His financial situation to him, in **Matthew 8:19-20:**

**19 Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, “Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.”**

**20 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”**

Jesus did not acquire houses or lands, but lived an ad-hoc life, developing resources when He needed them from the abundance that God supplied. For example, Peter came to Jesus about a tax matter in **Matthew 17:24-27**:

**24 When they had come to Capernaum, those who received the temple tax came to Peter and said, “Does your Teacher not pay the temple tax?”**

**25 He said, “Yes.” And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?”**

**26 Peter said to Him, “From strangers.” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free.**

**27 Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you.”**

God wants us to not make the acquisition of possessions a primary pursuit in this world of abundance. There is such a thing as “enough”, and those that want to acquire possessions in sufficient quantities to pass from reasonable to rich need to shift their focus from the acquisition of possessions to the development of character. **1Timothy 6:6-10** tells us:

**6 Now godliness with contentment is great gain.**

**7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.**

**8 And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.**

**9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.**

**10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

Our proper pursuit is not the acquisition of riches, but, as **1 Timothy 6:11** tells us:

**11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.**

The development of these qualities is antithesis of self-centeredness, and is required should we desire to assume the role of a decision maker in the Kingdom of God.

But this explanation was not in the mind of Peter, who was flabbergasted, as were the rest of the disciples, about Jesus’ statement that rich people would have a difficult time being saved. Peter had a difficult time, as do most people, in drawing the line between the prudent storing of resources and ostentatious display. In the mind of the disciples, the amount of real or monetary resources that a person has stored indicated the amount of success that the person has, and if, as Jesus implied, the Kingdom of God was not about financial success, they could not determine that which the Kingdom was about.

In the part of the harmony of the gospels that is our text for today, Jesus discusses the coming Kingdom with the disciples. **Luke 18:28-30: (Matthew 19:27-28, Mark 10:28-30)** records:



**Then Peter began saying to [Jesus], “Look how we have left everything and have followed You. What will there be in this for us?”**

In keeping with His earlier analysis, Jesus did not talk about resources.

**“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “at the renewal of all things when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, all you who have followed Me will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.”**

Jesus’ focus is on the Kingdom of God, which is coming. The earth as God initially created it is going to be renewed, and those that walk with Jesus and graduate from His school of attitude will have the opportunity to see that which life would have been like had the man and the woman in the Garden not become violated God’s commandment because of their acquisition orientation and eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil against God’s wishes. The end result of our relationship with Jesus should be that we develop an intellectual level of Christlikeness that will allow us to be the decision makers in the Kingdom. The twelve disciples will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, but there are a great many more dominions in the Kingdom that will need decision makers than that. You may remember the admonition in **Genesis 1:28:**

**28 Then God blessed [the man and the woman], and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”**

God put us here to have dominion. If you compare the characteristics of the various animals that God created, you will find that man is not the fastest, the largest, the strongest or the most physically capable in any way. Man has the distinction, however, of having the greatest intellectual capacity. We can think and communicate in ways that other animals can not.

God put us here to be in charge, to develop plans and execute them in the same way that God has planned and executed the creation of the universe.

Rather than being God’s creation as are the other animals, we, with our unique intellectual capacity, are actually God’s children, with the mandate to learn our Father’s principles of management so that we can competently make Godly decisions as we oversee the portion of His Kingdom over which He appoints us.

So the purpose of our Christianity is to change our focus from the acquisition of possessions to leadership in the Kingdom of God. Possessions will be of no value to us in the Kingdom of God, as Christlikeness puts us on a different level. Jesus could not be bought off by contributions, and was never tempted by the ruler’s money, as was Bernie Madoff. After all, when you can catch a fish with enough gold in his mouth to meet your immediate needs whenever you want, of what value is a big bank account? When you can heal the sick and raise the dead, of what value is a Blue Cross and Blue Shield card?

What happens to jealousy when the acquisition of possessions is no longer an issue? What happens to competition for dominance when the resources for which we compete are abundantly available to all? The paradigm for leadership changes drastically. In **Luke 22:25-27:**

**25 And [Jesus] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’**

**26 But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.**

**27 For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.**

Sitting on a throne in the Kingdom of God is not the same as being the President or King of a earthly country. Leadership in the Kingdom of God requires self-sacrifice, rather than self-centeredness. In the Kingdom, we will not be calling down fire to consume those who displease us, because, when the disciples wanted to burn up the Samaritan town, in **Luke 9:55-56**

**55 But [Jesus] turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.**

**56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.**

To be a leader in the Kingdom, you need to know what matter of spirit of which you are. You can’t go around venting your spleen and holding grudges against those who wrong you. You have to take the long view, be as one who serves, and develop the characteristics of righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness, as **1Timothy 6:11** tells us.

Marriage is an excellent example of an earthly institution with a heavenly focus. Listen to the vow that you make to get involved in the institution of matrimony.

I take you to be my lawfully wedded spouse, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God’s holy ordinance; and thereto I pledge you my faith.

To fulfill the marital requirements stated in the vows, we need faith, love, patience and gentleness, as well as righteousness and godliness. Being a leader in the Kingdom of God is analogous to having the concern that one would have for a husband or a wife for all of the subjects under your leadership in the Kingdom, which is why a successful marriage with longevity during our earthly lives is such an important qualification for spiritual leadership. How we treat the one that we have vowed to love most dearly on earth is an important indicator of how we are going to function in leadership in the Kingdom. God finds this indicator important, and chastens us when we do not function properly in our marriages, as He says, in **Malachi 2:13-16**

**13 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.**

**14 Yet you say, “For what reason?” Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.**

**15 But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. “Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.**

**16 “For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.”**

Participation and leadership in the Kingdom of God is analogous to a familial commitment to a group of people much larger than a nuclear family, which is why, in the end of our text for today, **Luke 18:29-30 (Matthew 19:29-30, Mark 10:29-30)**:

**[Jesus] said to them, “I tell you the truth, no one has ever left house or parents or brothers or sisters or wife or children or property for the sake of My name and the sake of the good news and the kingdom of God, who will not receive in this age a hundred times as much—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and property—and persecution. And in the age to come, you will inherit eternal life.**

Leadership in the Kingdom requires us to change our focus from being competitive to being a nurturing parent or spouse. We no longer crave the biggest or the best for ourselves, but the best for everyone. Listen, as Jesus gives us a parable that describes how we, with the correct perspective, should deal with those with a lesser perspective. Jesus says, in **Matthew 20:1-16**:

**1 “For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard.**

**2 Now when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.**

**3 And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,**

**4 and said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.’ So they went.**

**5 Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise.**

**6 And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’**

**7 They said to him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right you will receive.’**

**8 “So when evening had come, the owner of the vineyard said to his steward, ‘Call the laborers and give them their wages, beginning with the last to the first.’**

**9 And when those came who were hired about the eleventh hour, they each received a denarius.**

**10 But when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received each a denarius.**

**11 And when they had received it, they complained against the landowner,**

**12 saying, ‘These last men have worked only one hour, and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden and the heat of the day.’**

**13 But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’**

**14 Take what is yours and go your way. I wish to give to this last man the same as to you.**

**15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things? Or is your eye evil because I am good?’**

**16 So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.”**

None of us are worthy to go to heaven. All of us are must be saved and forgiven by God to get into heaven. All of us are saved, not by our own efforts, but by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. You may have been saved when you were a child, I wasn’t saved until I was twenty-



seven years of age, and the thief on the cross was not saved until he was about to die, but we are all saved. One of us is not more saved than the other, even if one of us was saved longer.

Competition is not a factor in the Kingdom, as we rely on Jesus Christ, the owner of the vineyard, to determine our position in the Kingdom. Our job is not to jockey for position or campaign for dominance, but to labor. He who would be chief among us must be as one who serves.

The Kingdom of God is like a good marriage, which is not about receiving, but about giving. The Kingdom of God is for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, even to the end of the age.

Those of us that have more are blessed to have that which we have, and it is ours to share with those who have less, because ultimately, everything belongs to God. And God does not hoard, but God gives. As a matter of fact, Jesus came giving. He gave wine to those that had water at their wedding. He gave health to those that had sickness. He gave the largest catch of fish on record to those who toiled all night and caught nothing. He gave life to the man who was in the grave for four days. Jesus' Kingdom is not about receiving, but about giving. And as we give, we will receive. And what will we receive? **John 3:16-17** tells us:

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

Let us not be acquisition oriented, looking for the hundredfold return, because we receive a much greater gift from the Christ when He gives us entrance into the Kingdom. Let us rather, enter the vineyard and go to work. Being in the vineyard with Jesus and living the abundant life is pay enough. Let us not focus on the acquisition of possessions, but the coming of the Kingdom.

Reverend Darryl R. Curtis  
Family Life Baptist Church