

**Helping Our
Children Present
Jesus as the Son of
Man
Part 2**

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 24**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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Jesus Sent Out the Twelve

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus told some people that He healed not to tell anyone exactly what had happened. Jesus did this especially where the crowds showed their unbelief. We saw that Jesus healed both a woman that had an incurable physical problem and raised a young girl from the dead. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus sent out the Twelve to give them some on-the-job training. We will also see that Jesus gave the Twelve some very specific instructions as they went out to tell others the good news.

Luke 9:1-6 says, "Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. And He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them." So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere." Jesus had taken the disciples with Him to show them how to minister. Now He was sending them out for the first time to do the things they had learned.

However, Jesus gave the disciples instructions before He sent them out to minister. He told them that He had given them power over both demons and diseases. He said that they were to preach the kingdom of God as well as heal the sick. Then Jesus gave them specific instructions about the things that they were not to take. One of the key lessons that people learning to serve the Lord need to learn is to trust the Lord to supply their needs. As a result, Jesus told them not to take anything extra. They were not to take extra staffs (walking sticks). They were not to take a leather sack to carry their food. They were not to take food. They were not to take money. They were not to take extra clothes. Philippians 4:19 says, "And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." The disciples had to learn that they could trust the Lord to supply things as those things were needed for effective future ministry.

Next, Jesus told them to stay in one home the entire time they were in that town. Matthew 10:11 says, "Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out." In each town the first thing that they were to do was to find out who was worthy (respected). Then they were to stay with that family as long as they were in that town. A respected person opens doors and builds bridges that help you to make contacts with the rest of the people of the town. Jesus knew that the people of some towns would not receive them. Jesus told the Twelve that instead of feeling rejected in such towns they were to shake off the dust from their sandals as a testimony against the people of that town or city. To the Jews in that town this was a visible sign that they were like Gentiles who did not trust and obey the Lord. In this way the disciples learned not to take rejection of the Gospel personally but to realize that following Jesus meant that some people would reject them because they spoke about Jesus. The disciples then left in teams of two and went through the various towns preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God and healing people wherever they went.

Luke 9:7-9 says, "Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, "John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?" So he sought to see Him."

Herod was really confused as he heard about the things that Jesus was doing. Some people told Herod that God must have raised John the Baptist from the dead and that he was doing all of these miracles. Malachi 4:5-6 says, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." As a result, others said that Elijah had come back to earth since he had not died and was doing these miracles. A third group said that one of the Old Testament prophets must have risen.

Herod heard all of these different opinions. However, Herod was being convicted by his own conscience. He had chosen to put John the Baptist to death by cutting off his head. Mark 6:16 says, "But when Herod heard, he said, 'This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!'" When a person has a guilty conscience, their conscience keeps convicting a person and that person has great guilt. That was what caused Herod to immediately think that it must be John. As a result of this guilty conscience, Herod had a great desire to see Jesus. He wanted to see for himself whether this was John or not.

Meanwhile while Herod was thinking these thoughts, the Twelve had returned to Jesus after their ministry in the different towns. Luke 9:10-11 says, "And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing." The disciples were very excited as they told Jesus about what had happened as they visited the various towns. Mark 6:30-31 says, "Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught. And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat." Here we see that they told Jesus both about the miracles that they had done and the message that they had taught.

Jesus then told the disciples that it was time for all of them to take a break and go out into the desert so that they could be alone. Jesus provided an example for the disciples of the fact that when things get very busy that we need to take some time to get away for a few hours. This time away provided rest for the disciples but it also gave them time to discuss the things that they had learned from their ministry trips. The disciples only had a few hours to rest because the multitude heard and followed Jesus and his disciples to the deserted place where they had gone. As a result, when the multitudes reached the place where Jesus and the disciples were talking together, Jesus received the people and spoke to them about the kingdom of God. He also healed those who needed to be healed.

Luke 9:12-17 says, "When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, 'Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.' But He said to them, 'You give them something to eat.' And they said, 'We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.' For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, 'Make them sit down in groups of fifty.' And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude. So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them." The people spent most of the day listening to Jesus.

In the last afternoon the disciples came to Jesus and told Him to send the people away so that they could go into the surrounding towns to buy food for themselves. The disciples said that they were in a deserted place and there was no place for the people to buy food or find a place

to stay overnight. Jesus did not send the people away. Instead Jesus told the disciples, “You give them something to eat.” The disciples said that they could not give anything to the people because they did not have enough. In fact the only food there was a lunch that belonged to a boy. Andrew said in John 6:9, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” Here we see that most of the disciples saw the problem of feeding 5000 men plus women and children instead of realizing that Jesus was the person who could solve any problem.

Jesus just told the disciples to have the people sit down in groups of fifty. The reason for this was so that they could feed people by groups and know that every group had received food. Any size group can be ministered to effectively as long as they are ministered to as smaller groups and not one huge group. The disciples were obedient and did what Jesus told them to do. Then Jesus did the miracle as He took the five loaves and two fish, blessed them and then began to break them into pieces. Jesus gave the disciples baskets of food to take to each group of fifty people. Again the disciples were obedient and did what Jesus told them to do.

Jesus performed a great miracle and all of the people ate and were filled. In addition to the 5000 men, there were also women and children to be fed so the group could have been as much as fifteen or twenty thousand. Then Jesus told the disciples to gather up the food that remained. We see the response of the disciples after they gathered up the food that remained. John 6:13-14 says, “Therefore they gathered them up, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.”” This was one of the signs that Jesus showed His disciples so that they would recognize that He was the Messiah promised by the Old Testament. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to clearly explain that Jesus fulfilled all of the Old Testament promises. We also want to show our children the importance of obedience to Jesus even when He commands us to do those things that are difficult or impossible in our own strength. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to serve the Lord effectively.

Jesus Taught What it Meant to be His Disciple

In our last topic, we saw how Jesus trained the twelve to serve Him. We want to show our physical and spiritual children what to teach and how to serve the Lord. After we have shown them how to serve the Lord, we want to give them experience doing what we have shown them. To give them that training we need to send them out in teams to carry out that ministry. When they return, we need to have a time when they can report what they have taught and what they have done. Then we can give them further instruction and example and send them out again until they gain the experience that they need. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus then explained to the Twelve what it meant to be His disciple.

One day Jesus went out to pray alone to the Father. Later the disciples joined Him there. Luke 9:18-20 says, "And it happened, as He was alone praying, that His disciples joined Him, and He asked them, saying, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" So they answered and said, "John the Baptist, but some say Elijah; and others say that one of the old prophets has risen again." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said, "The Christ of God." After the disciples came to the place where Jesus had been praying, He and the disciples began to talk together.

Then Jesus asked the disciples what sounded like a very simple question. Jesus just asked the question, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" The disciples told Jesus some of the things that they had heard the crowds say about Jesus. Some of the people said that John the Baptist had come back to life. Others said that Jesus must be Elijah because his return to the earth was promised in Malachi 4:5 where we read, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." These people thought that the day of the Lord must be arriving. Still other people thought that Jesus must be one of the other Old Testament prophets that had arisen from the dead. Here we see that Jesus heard the opinions of the people about who He was.

Then Jesus asked a much more important question. The crowds will always have opinions. However, Jesus wanted more than the opinions of the crowd. As a result, Jesus asked His disciples, "But who do you say that I am?" Here we see that Jesus had suddenly switched from the opinions of the crowds to the beliefs of the disciples after they had been given the opportunity to carefully observe Jesus and the signs which He had performed. Peter answered for all of the disciples by saying, "The Christ of God." "The Christ" meant the "Anointed One", the "Messiah" and the "Son of God". Here we see that as they had traveled with Jesus and had observed the things that Jesus said and did that the disciples had come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Promised Messiah.

That answer meant that Peter and the other disciples recognized that Jesus was the Messiah promised in Daniel 9:25-26 which says, "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined." Although they recognized that Jesus was the Promised Messiah, Peter and the others did not fully understand that the Messiah would be cut off but not for Himself. Their understanding of that would come after the resurrection.

Luke 9:21-22 says, “And He strictly warned and commanded them to tell this to no one, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.”” Once the disciples knew that Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus could begin to explain what He was going to do. Here we see that Jesus began to tell His disciples about His coming death and resurrection.

First, Jesus said that the Son of Man must suffer many things. This suffering had been predicted in many places in the Old Testament. Genesis 3:15 says, “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” This announcement to Satan of his coming judgment also predicted the sufferings of Jesus as Satan was told that he would bruise the heel of Jesus. Isaiah 53:5 says, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

Second, Jesus said the Son of Man must be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes. Jesus later told His disciples that He would be rejected by that generation. Luke 17:25 says, “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.” Psalm 118:22-23 says, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.” Christ quoted this passage when He told the parable of the vineyard and the evil tenants who killed the Son of the owner to describe what that generation of Jews was going to do to Him. Then Luke 20:17 says, “Then He looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written: ‘The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone?’” Jesus said that the cornerstone of the temple that Solomon built was rejected to show the future rejection of Jesus.

Third, Jesus said that the Son of Man must be killed. Isaiah 53:7-9 says, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked--but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.” Isaiah had predicted several things that would happen to Jesus regarding His death.

Fourth, Jesus said that the Son of Man would be raised the third day.” Jesus had said in Matthew 12:40, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” Here we see that Jesus said that he would be in the grave for three days. Jesus also told His disciples while they were in Galilee that He would be raised on the third day. Matthew 17:22-23 says, “Now while they were staying in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men, and they will kill Him, and the third day He will be raised up.” And they were exceedingly sorrowful.” Jesus had also spoken several other times about His coming resurrection.

Then Jesus went on to tell the disciples how to make their lives count for eternity. Luke 9:23-26 says, “Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.” Here we see that Jesus also taught us several important things for our lives today as well.

Jesus explained what it means to follow Him when He said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.” The word translated “let him deny” means to forget one’s self or one’s own interests. Most of the other uses are of Peter denying Christ three times. Instead of forgetting his own interests Peter forgot the interests of Jesus. Jesus also said that those who come after Him should take up his cross daily. 1 Peter 4:12-13 says, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.” Here we see that Peter had learned that it was a privilege to remember the interests of Jesus and to suffer for Him.

Jesus then explained what has eternal value. If a person could gain all of the wealth in the world but did not receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life, the riches of this world would mean nothing. That person will take nothing with him when he dies. Instead that person will destroy himself and experience eternal judgment. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Earthly riches will have no meaning in eternity.

Every person makes a choice about what is most important in his or her life. 1 John 2:28 says, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” Those who place their faith in Jesus will not be ashamed at His coming. In contrast, Mark 8:36-38 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? “Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” Those who choose to reject Jesus will be ashamed when he comes and will face eternal judgment. We want to help our children learn to explain this choice clearly so that they can help others realize that every person has a choice to make that will have an impact on their lives for eternity. They will either have eternal life or eternal judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain this choice to others.

Jesus was Transfigured

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. We also saw that we want them to learn how to explain to others the choice that each person faces in his or her life. In our topic today, we are going to see that three of the disciples had the opportunity to see what Jesus will be like in His future glory.

Luke 9:27-31 says, ““But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.” Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe *became* white *and* glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.” Jesus had just told His disciples who would be disciples in His kingdom. Here we see that Jesus gave the disciples a promise that some of them would have the opportunity to see what that kingdom would be like before they died.

About a week later Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him as He went up on a mountain to pray. While Jesus was on the mountain a very unusual thing happened to Him. First we see that the outward appearance of the face of Jesus was changed. Second, we see that His robe looked like it was giving off a bright light. By these two things we see that Jesus was showing the glory that He will have in the kingdom. Then we see that two people were talking with Him. One was Moses and the other was Elijah. Jesus spoke with the two of them about His coming death that would happen to Jesus in the very near future in the city of Jerusalem.

Luke 9:32-36 says, “But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, *that* Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone. But they kept quiet, and told no one in those days any of the things they had seen.” We see that Peter, James and John had gone to sleep.

Suddenly they woke up. When they were fully awake they saw the glory of Jesus and Moses and Elijah talking with Jesus. Here we see a little picture of what the kingdom of God will be like. In that kingdom there will be people from the time of the Old Testament who will see the promises God made to Israel fulfilled in that kingdom. There will be people from the New Testament and from the church that will see the promises Jesus made to the church fulfilled in that kingdom. There will be people who have died because Moses was there. There will be people who are taken directly to heaven without dying because Elijah was there. Most of all Jesus will be revealed in all of His glory in that kingdom.

As Moses and Elijah prepared to leave, Peter suddenly had an idea. He said that it was good that he and the other two disciples were there. Then he said to Jesus that the three of them should make three tabernacles: one of Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. The word translated “tabernacles” means a tent or a shelter made from the green branches of a tree, the skins of animals or of some other material. Here we see that Peter started talking before his brain started thinking so that he did not even know what he was saying. As a result, God

interrupted Peter as he was talking.

We see that the mountain was covered with a very thick cloud. In the wilderness God had revealed His presence to Israel with a thick cloud. Exodus 40:34-35 says, "Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." The disciples were fearful as they entered into the cloud. Suddenly, in addition to the cloud, the disciples heard the voice of God coming from the cloud. The voice said, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" The word translated "hear" means to hear so that there is understanding. God wanted the disciples to understand about the death of Jesus.

Then the cloud was gone. In addition, Moses and Elijah were no longer there. Jesus was the only one there. Jesus had promised that some of the disciples would see what the kingdom of God was like. These three had seen Jesus in all of His glory. However, at that time the disciples did not tell anyone what they had seen on the mountain. Jesus said to them in Matthew 17:9, "Now as they came down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, 'Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead.'" That was why the disciples did not say anything to anyone at that time.

We read that the other disciples and a large crowd were waiting the next day when Jesus and the three came down from the mountain. That may mean that the transfiguration happened at night. Luke 9:37-42 says, "Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. Suddenly a man from the multitude cried out, saying, 'Teacher, I implore You, look on my son, for he is my only child. 'And behold, a spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams *at the mouth*, and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him. 'So I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.'" Then Jesus answered and said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here." And as he was still coming, the demon threw him down and convulsed *him*. Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the child, and gave him back to his father." Here we see that the crowd included a man that had a son that was tormented by a demon.

This man came to Jesus and begged Jesus to help his son. The man said that this was his only son. Then the man described what the demon was doing to his son. The demon would suddenly seize the son. This would cause the boy to cry out. Then the demon would cause the boy to go into convulsions and begin to foam at the mouth. By the time the demon would stop the boy would be injured and bruised. Here we are reminded of the goal of Satan and his demons. John 10:10 says, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly." We see that the goal of Satan and his demons is always to steal, to kill and to destroy.

The man said that he had begged the disciples of Jesus to cast out the demon but they could not cast him out of the boy. The disciples had been given power to cast out demons when they were sent out two by two. Luke 9:1 says, "Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases." They did cast out demons on that ministry trip. Later they asked Jesus why they could not cast out demons in this case. Matthew 17:19-21 says, "Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why could we not cast it out?'" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. 'However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting.'" Apparently they depended on their own efforts instead of praying in faith.

Then Jesus told the man to bring his son to Him. The demon made one more attempt to try and destroy the child. As they were coming to Jesus the demon threw the boy down and caused him to go into convulsions. Jesus then rebuked the demon. The word translated “rebuked” means to charge or tell the demon to leave. The demon was forced to leave. Jesus later told the disciples in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Here we see that Jesus has all authority over all things including Satan and his demons. Then Jesus healed the child and gave the child back to the father.

The people were amazed at the miracle but Jesus took this opportunity to give His disciples a private message. Luke 9:43-45 says, “And they were all amazed at the majesty of God. But while everyone marveled at all the things which Jesus did, He said to His disciples, “Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.” But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.” The word translated “amazed” means to be struck with amazement or to be astonished. They recognized the greatness of Jesus that day.

While the people were talking about the amazing thing that Jesus had just done, Jesus talked to His disciples. The word translated “sink down” means to settle or to place. Jesus wanted His disciples to really let these words settle into their thinking. Then He told them that the Son of Man was about to be betrayed into the hands of men. Here we see that Jesus told the disciples again about His coming death but again they did not understand and were afraid to ask. We are reminded that people can have knowledge of the Word of God but lack understanding. We need to keep this in mind as we help our physical and spiritual children in their spiritual growth because sometimes they will also lack understanding. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children in their spiritual growth and understanding.

Jesus Taught the Importance of Humility

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus chose to show some of His disciples what the kingdom of God would be like. We also saw that Jesus cast a demon out of a boy. In this topic we are going to see that Jesus taught His disciples about some of the important attitudes that needed to be developed in their lives.

Luke 9:46-50 says, “Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, “Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great.” Now John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow with us.” But Jesus said to him, “Do not forbid *him*, for he who is not against us is on our side.” Here we see that one of the key lessons that Jesus had to teach His disciples was humility as Jesus gave the disciples two different illustrations.

The disciples of Jesus had many attitudes that had to be transformed by Jesus. One day the disciples had a discussion that became an argument. They were discussing which of them would be the greatest. The word translated “greatest” means the greatest in value or importance. Here we see that Jesus had to deal with the attitude of pride because they each wanted to be the most important. Mark 9:33-34 says, “Then He came to Capernaum. And when He was in the house He asked them, “What was it you disputed among yourselves on the road?” But they kept silent, for on the road they had disputed among themselves who *would be the greatest*.” The disciples showed that they knew their attitude was wrong because they kept silent when Jesus asked them this question.

However, Jesus knew what was going on in their thoughts. The word translated “child” means a young child or a little child. This same word is used in Mark 10:13-14 where we read, “Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.” In this case the disciples thought that the parents should not bother Jesus with their little children. Here in Luke Jesus set a little child by Him. He told the disciples that to welcome the little child in His name was to welcome Him and His Father. He said the way to become great is to become the least (humble).

John did not get the point and told Jesus what they had done earlier. He and some of the other disciples had met a man casting out demons in the name of Jesus. They had told him to stop because he was not one of the disciples like them. Here we see the pride of position. John thought that the Twelve were greater than others because they had been chosen by Jesus. Jesus again had to point out the need for humility. Jesus said that the disciples were not to prevent those who were followers of Jesus even though they might not be one of the Twelve. Jesus said that those who are not against Him are for Him. The fact that Jesus said this man was not against Jesus showed that both His teachings and His actions were pleasing to Jesus and that he was for Jesus. The disciples were not better than others who pleased Jesus.

Jesus and His disciples began traveling toward Jerusalem. Luke 9:51-56 says, “Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. But they did not receive Him, because His face was *set* for

the journey to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them*.” And they went to another village.” Toward evening Jesus sent some of His disciples into a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for them for a place to stay that night.

The Jews as a whole rejected the Samaritans. In fact this hatred by most of the Jews was so strong that most of the Jews going between Judea and Galilee would cross the Jordan River and travel on the other side of the river even though that was a longer trip to avoid going through Samaria. Many Samaritans reacted to that rejection by disliking the Jews. In this case we see that the Samaritans refused to let Jesus and His disciples stay in their village for the night because they were going toward Jerusalem. James and John reacted with great anger to this rejection. The two said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” Here we see that James and John were ready to destroy this village because the people did not allow them to stay in their village for the night.

Jesus did not have the same attitude as most of the rest of the Jews. Jesus loved the Samaritans just as much as He loved the Jews and every other group of people. As a result, Jesus answered James and John, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.” The spirit is the inner man. Before we become a Christian that inner man is totally sinful. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Once we become a Christian we are given a new nature. As a result, we now have a choice. We can make a natural response or we can make a supernatural response. When we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit we make a supernatural response. When we act in our own strength we make a natural response. That is what James and John did when they felt the rejection of the Samaritans. They made a natural response and wanted to get even and destroy.

In contrast, Jesus always made a supernatural response. Jesus explained, “For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them*.” Jesus rebuked James and John for their natural response. The word translated “rebuked” means to admonish or warn a person about their sinful behavior. Jesus did not come to destroy. Instead Jesus came to save the lives of mankind. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” Christ came to give life and save men’s lives and so He provided an example for the disciples and just went to another village.

Luke 9:57-62 says, “Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, *that* someone said to Him, “Lord, I will follow You wherever You go.” 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.” Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God.” And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go *and* bid them farewell who are at my house.” But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” In these verses, we see that three different people made the choice not to follow Jesus.

The first person said that He would follow Jesus wherever He went. Jesus told the person to think about his choice before he made a promise. Then Jesus told the person that the foxes have holes in the ground where they live. The birds of the air build nests so that they have a home. In contrast, Jesus said that He had no home of His own where He could sleep. Suddenly the person realized that he had to make a choice. He could follow Jesus by faith or he could think about his own needs. Jesus said in 2 Corinthians 5:7, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” The

first person chose to depend on the security of the things that he had instead of learning to walk by faith. We never read that this person ever followed Jesus.

Jesus then invited a second person to follow Him. This person said that he would follow Jesus but first he wanted to bury his father. The word translated “first” means first in time, place or rank. Luke 21:9 says, “But when you hear of wars and commotions, do not be terrified; for these things must come to pass first, but the end will not come immediately.” Here we see that certain things had to happen first before the end could come. This person was really saying that he would follow Jesus when he got old but first he had to wait until his father died so that he could bury him. This was important to this person because he wanted to receive his inheritance. His concern was for physical things instead of spiritual things. Jesus told the man to let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead. We never read that this person ever followed Jesus at a later time.

Jesus also invited a third person to follow Him. However, this person also had an excuse about something that he wanted to do first. He basically said that He would follow Jesus later but right now his first priority was to go and say farewell to those who were at his house. This person is like one who says that he will become a Christian at a later time or when he is old. Jesus told that person, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” By personal experience as a boy, I learned that you must plow by looking ahead and not looking back or you will not plow in a straight line. That is a good example of what it means to follow Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 says, “Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus as they go through their life on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to keep their eyes fixed on Jesus.

Jesus Sent Out Seventy Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus gave an example of the meaning of true humility. He also gave an example of the concern that we should to save lives and not to destroy them. Then Jesus gave three examples of what it means to be His disciple. We saw that we want to show our children the importance of keeping their eyes fixed on Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus again sent out His disciples to the cities where He would be going. This time Jesus sent out seventy disciples instead of just the Twelve.

As Jesus prepared to send out these seventy disciples the first thing that He told them was to pray for laborers. Luke 10:1-3 says, "After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves." We see that Jesus sent out seventy disciples in teams of two so a total of 35 different teams were sent out into all of the areas that Jesus would later visit. This would have included the areas of Galilee, Judea, Perea and possibly even Samaria.

The very first thing that He told the seventy was that there is a great harvest. Here we see that Jesus was talking about a spiritual harvest. The word translated "harvest" means the act of reaping or the time of reaping. John 4:35 says, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" Jesus knew that the disciples must first see that the harvest is great before they would ever become laborers in the harvest. Jesus also knew that they must pray for laborers before they would ever become laborers. In the same way we must see the spiritual needs around us and then begin to pray that the Lord will send laborers into His harvest. As we pray, the Lord will work in our hearts to prepare us to become part of the team of laborers.

Then Jesus told the seventy that He was sending them forth like lambs among wolves. Jesus described what He meant by wolves when He said in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves." Wolves are mentioned six times in the New Testament: five times by Jesus and once by Paul. In all six places it talks about false teachers. Acts 20:29 says, "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock." The goal of wolves is always to destroy the flock of God. Here we see an important lesson for our own lives as we serve the Lord. If you have a lamb and a wolf alone the wolf will eat lunch and the lamb will be the lunch. In contrast, if you have a lamb, a wolf and a shepherd, you will soon have one dead wolf because the shepherd will destroy the wolf. Only as we are dependent upon Christ and walk with Him are we protected from the false teachers that would try to destroy us.

Jesus also gave the seventy some specific instructions as He sent them out to the places where He would soon go. Luke 10:4-7 says, "Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house." Here we see that Jesus had several lessons that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples as they went out to minister. First, Jesus wanted the disciples to

learn that He would supply their needs as they went. For that reason He told them not to take a money bag, a food bag or an extra pair of sandals. This meant that they had to trust Jesus to provide their physical needs.

Second, Jesus told the disciples to greet no one along the road. In the Jewish culture a greeting was something that took a lot of time and might even include taking the time to eat a meal with the other person. Jesus had just told the disciples that the harvest was great but the laborers were few. It is very easy to spend much time doing things that keep a person busy instead of carrying out the ministry that the Lord has given them to do. That is also true for our own lives. In 1 Kings 20:39-40 we read, "Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, 'Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, 'Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver.' While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.'" Then the king of Israel said to him, "So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it." Here a prophet of God was using an illustration to show the king that he would be judged because he was busy here and there instead of doing what he had been told to do. It is very easy for Christians to be busy here and there and fail to do what God has called us to do.

Third, Jesus told the disciples to greet the first house that they entered by saying peace to this house. Jesus had said to the Twelve in Matthew 10:11-13, "Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and stay there till you go out. And when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it. But if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you." The word translated "worthy" means one who is respected and has influence. In each town the disciples were to offer peace to the house of the person that was most respected in that city or town. Jesus knew that a respected person would open the way to make many contacts in that place. The same thing is true today, because a person that is respected influences others.

Jesus told the disciples to stay at that home as long as they were in that town. They were to eat and drink the things that the person provided. Here we see that the disciples were to be content with whatever that person provided and not go looking for a family that might give better food. 1 Timothy 6:6-8 says, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." Jesus wanted the disciples to realize that their lives would give an example of what it means to be content if they ate what was provided by that family. Jesus also said that the laborer is worthy of his wages. As the disciples shared the message of the kingdom of God and served the people of the various cities and town that they visited, Jesus said that He would provide their daily needs through the families with which they stayed.

Jesus also told the disciples that some cities would receive them and some would not. Luke 10:8-12 says, "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.' But I say to you that it will be more tolerable in that Day for Sodom than for that city." Here we see that Jesus wanted to prepare His disciples both for acceptance and for rejection.

Some cities would receive the disciples. The word translated "receive" means to accept or to take to one's self. Such cities would have a welcoming attitude. The disciples were told to do two things in such cities. First, they were to heal the sick in those cities. Jesus often ministered to the physical needs of people as well as the spiritual needs. This statement shows that Jesus wanted to teach the disciples to do the same. However, there is a more important reason why

they were to heal the sick. 1 Corinthians 1:22 says, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom.” This sign to the Jews was to prepare their hearts for the message of the disciples about Jesus.

Second, we see that the disciples were to tell the people in these cities that the kingdom of God had come near to them. During the time of Jesus many Jews were looking for the coming of the Messiah. Those Jewish cities that would accept the disciples would also accept the message about the kingdom of God. This was the way that Jesus chose to prepare those cities for His coming and His message.

In contrast, Jesus told the disciples that the people of some cities would not accept them. In that day many Jews would wipe the dust off their sandals when they returned to Israel from the surrounding countries. This was their way of telling the Gentiles that their country was a pagan country because they did not accept and believe in the true God. Jesus said that by wiping the dust off of their sandals that it would be a visible testimony to the Jews of that city that they had rejected the message of the kingdom of God. At the same time they were to tell the people of that city that the message of the kingdom of God had come close to them but the people of that city had rejected that message. Jesus said that the cities that rejected Him and the message of the kingdom of God would receive a greater judgment than the city of Sodom. The reason for that greater judgment would be due to the fact that they had personally seen and heard the teaching of Jesus and had rejected both Jesus and His teaching.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they are to show the love of Christ to all people. If they have shown that love to all people, if the people reject the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus that they are not rejecting them as a person. Instead such people are rejecting the message of life that Jesus offers. We are to remind our children that they are to be like lambs among wolves and depend on the Shepherd to defend them instead of turning against the people that have chosen to reject the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn the same lessons that Jesus taught His disciples.

Jesus Received the Report of the Seventy Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand why Jesus gave the seventy disciples certain instructions as He sent them out to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God. We saw that one of the key lessons that Jesus wanted the disciples to learn was to come to an understanding of the fact that Jesus would provide for their needs as they were obedient to Him. In our topic today, we will learn about the report that the disciples brought when they returned to Jesus. We will also see that Jesus used that opportunity to teach them the things that are most important.

Jesus had spent much time preaching, healing and casting out demons in three cities. Most of the people of those cities had rejected the teaching of Jesus. As a result, Jesus warned about the judgment that the people of those three cities would receive. Luke 10:13-16 says, “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me.” Jesus had just told the disciples that the people of certain cities would reject their message.

As a result, Jesus spoke to the seventy about the people of the cities where He had spent much time teaching and doing miracles. The word translated “woe” means grief and spoke of the grief and sorrow that the people of these cities would one day experience. The first two cities that Jesus mentioned were Chorazin and Bethsaida. These towns were located close to the town of Capernaum which is the third town that is mentioned. In Ezekiel chapters 28-30 God had used Ezekiel to tell about the judgment that would come on the cities of Tyre and Sidon. That judgment happened exactly as God had promised through Ezekiel. Jesus said that if the miracles that He had done had been done in the cities of Tyre and Sidon that those cities would have repented a long time earlier. He said that the people of those cities would have shown their repentance by sitting in sackcloth and ashes which was a sign of true sorrow for sin.

Jesus said that it would be easier for the people of Tyre and Sidon at the final judgment than it would be for the people of the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. Then Jesus reminded the seventy why they did not need to take it personally if people in other cities rejected them. He said that the people that would listen to the seventy would also listen to Him. Those who rejected the seventy would also reject Jesus. However, they would be rejecting more than just Jesus. They would also be rejecting the Father that had sent Jesus to this earth to pay the penalty for sin. Then Jesus sent out the seventy to speak of the kingdom of God in all of the places where He would soon be going.

The seventy were gone for a period of time and then returned to meet with Jesus at the appointed time. When the seventy returned to Jesus, He gave them the opportunity to report what had happened as they ministered. Luke 10:17-20 says, “Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”” People who are given the opportunity to serve the Lord are excited when they see how the Lord works through their lives. That was also true of the seventy.

We see that the seventy were filled with joy when they returned. This meant that the Lord had been working in their lives as well as through their lives. They said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." Here we see that the disciples were excited about what God had done through their lives. This is a common response when Christians first go out to serve the Lord and see how the Lord works in the lives of the people. We see that Jesus rejoiced with the seventy for what He had done through their lives. He chose to rejoice with those who rejoice.

Jesus also looked forward to the total defeat of Satan. Jesus had seen when Satan was cast out of heaven. Isaiah 14:12 says, "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!" Now Jesus looked forward to the defeat of Satan on this earth. John 12:31 says, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out." Then John 16:11 says, "Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." Christ had given His disciples authority over demons when He originally sent out the Twelve. As a result, they were now given a little picture of the judgment that would come on Satan and his demons and could look forward to his final judgment.

Later Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:12, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Then in Ephesians 6:17-18 we see that Christ gives Christians two offensive weapons against Satan and his demons. Those verses say, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." In these verses, we see that our two offensive weapons are the Word of God and prayer. We are to share the Word of God and then pray that Jesus will defeat the powers of Satan in the life of any person that is troubled by the powers of Satan and his demons.

After rejoicing with the seventy, Jesus went on to give a much greater reason why they should rejoice. Instead of making this power over the demons the source of their rejoicing, Jesus encouraged the seventy to rejoice because their names are written in heaven. Here we see a key lesson for our own lives. We are to rejoice with those who rejoice and then help them refocus on what the Lord has done for them instead of what they are doing for the Lord. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Then Ephesians 3:20-21 adds, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." We want to help our physical and spiritual children bring glory to the Lord and not to their ministry.

Jesus went on to rejoice for the things that the Father had taught the disciples. Luke 10:21-24 says, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.'" Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it." Here we see that the Father both hides and reveals.

The Father hides spiritual truth from those who depend on their human abilities and human wisdom. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." In contrast, God reveals His truth even to those who are spiritual babes. The word

translated “babes” means a young child that often cannot even speak clearly. Matthew 21:15-16 says, “But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise'?"” The seventy did not have formal religious training from well known rabbis in Jerusalem. Instead they had spent time with Jesus and God had given them spiritual understanding.

The Father is the One who reveals the Son. The Son is the One who reveals the Father. The Jewish rabbis depended on the writings of earlier rabbis to try and teach about the Father. However, they had no personal relationship with God. In contrast, Jesus is the Son of God who reveals the Father to those He wills to reveal the Father. As a result, the seventy had the privilege of getting to know the Father because Jesus had revealed the Father to them.

Jesus then told the disciples privately that they were blessed to see the way that the Lord worked through their lives. The seventy had the opportunity to see the things that many prophets and kings had desired to see but those men had not seen these things. They had also desired to hear the teaching that the disciples had received but they had not had that opportunity. The seventy had a special blessing to see and hear the way that God worked in their lives and through their lives. That is why they were to rejoice that their names were written in heaven instead of rejoicing in what they had been able to accomplish. They could enjoy that special blessing but the most important thing was to rejoice in their eternal salvation. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to rejoice in their eternal salvation. May the Lord richly bless you as you rejoice with your children for the eternal life that each one has received.

Jesus Answered a Lawyer

In our last topic, we saw that we want to learn to rejoice with our physical and spiritual children about the way that the Lord works through their lives. However, after we rejoice with them we want to help them refocus so that their real rejoicing is over the fact that their names are written in heaven. In this way the things that they say and do will bring glory to God and not to themselves. In our topic today, we are going to see that a lawyer asked Jesus a question to try and justify himself and we will see how Jesus responded.

One day a lawyer tried to trap Jesus with a question. Luke 10:25-29 says, "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"" This lawyer had no desire to learn when he asked his question. Instead his desire was to test Jesus. Here we see a common attitude of many people.

The word translated "lawyer" was the word that was used to describe a scribe who was considered an expert in the Old Testament law. Luke 14:3 says, "And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"" Here we see that Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees the question since they were supposed to be the experts on Old Testament law. As a result, Jesus did as He often did when people asked Him a question and answered their question with a question. Jesus asked what the law taught. The lawyer gave basically the same summary of the law that Jesus gave in Matthew 22:37-40. Jesus told the lawyer that he had given the correct answer. Jesus told him to keep that law and he would live.

Suddenly the lawyer knew in his heart that he did not have that kind of love for God. As a result, he decided to only deal with the part of the commandment that deals with the relationship of man to man. In order to try and justify himself the lawyer asked another question, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus answered the question of the lawyer by telling the story that has become known as the story of the Good Samaritan.

Luke 10:30-35 says, "Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'" Notice that the Bible does not call this story a parable.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho was a twisting, winding road as it went down about 3300 feet in just 17 miles. As a result, it was considered a dangerous road because there were many places where thieves could hide. This particular man was traveling this road alone and was attacked by a group of thieves. These thieves showed no mercy. They even took his clothing.

They wounded and injured him so that he was half dead. Then they went on their way and left the man to die. Here we see a real picture of the sinfulness of many people when they think that they will not be caught.

The word translated “chance” means by accident or by chance. We see that sometime later in the day three different people came by the place where the man was dying. The first was a priest. Here we see that a religious leader was the first to see the man. The priests were the religious leaders of the Jews who offered the sacrifices in the temple. This priest saw the man and passed by on the other side of the road. He was a religious leader but he had no compassion. The second person to come by was a Levite. The Levites assisted the priests and also carried out many civic duties in the various cities. He also lacked compassion because he came and looked and then passed by on the other side of the road.

The third person to come down that road was a Samaritan. Normally the Samaritans did not travel this road because in addition to the danger of thieves there was also the rejection that Samaritans regularly received from the Jews. In contrast to the priest and the Levite who had no compassion for a fellow Jew, we see that the Samaritan felt compassion and it caused him to take action to help the injured man. The word translated “compassion” means to be moved from within by love. The priest and the Levite had no love for a fellow countryman. However, the Samaritan had that love even though the Samaritans were rejected by the Jews. The Samaritan poured oil and wine on the wounds and then bandaged them. The oil and wine were used to disinfect and sooth. Then the Samaritan bandaged up the wounds.

However, the Samaritan did much more. He also put the man on his animal, brought him to an inn and took care of him throughout the night. The next day, when the Samaritan had to leave, he gave the innkeeper two days wages and asked the innkeeper to take care of him. He also said that if the cost was more that he would pay the additional amount to cover the expenses for the man to heal the next time that he returned.

Then Jesus asked the lawyer a question. Luke 10:26-37 says, “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” And he said, “He who showed mercy on him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”” The lawyer was faced with a question that he could only honestly answer in one way. It was very obvious that the priest and the Levite did not act as a neighbor. However, the lawyer was unwilling to even use the word Samaritan to answer the question. As a result, the lawyer said that the one who showed mercy was the neighbor. Jesus then told the lawyer that if he were going to be a neighbor that he would have to have the same kind of actions and not just speak the words.

Then Luke 10:38-42 says, “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.” And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”” From John 11 we know that this was the town of Bethany.

Here we see that two sisters show us two very different ways that people respond to Jesus. Martha welcomed Jesus into her house but then became very busy preparing a fancy meal for Jesus and those with him. In contrast, her sister Mary just sat at the feet of Jesus and heard His teaching. The word translated “heard” means to hear so that there is understanding. Mary really wanted to understand what Jesus was teaching and enjoy fellowship with Him. In contrast, the word translated “distracted” means to be driven about mentally. In her mind

Martha was more concerned with serving Jesus than she was with listening to Him and learning from Him. She was probably trying to prepare a very elaborate dinner. However, she got upset because her sister was not helping her. Her anger came out in her words, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

Jesus then gently explained to Martha that she had her priorities wrong. The word translated "worried" means to be troubled with cares. The word translated "troubled" means to be troubled in mind. 1 John 1:3-4 says, "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full." Martha was distracted by her own plans to make an elaborate dinner and she was not able to enjoy fellowship with the Lord. In contrast, Mary had chosen to learn from Jesus and enjoy fellowship with Him.

Jesus gently explained that Mary had chosen the most important thing because she had chosen that good part. The word that is translated "good" means that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects. The word translated "part" means a part as distinct from the whole. Mary had chosen to experience the joy that comes from true fellowship with Jesus. That was much more beneficial than being driven by busyness like Martha who had her focus only on service for Jesus. Jesus said that the good part would not be taken away from Mary.

Here we see a key lesson that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand. It is very easy to become a person that is driven like Martha when we try to serve the Lord through our own efforts. Instead Jesus wants us to help our children learn to be led like Mary as we show them how to enjoy fellowship with the Lord that will cause their joy to be full. Our lives will have a much greater impact when we are led by the love of Christ instead of being driven by the fear of people. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be led by the love of Christ.

Jesus Taught About Answered Prayer

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We also want to help our children learn that our lives will have a greater impact as we learn to enjoy fellowship with Jesus that produces a joy that is full than if we try to serve the Lord in our own strength because then we will become driven and be upset at others. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus taught His disciples several lessons about prayer.

One day the disciples of Jesus asked Jesus how to pray. Luke 11:1-4 says, "Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.'" So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." In the time of Jesus the rabbis often taught their followers prayers to repeat. John had also taught his disciples to pray. The disciples had often seen Jesus pray. One day after He had finished praying one of the disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them to pray.

The rabbis would teach their followers a prayer to repeat. In contrast, the disciples saw and heard Jesus praying to the Father and so they realized that He did not just repeat prayers. That was why one of the disciples of Jesus asked Him to teach them how to pray. We will see that Jesus did not give them words to repeat. Instead Jesus taught the disciples about the various things to include in prayer. This prayer begins by pointing out the relationship that we have to God. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Then Romans 8:14-15 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" Hebrews 4:16 then tells us, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." We become the children of God when we believe in Jesus and receive Him. We then have a very personal relationship that means we can cry out to God, our Father. We can also come to Him boldly because of that relationship.

Second, we recognize that God is Holy. The word "hallowed" means to be pure or free from the guilt of sin. God is holy because He is without sin. Third, we are to pray for the work of God in the world as we pray that His kingdom will be fully established. Fourth, we pray for the will of God to be done on earth just as His will is already done in heaven. This also shows our submission to the plan and purpose of God. After praying for the work of God in the world, we are also to pray for our own needs. First, we are to pray for our daily needs. Second, we are to pray for forgiveness from our sins. Our sins were forgiven at the moment of salvation but we will only experience the feeling of forgiveness as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Third we are to pray that the Lord will not bring us into temptation but instead deliver us from the temptations of the evil one. The word translated "deliver" means to rescue us from Satan.

After teaching about prayer, Jesus went on to teach the importance of persistence in prayer. Luke 11:5-8 says, "And He said to them, 'Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within and say, 'Do

not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you?" I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs." Here we see an illustration about persistence in prayer.

Jesus used two friends in this story to illustrate persistence. Jesus talked about a friend that was traveling and arrived at the home of one of his disciples close to midnight one night. It would be customary to offer such a friend something to eat after he had traveled so late. However, Jesus said that for the purpose of this story the disciple had no bread in his house. As a result, the disciple would go to a friend who lived nearby and ask to borrow three loaves of bread. Most of the Jews had only one room in their houses and so the whole family slept in that main room at night. Since it was midnight the entire family would be asleep at midnight when the disciple knocked on the door and asked to borrow the three loaves of bread.

When a person is awakened by someone knocking on the door in the middle of the night, that person might not be very eager to answer the door at that time of the night. The person would not want to wake up his entire family by lighting a lamp to find the bread. As a result, Jesus said that the friend might answer, "Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you." Jesus said that the person might not want to get up to get bread even though he was a friend. However, if the disciple just kept knocking on the door eventually the friend would get up and give the bread just because the disciple was persistent. If the disciple kept knocking long enough, everyone in the house would be awake and the friend would get the bread just to stop the knocking so that they could all go back to sleep. In the same way God wants us to understand that He will answer our prayers even though the prayer may not be answered immediately.

Jesus went on to teach about the way that God will answer our prayers. Luke 11:9-13 says, "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Jesus taught three things that we are to do as we bring our requests to the Lord. First, we are to ask. The word translated "ask" is often used to talk of some of lesser importance making a request of someone of greater importance. God is our Creator but He invites us to bring our requests to Him. The word translated "receive" means to gain or to obtain. Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." In this verse, the word is translated "we may obtain". In the same way, when we bring our requests to the Lord, Jesus said that we will obtain an answer to our prayer.

Second, we are to seek. The word translated "seek" means to seek in order to find. In the parable of the lost coin Luke 15:8 says, "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?" Here we see that the woman continued to seek for the coin until she found it. The word that is translated "finds" means to find by inquiry or to find either by searching or without searching. The Father wants to answer our requests as we ask according to the will of God.

Third, we are to knock. The word translated "knock" means to knock at the door. In Acts 12:13 and 16 Peter kept knocking at the door where a prayer meeting was being held to pray for

him. He kept knocking until the door was opened. Jesus said that the one who knocks will have the door opened. This reminds us of the importance of continuing to pray until there is an answer. God wants to answer our prayers and may teach us patience in the process.

Then we are given three illustrations of how the Father answers our prayers. If a son asks for food a father does not give his son a stone. A stone cannot be eaten. If a child asks for a piece of fish, the father does not give him a snake. A snake will often destroy instead of meet the need for food. If a son asks for an egg, the father does not give him a scorpion. A scorpion has a poisonous sting in its tail. A father is not going to make a child suffer from a poisonous sting instead of giving the child the food that it needs. A loving parent will give good things to a child and not things that will destroy him.

The Jesus made a comparison between the giving of sinful parents and the giving of our heavenly Father. Luke 11:13 says, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" The night before His crucifixion Jesus promised in John 14:16-17, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you." Ephesians 1:13-14 then promises, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Here we see that the Father gives us the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation as our guarantee of eternal life.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that we can come to God in prayer at any time with our requests. He is eager to answer our prayers because of the fact that He is our loving heavenly Father. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why the Father answers our prayers.

Jesus Showed His Power over Demons

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the fact that God is eager to answer our prayers because of His love for us. We can know that He will answer our prayers in His time and according to His will because we are His children. God is able to answer our prayers because He is much greater than Satan and has all power. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus showed that He has much greater power than Satan by defeating the demon that possessed a person and made it impossible for person to speak.

One day Jesus cast a demon out of a person. Luke 11:14-16 says, "And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute. So it was, when the demon had gone out, that the mute spoke; and the multitudes marveled. But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." Others, testing Him, sought from Him a sign from heaven." Here we see that one day Jesus met a person that was unable to speak. This person was prevented from speaking by a demon that had taken possession of the person. Jesus immediately cast the demon out of the person. Then the person started to talk and the crowds around Jesus were amazed as they saw the person speak.

However, there were some who were there that said that Jesus had cast out the demon by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. Here we see that one of the names of Satan is Beelezbub. In the Old Testament Baal was the main god of the Philistines. We see that many times the people of Israel joined in the false worship of Baal. One day the king of Israel was injured and wanted to know if he would recover. 2 Kings 1:2 says, "Now Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury.'" By the time of the New Testament Baal-zebub was spelled Beelzebub and had become a name for Satan.

In addition to accusing Jesus of casting out demons by the prince of demons, the people who rejected the fact that Jesus is God also tried to test Jesus by asking Him for a sign from heaven. The fact that Jesus had just cast out the demon was evidence of the fact that Jesus is God because He had all power over Satan and his demons. Jesus also knew the thoughts of those who were accusing Him. Luke 11:17-23 says, "But He, knowing their thoughts, said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." The fact that Jesus knew their thoughts was another sign He is God.

Jesus knew their thoughts so He gave an answer to those who were rejecting Him. Jesus said that a kingdom that was divided and fighting against itself would soon be destroyed. In the same way a house that is divided against itself will fall. The word translated "house" can also talk about the household or the family living within the house. That is the way the word is used in Acts 16:15 where we read, "And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us." Here we see that Lydia and her whole household were baptized.

Jesus showed that it made no sense for Satan to cast out demons because Satan would actually be fighting against himself. Jesus had suddenly revealed the thoughts of those who rejected Him. He said that if they were saying that He was casting out demons by Satan, then they needed to tell Him by whom their sons were casting out Satan. At the time of Jesus and after Him there were Jews who were going around who claimed to have the power to cast out demons. Acts 19:13-15 says, "Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?" Here we see that it was the sons of a Jewish chief priest that claimed to have that power. They did not actually have that power because Acts 19:16 says, "Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Satan did not give them power to back up their false claims.

In answer to their thoughts, Jesus explained the choice that these people had to make. They had to make the choice whether to recognize the finger of God and the fact that the kingdom of God had come or whether to continue to reject the evidence that Jesus is God. Then Jesus gave an illustration to make those who rejected Him think. A strong man who is fully armed and is guarding his palace will have peace and know that his goods are protected. However, if a stronger person comes to him and defeats him, the stronger man will take all of the armor of the strong man and also take his possessions. The fact that Jesus had cast out the demon was evidence that He was stronger than Satan because He was able to defeat Satan and his demon.

Then Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters." Jesus here pointed out that each person has to examine his own life and attitudes to see whether he is for Jesus or against Jesus. This is in contrast to the statement that Jesus had made in Luke 9:50 which says, "But Jesus said to him, "Do not forbid him, for he who is not against us is on our side." In this verse, Jesus told the disciples not to judge the other person because the actions of the other person showed that the other person was also serving Jesus. In this verse, Jesus told those who were thinking evil thoughts about Jesus that they needed to examine their own hearts because their evil thoughts showed that they were against Jesus. Such a person cannot gather the harvest that Christ has. Instead when a person has an evil heart that person is scattering or destroying what is good instead of doing what is good.

Then Jesus went on to explain that a person who has an unclean spirit cannot be permanently changed by an evil person who casts out demons. Luke 11:24-26 says, "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." Jesus had just asked those who had evil thoughts in their hearts by whom their sons cast out demons.

Here Jesus explains that sometimes people with evil hearts can temporarily cast out demons through their own efforts and the person will seem to be free of the demons for a short period of time. This also happens when a medicine man does a ceremony or a sing to get rid of a demon. The demon may go out of the person temporarily but that demon will be seeking a new person that he can possess. If that demon does not find a new person that he can possess, that demon will go back to the person that he had previously possessed. The demon wants to check and see if that person has a greater power than the power which Satan has given to him.

He finds the person that he previously possessed has cleaned up his life so that everything seems to be different. However, Matthew 12:43-44 says, "When an unclean spirit goes out of a

man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order." There is only one problem. Without the power of the Holy Spirit in that life because that person has repented and placed his faith in Christ, the spirit of that person is empty. The person has outwardly changed his life but there has been no change on the inside.

Jesus said that when the unclean spirit sees that the spirit of the person is still empty, that unclean spirit goes and finds seven other evil spirits that are more wicked than he is. The evil spirit then invites those other unclean spirits to join him and together then all move into the spirit of the person that has tried to clean up his life by his own efforts. Then all eight evil spirits enter into the person and the condition of that person is even worse than it originally was. Here we see that Jesus explained to these men that had evil thoughts in their hearts why their sons were able to cast out evil spirits and temporarily cause a person to think that his or her life was greatly improved. The demon would leave temporarily but if that person did not find true spiritual life through Jesus that demon would soon return and the last condition of that person would be even worse.

We see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why people can find temporary help for their lives through medicine men or various programs. However, that help will not be permanent unless that person receives spiritual life through Christ. Only Christ has promised to give the Holy Spirit to those who come to Him for spiritual life. That is why we want to help our children understand why Jesus is the only One that can bring permanent change to the life of such a person. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how Jesus changes lives.

Jesus Taught about the Sign of Jonah

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus is the only one who is able to exercise total power over the demons of Satan. Those who try to cast out demons through any other power will only have temporary success because Jesus is the only One who gives the Holy Spirit to those who repent of their sin and place their faith in Him. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus told those who had evil hearts that the only sign that would be given to them would be the sign of Jonah.

One day a woman made a statement about being blessed. Jesus then explained that there is a greater blessing by which we can all be blessed. Luke 11:27-28 says, "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!" But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Several times during the ministry of Jesus people tried to say that the family of Jesus received extra blessing, privilege or power. Each time Jesus used the opportunity to explain that all those who become His true followers also receive this same blessing. Here we see that this woman tried to say that Mary had received a special blessing. Jesus did not deny the fact that she that she was blessed.

Instead Jesus told how any person can receive even greater blessing. The phrase translated "more than that" has the thought that yes that is true but even more important is this. Paul used the word in Philippians 3:7-8 where we read, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." Here the word is translated "yet indeed". Paul had just listed the things that had brought personal gain to his life before he became a Christian. Then he said those things were worth nothing compared to what he received by placing his faith in Jesus. That is the same thought that we have here in Luke.

Jesus went on to explain that true blessing comes to those who hear the Word of God and keep it. The word translated "keep" means to guard or keep something so that it is not violated. This word is used twice in Acts 21:24-25 where we read, "Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality." In these verses, we see that the church leaders recognized that Paul kept the law and that instructions had been given to the Gentiles about the things that they were to keep so that they were not violated.

Jesus went on to warn about those who seek signs. Luke 11:29-32 says, "And while the crowds were thickly gathered together, He began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here." Jesus warned the crowd that they were part of an evil generation.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22-24 Paul wrote, “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” The Jews wanted Jesus to give them a sign to prove that He was God. Jesus told the crowd that the only sign that they would receive would be the sign of Jonah. Matthew tells us that some scribes and Pharisees had just asked for a sign. Jesus explained the sign of Jonah in Matthew 12:40 which says, “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The sign that Jesus gave was His coming death and resurrection.

Jesus also said that the queen of the South (Sheba) would condemn the men of Jesus generation. She had come a great distance to hear the wisdom of Solomon. 1 Kings 10:6-7 say, “Then she said to the king: "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard.” Solomon had great wisdom but Jesus was much greater than Solomon and the people were rejecting Him.

In the same way Jesus said that the men of Nineveh would also rise up and condemn the generation that lived during the time of Jesus. The people of Nineveh had repented in sackcloth and ashes at the preaching of Jonah. Jonah 3:5-6 says, “So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. Then word came to the king of Nineveh; and he arose from his throne and laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth and sat in ashes.” Here we see that the people of Nineveh had true sorrow for their sins. In contrast, the people of Jesus day had one greater than Jonah speaking the Word of God to them and they had chosen to reject Jesus and His teaching.

At the same time Jesus also invited the people to turn to Him for spiritual light. Luke 11:33-36 says, “No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a secret place or under a basket, but on a lampstand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light.” Jesus said that the purpose of a lamp is to give light so that people can see. The Word of God was given so that people could receive spiritual light. In addition, Jesus came to give spiritual light so that people could receive spiritual sight.

However, the problem of many of the people of the generation of Christ was that they could not see spiritual light so Jesus gave another illustration. He said that the eye is like the lamp to the body. A person who has an eye that is good will receive light. Jesus had said earlier in Matthew 6:22-23, “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!” The word that is translated “bad” in both passages speaks of an evil nature or a bad condition. When this word is used in a physical sense it speaks of an eye that is diseased or blind. When this word is used in a moral sense it speaks of evil or wicked. The word is used four times in Matthew 12:34-35 where we read, “Brood of vipers! How can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.” The hearts of the people were evil so their thoughts, words and actions were also evil.

In contrast, Jesus told them that their whole body could be full of light. Jesus came to give

spiritual light to all who would believe. In John 8:12 Jesus said, "Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."” In John 8:30-32 Jesus gave a great promise to those who believed in Him. Those verses say, “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Jesus came to bring that truth to every person who would believe. Then Jesus promised in John 8:36, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Jesus offered that freedom to all but many were unwilling to accept the truth and receive that freedom.

One of those who rejected the teaching of Jesus still invited Him to dinner. Luke 11:37-38 says, “And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner.” Here we see that the purpose of the Pharisee was not to show Jesus kindness but rather to look for an excuse to condemn Him. Jesus said in Matthew 23:27, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.” We are going to see in our next topic that Jesus gave a similar warning to the people who were in the house of the Pharisee that day.

We see in this passage that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus is concerned about the heart of each person. We want to help our children understand that the Word of God will reveal the thoughts and intents of the heart so if they share the Word of God, He will speak through His Word. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word of God instead of their opinions.

Jesus Pronounced Woes on the Pharisees

We saw in our last topic that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that a person can have a heart that is full of spiritual darkness. The Word of God is the only thing that can penetrate that darkness and that is why it is so important that we share the Word of God with others rather than our own opinions. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus gave a warning to the Pharisees and lawyers that were gathered for dinner at the home of the Pharisee that had invited Jesus to have dinner with him at his home.

We saw in our last topic that Jesus had warned the people that they were a part of an evil generation. One of the Pharisees in that crowd then invited Jesus to dinner at his house. However, the Pharisee was immediately critical of Jesus because He did not wash His hands in the way that the Pharisees taught people to wash their hands. As a result, in Luke 11:39-44 we see that Jesus now warned this Pharisee by saying, "Then the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness. Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them."'" Jesus here gave the Pharisees several reasons why grief would come upon them.

Jesus said that the Pharisees tried to be one thing on the outside but they were very different on the inside. On the outside they tried to appear to others like they were a clean cup or dish. They washed their cups and dishes and worked to make sure that that they did the proper ceremony when they washed. However, in their heart they were full of greed and wickedness. Jesus said that the Pharisees were foolish because the Creator who made the outside also made the inside and so He knew their hearts. Instead of outward acts Jesus said that they needed to have a concern for the needy that came from a heart that was right with God. Matthew 6:3-4 says, "But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly."

Jesus also said that the Pharisees would experience grief because they gave tithes from their spices but they ignored justice and the love of God. Jesus said it was right to give tithes but it was sin to forget the much more important issues of justice and love for God. Jesus also told the Pharisees that they would experience grief because they loved the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. The best seats were the places where the most important people sat. The greetings in the marketplaces were ceremonies where people were greeted according to their rank in that culture. Both things pointed to the pride of the Pharisees. Jesus said that the Pharisees were like graves that could not be seen. The Pharisees were carefully hiding the inner attitudes of their hearts.

One of the lawyers suddenly spoke up. Luke 11:45-51 says, "Then one of the lawyers answered and said to Him, "Teacher, by saying these things You reproach us also." And He said, "Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. In fact, you bear witness that you approve the deeds of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore the

wisdom of God also said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute,' that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation." The word translated "reproach" means to speak shamefully. The lawyer said that Jesus was also bringing shame on the lawyers.

The lawyers were scribes who were considered experts in the Old Testament law. Jesus then said that the lawyers would also experience grief. Jesus went on to explain what the lawyers did. He said that they loaded the other people with burdens that were hard to carry. The word translated "burdens" were the heavy loads of traditions that the lawyers made other people follow. Matthew 23:3-4 says, "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers." Jesus made it clear that they put rules on others but did not obey those rules themselves.

The lawyers and Pharisees also built fancy tombs for the prophets that their fathers had killed. Matthew 23:29-30 says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'" Jesus said that they were just as guilty as their fathers. They would soon show why they were as guilty as their fathers by condemning Jesus to death. Jesus said that they would be held accountable for all of the blood of the righteous people that had died from Abel to Zechariah.

In the wisdom of God, He had given the Jewish religious leaders the Word of God through the prophets of God. Now God was going to give them the apostles that would share the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Just as their fathers had killed the Old Testament prophets, these religious leaders would kill and persecute the apostles. Here we see the reason why God said that all of the Old Testament martyrs would be required of this generation. They were as guilty as any of their fathers that had killed the prophets. Jesus said this generation would be held accountable for their sin.

Jesus went on to tell the lawyers in Luke 11:52-54, "Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him." Jesus concluded by giving the lawyers a final reason that they would experience grief.

Jesus said that the lawyers had taken away the key of knowledge. The way that they had taken away that key is explained in Mark 7:13 where we read, "Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do." The lawyers taught the traditions that had been taught by their fathers instead of explaining the Word of God. This replaced the Word of God with the opinions of men. In contrast, Matthew 7:28-29 says, "And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." In Matthew chapters 5 through 7 Jesus repeatedly said, "You have heard that it was said...But I say to you." In each case Jesus replaced the traditions of their fathers with a proper interpretation of the Word of God. That is why Jesus said that the lawyers had taken away the key to knowledge.

The lawyers had chosen not to enter the kingdom of God and they were doing whatever they

could to try and hinder others from entering the kingdom. That is why Jesus had earlier said in Matthew 7:13-14, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." The way that leads to destruction is wide because it rejects the Word of God and follows the traditions of men. In contrast, the way into the kingdom of God is narrow because it requires repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. As a result of Jesus confronting the fact that they had taken away the key of knowledge, the scribes and Pharisees were very angry and began to attack Him.

The word translated "lying in wait for" means to prepare a trap for. Here we see that the purpose of the Pharisees and lawyers was to try and trap Jesus in His words. The word translated "to catch" means to go hunting or to trap with a snare. These words show that the lawyers and Pharisees had only one goal. Their goal was to trap Jesus with His words and find some way that they could accuse Him. That is exactly what they did later as they spoke to Pilate about Jesus. Luke 23:1-2 says, "Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.'" Then Pilate sent Jesus to Herod and the chief priests and scribes accused Jesus to Herod. Luke 23:10 says, "And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him." Here in Luke 11 we see that these men had already begun to plot against Jesus and to try and trap Him in His words in their efforts to find some way to condemn Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that there are many like the scribes and Pharisees who want to replace the Word of God with their traditions. We also want to help our children realize that they will face opposition from such individuals as they focus on obedience to the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to face opposition from those who oppose the Word of God.

Jesus Warned About False Doctrine

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are many like the scribes and Pharisees today who want to replace the Word of God with their traditions and opinions. Jesus said that such leaders will experience judgment because they not only reject the truth but also hinder others from accepting the truth of the Word of God. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus went on to warn His disciples about the false doctrine of the Pharisees.

While Jesus was warning about the grief that the lawyers and Pharisees faced, a very large crowd of people gathered to hear Jesus teach. Luke 12:1-3 says, "In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have spoken in the ear in inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops." Here we see that there were so many people gathered that they began to trample on one another.

Although there was a large crowd, the greatest concern of Jesus was to talk to His disciples. The word translated "first of all" means first in place or first in importance. This reminds us of the fact that the first concern of Jesus was to train His disciples even when there was a large crowd gathered. He warned the disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. The word translated "beware" means pay attention or to listen closely. Matthew 13:33 says, "Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." This verse reminds us that leaven can be used in either a good or a bad sense. The word means that something spreads to the whole and speaks of influence.

In this verse, the leaven of the Pharisees is called hypocrisy. In Matthew 16:12 we read, "Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." In Matthew leaven speaks of the doctrine of Pharisees and speaks about all of the rules and traditions that they had added to the law. The word translated "hypocrisy" means the acting of a stage player and meant that they said one thing and did another. Then Luke 11:46 says, "And He said, Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." The Pharisees and lawyers loaded heavy burdens on others but did not do the things that they taught because their hearts were deceitful and desperately wicked.

Jesus told His disciples that the things that He had taught them privately would one day be known by all. The things that they had talked about in the dark would be heard in the light. The things whispered in an inner room would be proclaimed from the housetops. Jesus did not want His disciples to become like the Pharisees with their hypocrisy. Instead Jesus wanted His disciples to live what they taught. Paul summarized this thought in 1 Corinthians 11:1 which says, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

Jesus went on to tell His disciples not to fear those who can kill the body. Luke 12:4-7 says, "And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him! Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows."

Jesus knew that His disciples would face persecution and He did not want them to be fearful.

The only thing a person can do to a Christian is kill the body because persecutors have no power over a person once that person is dead. In contrast, God is the one that all people need to fear because He has the power to cast into hell those who reject the payment that Jesus made for their sins. Since there was a large crowd listening as Jesus spoke to His disciples, this was a real warning to the entire group. Then Jesus had a message of encouragement to His disciples. Two copper coins was the amount of money a person would earn by working a little more than one hour. Those two coins would be enough to buy five small birds called sparrows. Yet God knows when each one of those birds dies and falls to the ground. God does not forget any of the birds. Jesus also told the disciples that God knows the number of hairs on the head of each person. Since God keeps track of the smallest bird and also keeps track of the number of hairs on your head, you do not need to fear people. Jesus told the disciples that God had placed a much greater value on each of them than He had on many birds. The same is true today.

Jesus also promised the disciples that God would give them the words to speak when they were persecuted. Luke 12:8-12 says, "Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven. Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." Jesus encouraged His disciples to speak to others about Him and promised them that they did not need to worry when they were persecuted.

In these verses, Jesus promised the disciples that as they spoke to others and told them about Jesus that He would speak for them to the angels and to the father. In contrast, those who denied Him would also be denied before the angels. These same things are true for us today. Peter may have thought of what Jesus said that day when he later wrote in 1 Peter 3:15-16, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed." We are to be ready at all times to speak for Jesus to others.

Some may even blaspheme us when we speak about Jesus to them. Jesus said that even those who speak a word against Him will be forgiven when they repent. This was certainly illustrated in the life of Paul who severely persecuted the followers of Jesus until God stopped him on the road to Damascus. Then he became a great witness for Christ. Jesus said that only the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. John 11:47-48 says, "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.'" The Jewish religious leaders knew that the message of Jesus was true and Jesus had shown many signs to back up His Word. In fact He had just raised Lazarus from the dead. Instead of accepting the signs that Jesus did, they said that Jesus had done them by the power of Satan. Luke 11:15 said, "But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.'" That same sign is recorded in Matthew 12:24-32 where Jesus warned of the danger of the blasphemy of the Spirit because they said that the works of Jesus were being done by Satan.

Jesus also assured the disciples that they did not need to worry about what to say if the leaders of the synagogue, the magistrates or the authorities arrested them for preaching about Jesus. Instead Jesus gave them a wonderful promise. He promised, "The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." The night of the Last Supper before His crucifixion

Jesus again reminded the disciples of this promise. John 14:26 says, "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." Then a little later after warning again about persecution Jesus said in John 15:26, "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." Jesus made it clear that the Holy Spirit would give them the words to speak when facing persecution.

In Luke 12:13-15 Jesus warned about the danger of covetousness. Those verses say, "Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." Covetousness is a greedy desire to have more. Jesus did not come to settle disputes between brothers who had a desire to have more. Instead Jesus came to give eternal life and the money of this world has no eternal value. Riches and possessions do not give life. In fact 1 Timothy 6:9 says, "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction." The desire for riches destroys.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the things that have eternal value. Mark 8:36-37 says, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Those things that are eternal are the things that give life meaning and purpose and bring joy to our lives on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children why the things that have eternal value bring great meaning to your own life.

Jesus Gave a Parable about a Rich Fool

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus warned His disciples about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees because they said one thing and did another. Jesus also taught His disciples that their lives had great value. Then Jesus warned the disciples of the danger of covetousness. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus illustrated that danger by giving the parable of the rich fool.

That parable is found in Luke 12:16-21 where we read, “Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.’” ‘But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”” Here we see an illustration of the way that many people live their lives today.

Jesus began this parable by talking about a rich man whose fields yielded an abundant crop. However, he did not thank God for the way that God had blessed His fields or share anything with the needy. Instead he became controlled by pride. His pride is shown by the thoughts of his heart. First, the man thought about the size of his barns and realized that he did not have enough room to store his crops. He decided that he would tear down those barns and build larger barns. In his thoughts he thought that would give him enough room to store all of his crops.

Second, we see that the man thought about what his life would be like as he lived as a rich man. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The heart of this man was controlled by pride. Here we see that his sinful heart caused him to talk to his soul and tell his soul how good life would be for him in the future. The soul is the mind, emotions and will. He immediately started thinking about how good his life would be for many years. He told himself that he could now enjoy the easy life. He thought about the wonderful feeling that he thought that he would enjoy as he lived a life of pleasure. There was only one problem with his plan. He left God out of his thinking.

God said that the man was a fool. Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1 both give the same definition of a fool. Those verses both say, “The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.” These verses tell us that a person is a fool when he leaves God out of his thinking. Jesus said that the man was a fool because he only planned for his earthly life and did not plan for eternity. In fact Jesus said that he would die that night. He would never enjoy the things that he had provided for this earth. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This man had earthly riches but nothing of eternal value.

Jesus went on to teach the disciples that He would supply their needs. Luke 12:22-28 says, “Then He said to His disciples, “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more

than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds? And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?" We see that Jesus gave several reasons why His followers do not need to worry.

First, if God gave us life, He will supply the food and clothing that we need. Second, God provides for the birds so He will certainly provide for us because we are of much greater value than the birds. Third, we cannot add to our height by worrying. If we cannot do that, then it is senseless to worry about the rest of the things that we need. Fourth, God has given the flowers of the field great beauty. In fact Solomon with all of his beautiful clothes was not as beautiful as the flowers. The flowers have their beauty for just a few days and then they are gone. If God gives such beauty to things that only last for a few days, certainly he will clothe us. Then Jesus gave the reason why we worry. He said that we worry because we have little faith.

The word translated "O you of little faith" is used five times in the New Testament, twice in this context. Matthew 6:30 has the same context as Luke. Jesus was the One who used it each of the five times that this word was used. Jesus actually spoke it as a tender rebuke each time that He used this word. In Matthew 8:25-26 Jesus was sleeping in the back of the boat during a great storm. Those verses say, "Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."

Jesus used this word again during another storm when He came walking on the water to the disciples. Jesus told the disciples not to be afraid and Peter asked if He could come to Jesus. Then Matthew 14:29-31 says, "So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"" Finally in Matthew 16:6-8 we read, "Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "It is because we have taken no bread." But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread?" Jesus wanted to teach the disciples that they could trust Him to supply their needs in every situation.

Then Jesus went on to tell the disciples how to have treasure in heaven. Luke 12:29-34 says, "And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, nor have an anxious mind. For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Here Jesus gave some additional reasons why the disciples did not need to worry.

The people of the world do worry about these things. However, followers of Jesus do not need to worry because our heavenly Father knows that we need these things. As a result, we are told to seek the kingdom of God and God will add to us the things that we need. When we are seeking the will of God and are doing the work of God, He will supply the things that He knows

that we need. In fact Jesus said that it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. The word translated "good pleasure" means to be well pleased with or to be favorable to one. The Father used this same word when He spoke about Jesus in Matthew 3:17 and said, "And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."" We see that when we seek the will of God and do the work of God that He is pleased with us just as He was pleased with Jesus.

Since we can trust God to supply our needs, we can use part of what He gives us to carry out His work in this world. Jesus told the disciples to sell what they had so that they could use that money to do alms. The word translated "alms" means to show acts of kindness especially to the poor. We can meet the needs of others because we can trust the Lord to meet our needs. When a money bag gets a hole in the bag the money will fall out of the bag. Haggai 1:5-6 says, "Now therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider your ways! "You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but do not have enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages, earns wages to put into a bag with holes."" In contrast, when we give to the needs of others we are storing our treasure in the heaven and do not need to fear that our treasure will be lost or stolen. Jesus said we will have eternal reward.

Jesus also pointed out another key lesson. He said that where our treasure is that will also be the place where our heart is. That means that those who store up treasure on earth will have earthly values. Those who store up treasure in heaven will have heavenly values. We show our children where our heart is by our example. They can tell if we have earthly values or heavenly values by our actions. We will only be able to help our children develop heavenly values as we model those values in our own lives. Our example is the key way that we teach our children to develop godly priorities in their lives because they will follow our example as we lead them in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example to your children of godly values.

Jesus Warned of the Need to be Ready for His Coming

In our last topic, we saw that where our treasure is our heart will be also there. This is important because we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the importance of developing heavenly values instead of earthly values. As our children see by our choices that our lives are guided by eternal values that result in godly love, the Lord will work in their hearts to develop similar values. Another reason why it is important to have eternal values and to seek the kingdom of God in our lives is the fact that Jesus is coming back for us and we want to be ready to meet Him when He comes.

Jesus shared with His disciples the importance of being ready to meet Him when He returns. Luke 12:35-40 says, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Since Jesus knew that the group of disciples to whom He was talking would no longer be on this earth when He returns, they were to pass on this message to us so that we will be ready to meet Jesus when He returns.

The Jews of that day and most people in Israel and the surrounding countries today still wear long robes because of the heat. When these verses talk about having the waist girded it meant that the long robes were tucked into their belts so that they were ready to work and serve their master when he returned from a wedding or other event. The servants would also have their torches burning so that they could provide light for their master when he returned to his home. Such servants would be ready to open the door and serve their master immediately as soon as their master knocked on the door. Jesus was pointing out the fact that His followers should also be ready for His return from heaven.

However, Jesus also pointed out that at His return will be different than that of a master returning to his home after a wedding. Since we are the servants of Jesus, He told how He will respond when He finds us prepared for His return. Instead of us serving Him, He will serve us. Jesus said that He will have His servants sit down to eat and He will serve them. As a result, if we are faithful servants of the Lord He has said that the day will come in the future when we will be served by Him.

Jesus also pointed out the importance of being ready at all times. We have no idea whether Jesus will come before midnight, very early in the morning or the middle of the day. Then Jesus gave an illustration to show why it is important for us to be ready for the coming of Jesus at all times. If the owner of a house knew at what time a thief was coming, he would be prepared and would not let the thief break into his house. The thief is able to steal because people do not prepare for his coming. Jesus said we need to be ready for His coming because He will come at a time that we do not expect.

Peter asked Jesus a question as he heard Jesus speak about the need to be ready. Luke 12:41-44 says, "Then Peter said to Him, "Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?" And the Lord said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make

ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.” Here we see that Peter wanted to know if Jesus was speaking this parable to just the disciples or whether He was speaking to all of the people. We see in the Gospels that Jesus often spoke in parables to the crowds and then explained the parables to the disciples when they were alone with Him.

Instead of giving a direct answer to the question, Jesus chose to answer by explaining what a faithful and wise steward is like. The word translated “steward” means the manager of the household and financial affairs of his master. It was his responsibility to manage the things that belonged to his master in a way that would please his master. Jesus said that it was the responsibility of such a servant to manage the food of his master so that the other servants received the food that they were to receive. By this answer Jesus taught several things about those to whom He was speaking.

First, a steward is the servant of his master. This meant that Jesus was speaking to those who were His true followers and not to everyone. Second, a faithful and wise steward has a concern for all of the other servants of his master. Jesus showed by this answer that a faithful follower of His is one that is serving other Christians. Third, a faithful and wise steward will be blessed if he continues to do these things until Jesus comes. Jesus will come for each individual Christian in one of two ways. Some of us may have the opportunity to be alive when Jesus comes back to take the church to heaven as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. However, through the years since His return to heaven Jesus has come to take many Christians to Himself through death. Here we learn a key lesson. We are to be faithful in serving other Christians until the time that Jesus takes us to heaven whether at the Rapture or by death.

That means that as long as we are here on the earth that we are to be faithful servants because the Lord still has work for us to do. Even if we have poor health there are still ways that we can serve other Christians. One of the key ways that we can continue to serve other Christians even with poor health is by praying for them. James 5:16 says, “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” This verse tells us that the effective prayer of a righteous person has great power in its effects. Jesus also promises that those servants who faithfully serve Him will be rewarded. The word translated “make him ruler” means to make or to set one over. This word is used both in Matthew 25:21 and in 25:23. Those verses say, “His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'” Both verses say exactly the same thing but are spoken to people who have been stewards of different amounts of talents.

Jesus also went on to warn about those who are unfaithful. These would be people who did not become true followers of Jesus. Luke 12:45-48 says, “But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” Here we see that Jesus answered the question with a second half that talked about unfaithful servants that have an unbelieving heart.

The actions of these evil servants show that these servants have unbelieving hearts. First, we see the attitude of an unbeliever. He says in his heart that the master is delaying his coming.

This shows that the servant is not preparing for the coming of his master. Second, we see the actions of an unbeliever toward Christians. Because of an evil heart he begins to mistreat those who are true believers. Third, we see the actions of an unbeliever to satisfy his own desires. His attitude is the same attitude that caused God to judge Jerusalem in the Old Testament. Isaiah 22:12-13 says, "And in that day the Lord God of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, for baldness and for girding with sackcloth. But instead, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!"" God called for repentance but the people chose to live to please themselves.

Just as God promised judgment to Jerusalem in the Old Testament, Jesus said that there will be judgment in the future for those who refuse to repent. At the time that Jesus comes, He will find the unbelievers unprepared for His coming. They will not even be thinking about His coming. Then all unbelievers will receive their judgment with the other unbelievers. We see that the judgment of unbelievers will be in proportion to the amount of truth that they heard. Those who heard the Word of God and continued to reject the Word will have a much greater judgment. Those who never heard the Word of God but did evil will also be judged. However, we see that their judgment will be with few stripes rather than many stripes. The more opportunity that a person has had to hear the Word of God and rejected that Word, the greater the judgment of that person will be. Here we see that Jesus gave a real warning to those in the crowd who were rejecting the message of Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there is great blessing for those who follow Him and serve others. In contrast, there will be great judgment for those who hear and continue to reject. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand both the blessings and the warnings.

Jesus Warned of Family Rejection

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there will be great blessing for those who are faithful servants of Jesus as they serve Him. We also want to help our children understand the judgment that those who reject Jesus are facing. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus then went on to warn His disciples that some of His followers will face rejection from their families because they follow Jesus.

Jesus told His disciples that His message brings division because many reject that message. Luke 12:49-53 says, "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." In these verses, we see that Jesus described the division that will come when some family members fail to believe.

Jesus said that He came to send fire on the earth. John used fire to talk about coming judgment as he prepared the way for Jesus. Matthew 3:11-12 says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." In these verses, we see that fire speaks of the eternal judgment of sinners. This same thought is found in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8 which says, "Since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." John, Paul and many others used fire to picture the coming judgment and that is the way Jesus used fire here.

Jesus said that He had a baptism to be baptized with and He would be distressed until that baptism was finished. Jesus talked about this baptism when He said to James and John in Matthew 20:23, "So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." This baptism was the baptism of suffering and spoke about His coming death. Jesus said He would be distressed until it was finished because He dreaded the separation from the Father as He bore our sins. That is why Jesus cried in Matthew 27:46, "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" However, that cry was soon followed by a cry of victory as Jesus said in John 19:30, "So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit." Jesus was filled with joy when that period of separation for our sin was finished.

Jesus also warned His followers that His followers would experience division in their families because family members would not believe and turn to Jesus. Jesus said that His coming would bring division rather than peace to the earth. The reason for this division would be due to the fact that some family members would follow Him and others would not. Households would be divided. Sometimes this division would be between fathers and sons. Sometimes it would be between mothers and daughters. Sometimes it would be between mother-in-law and daughter-

in-law. Those kinds of divisions are still present and will last until Jesus completes all things. However, 2 Peter 3:13 tells us that we can look beyond the time of these divisions. That verse says, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells." Then there will be eternal peace.

Jesus went on to tell the multitude that they could forecast the weather but they could not recognize the time. Luke 12:54-56 says, "Then He also said to the multitudes, 'Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?' The Mediterranean Sea lies west of the land of Israel. As a result, Jesus said that the people would say as soon as they saw a cloud rising out of the west that it was going to rain and that is exactly what happened. The people were able to also predict the weather when they felt the south wind blowing. The area south of the land of Israel is desert so when the people felt the south wind blow they would say that they were going to soon have hot weather and that also happened exactly as they predicted. Jesus said they could understand the weather but not the time.

In contrast, Jesus said what people really need to understand is the time. The word translated "time" means a limited or fixed period of time. 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 says, "We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." People only have a limited or a fixed period of time to receive the message of salvation and come to Christ in repentance for sin.

Hebrews 9:27-28 says, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." All people have an appointed time when they will die. Each person only has the fixed time of their physical life here on this earth to place their faith in Christ. We want to help every person understand that once their time of life on this earth is done, there will be no second opportunity to place their faith in Christ because their particular day of salvation will be past and they will be facing the time of judgment.

Jesus used this warning to the people to discern the time to also warn them of the need to get disagreements settled quickly on this earth. Luke 12:57-59 says, "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite." Christ used the process of judgment on this earth to illustrate eternal judgment.

The word that is translated "right" is the word that is normally translated righteous and spoke of the things that were approved or acceptable to God. Even people who have never heard of the Bible have a sense of what is right and acceptable because every person has a conscience. Romans 2:14-15 says, "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)." However, many people have seared their conscience. 1 Timothy 4:2 says, "Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron." The word seared is used to speak of using a hot iron to put a brand on an animal. The iron is so hot that it burns the skin of the animal so that no hair ever grows on that spot again so the animal has the shape of that brand for the rest of its life. To sear a

conscience means that a person is no longer bothered by their sins.

Jesus went on to tell the people what they should do if they had wronged another person. If no effort is made to settle the problem, the other person may take the person to the judge. As a result, Jesus warned the people to make every effort along the way to do what is right to solve the conflict and be reconciled to the other person. Luke 18:2-5 gives an illustration. Those verses say, "Saying: 'There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.''" An adversary had wronged the widow and she finally went to the judge.

Jesus said that once a person is taken to the judge that the person can expect to receive the full judgment for the thing that the person has done wrong. That is why a person should settle the conflict before that person is taken to the judge. Once the judge determined that the person was guilty, the judge would turn the person over to the officer and the officer would throw the person in prison. In that day they had a debtor's prison where a person had to work to earn what he had taken from the other person by sin. Jesus said that the person would be in prison until the person had paid the full penalty.

The same is also true for all those who do not repent of their sin of unbelief and come to God by faith in Jesus. Once they are delivered to judgment they will experience an eternal judgment. That is why we want to equip our physical and spiritual children to explain clearly to each person with whom they talk the choice that each person faces in their life. The penalty for sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life. Each person must choose to repent in this life or that person will face eternal judgment. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to explain to others the choice that they face.

Jesus Spoke of the Need to Bear Fruit

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly to others the most important choice that they will ever make in this life. If they choose to repent of their sin of unbelief, they will receive eternal life. If they choose to reject, they will face eternal punishment. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus continued to speak about the topic of coming judgment.

Jesus had been teaching the people. One day some of the people told Jesus what had happened to some Galileans that Pilate had killed. Luke 13:1-3 says, "There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." This is the first time that Luke said anything about the character of Pilate. (Luke had mentioned Pilate as one of the rulers when Jesus was born in Luke 3:1.) We see that some of the people told Jesus what Pilate had done to some Galileans.

Most of the Jews were very opposed to the rule of their land by the Romans. This was especially true in the area of Galilee. A leader from Galilee by the name of Judas Gaulonitis organized a rebellion against the Romans to oppose the paying of taxes to Caesar. A group of his followers came to Jerusalem during one of the feasts to offer their sacrifices. That was apparently the time when Pilate sent a group of his soldiers into the temple court. These soldiers killed these Jews and mingled the blood of these men with the blood of the sacrifices that they were offering. For the Roman soldiers to kill a group of people in the temple courtyard was considered blasphemy by the Jews. This just further stirred up the hatred of the Jews toward the Romans.

The Jews thought that when something unusual happened to a Jew that it was the judgment of God. John 9:2 says, "And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" In this case the disciples of Jesus thought that this man was born blind either as a judgment for his sins or for the sins of the parents. Many Jews thought that these Galileans had committed some very evil sin and that sin was the reason why they had been killed and their blood mingled with the blood of their sacrifices.

Jesus made it clear that the manner of their death was not the reason why this had happened to these Galileans. Instead Jesus used the opportunity to speak to the people that were there and tell them that unless they repented that they would also experience an eternal judgment. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:24-26, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will." People have to know the truth and God must work in their hearts to draw them to Himself in order to escape the snare of the devil. The fact that these Galileans had been killed by the Romans did not make them any worse sinners than those who died a natural death. In addition, Jesus also knew that all of the Jews living in Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans about 40 years later.

Jesus went on to give a second illustration of people who had died an unusual death. Luke 13:4-5 says, "Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but

unless you repent you will all likewise perish.” The Pool of Siloam was located in the south part of the city of Jerusalem. That is where Jesus told the man that was born blind to go and wash his eyes. John 9:6-7 says, “When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay. And He said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, Sent). So he went and washed, and came back seeing.” Apparently the people had all heard about a tower located near this pool that had collapsed and killed eighteen people.

Again we see that some of the people thought that the people that were killed when the tower fell on them were worse sinners than the other people. Jesus again made it clear that this was not an earthly judgment of people that committed more sins than the rest of the people. Jesus again made it clear that people who die from a catastrophe are not worse sinners than those who die a natural death. Jesus gave the same warning to the people after pointing to the death of the people killed when the tower of Siloam fell and killed them. Jesus said that those who fail to repent of their sin of unbelief will also perish. The word translated “perish” in both verses means to destroy or to kill. It is the same word that is used in John 3:16 where we read, “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.” This verse makes it clear that that the word “perish” is talking about eternal judgment.

Then Jesus gave a parable of a fig tree that did not bear fruit. Luke 13:6-9 says, “He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’” Here we see that the keeper of the vineyard gives us a picture of the mercy of God.

In Hosea 9:10 we see that the nation of Israel is compared to a fig tree. That verse says, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season. But they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves to that shame; they became an abomination like the thing they loved.” This verse shows that God saw Israel as the first ripened fruit from a fig tree. As a result, this parable may apply to the nation of Israel as a whole. However, it certainly applies to individuals. God is the One who brought the nation of Israel into existence. His desire was to see Israel become a fruitful nation. In the passage from Hosea we see that God said that Israel was an unfruitful nation because of the idol worship of the nation.

In this parable we also see that God is looking for fruitfulness. Jesus later said to His disciples in John 15:4-5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” For any individual to bear fruit that individual must abide in Jesus. The Father is also looking for each Christian to bear fruit.

In this parable we see that the man who planted the vineyard spoke to the keeper of the vineyard when the vine did not bear fruit. He said that he had come looking for the vine to bear fruit for three years and there was still no fruit. The owner said to cut down the vine because it was just using up ground and was bearing no fruit. The keeper of the vineyard pleaded with the owner to give the vine one more opportunity to bear fruit. He said that he would dig up the ground around the vine and fertilize it so that it would have every possible opportunity to bear fruit.

The request of the keeper to give the vine one more opportunity to bear fruit helps us to understand one of the very important ministries of Jesus. Romans 8:34 says, "Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us." This shows the kindness of Jesus to all who follow Him. It is the desire of the Lord that we bear much fruit. Jesus told the disciples in John 15:8, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples." In our lives we learn to bring glory to God as we become more like Christ so that our lives bear more fruit.

However, the primary purpose of this parable is to provide a warning to those whose lives bear no fruit. For the individual that would be each individual that does not repent and place his or her faith in Jesus. Jesus illustrated this warning for His disciples in Mark 11:13-14 where we read, "And seeing from afar a fig tree having leaves, He went to see if perhaps He would find something on it. When He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. In response Jesus said to it, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again." And His disciples heard it." In this case the fig tree was cursed because of the lack of fruit. Mark 11:20-21 says, "Now in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree which You cursed has withered away." This is a reminder that all those who reject Jesus will one day be judged.

This passage also shows the mercy of the Father. We see that He has great patience even with those who reject and does give many opportunities even to the most sinful before He finally brings judgment. That is why 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to share with others the need to receive the mercy of God while they have the opportunity before judgment does come. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share this message with others.

Jesus Cured a Cripple on the Sabbath

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand that God is gracious and shows His mercy. He is even patient with those who are very evil and gives them many opportunities to repent before He brings judgment upon them. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus also took the opportunity to show mercy to a woman that had been crippled for eighteen years.

One Sabbath day Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues. A woman was there that day that had suffered with a crippled back for eighteen years. This crippled back caused the woman to be bent over so that she could not stand up straight. The verses do not tell us whether this was a physical problem or a problem caused by a demon. However, since it mentions a spirit of infirmity, a demon is a possibility. Whatever caused this crippled back it had made many things difficult for the woman for eighteen years.

Jesus saw the woman and immediately showed His compassion to her. Jesus asked the woman to come to Him. Then He said to her "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." The word translated "loosed" means to be released or to be set free. Then Jesus laid His hands on the woman. At that very moment the woman was able to stand up straight. She was no longer bent over. Then the woman glorified God and gave praise to Him for healing her. The word translated "glorified" means to honor or to express praise to. Here we see that this woman recognized that her healing was the work of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." That was certainly what the woman did that day as she gave glory to God for what He had done in her life.

However, not everyone was pleased that she was healed. Luke 13:14-17 says, "But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound-- think of it--for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." Here we see two very different responses.

The ruler of the synagogue was the man in each synagogue who was responsible to lead the synagogue. For the Sabbath day services it was his responsibility to select the various readers of the Old Testament and also the teachers that would explain the Word of God in the service. Each Sabbath he would select seven to nine men and teenage boys to read passages from the Old Testament. He would also select those who would be the teachers in the synagogue. We see that the ruler of the synagogue was very displeased when he saw that Jesus had healed the woman. This man had no compassion for a woman who had a great physical need for eighteen years.

This man wanted to control the people in the synagogue by imposing his rules on them. As a result, he told the people in the synagogue, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." This man was actually accusing Jesus of working on the Sabbath because He spoke the words to release this woman from her infirmity. This is a good of example of one form of legalism because legalism often replaces God's Word with man's rules. Micah 6:8 says, "He has shown you, O man, what is

good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" God is looking for people that are just, merciful and walk in humbleness and those things are to be done every day because they show what is in the heart.

As a result, Jesus told the ruler of the synagogue that he was a hypocrite. The word translated "hypocrite" spoke of a play actor that said one thing one minute and did the opposite the next minute. Jesus told the ruler of the synagogue that he untied his ox and donkey from their stall and took them to the water on the Sabbath. Here we see that the ruler of the synagogue was condemning Jesus for speaking words on the Sabbath that would heal a woman that had a crippled back for eighteen years. At the same time on the Sabbath he was leading his animals to get water so that he would not need to carry the water the previous day and store it so the animals could get the water. It was certainly more work to untie animals and lead them to the well where the city or village got its water than to speak the words that would heal the woman who had the crippled back.

Then Jesus spoke about woman. Jesus said that the woman was also a daughter of Abraham. That meant that the blessing given to Abraham also applied to her. Satan had kept this woman in bondage with the crippled back for eighteen years. Suddenly the ruler of the synagogue and all of those who had agreed with him were put to shame. The words of Jesus revealed the condition of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. Jesus made it clear that those who were opposing the healing of the woman by Jesus needed to examine their hearts and get their hearts right with God.

In contrast, the rest of the people were filled with joy as they saw what Jesus had done for the woman. They realized that what had happened was a great miracle and that it had been done by God. The word translated "rejoiced" means to be very glad or to be filled with joy. This word is used to describe the apostles when they were beaten for speaking about Jesus. Acts 5:40-42 says, "And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." The apostles were filled with joy for the privilege of suffering for Jesus since He had given His life for them. If our greatest desire is to bring glory to God, we will also have that same joy when we suffer for the sake of Jesus.

Then Jesus again explained what the kingdom of God is like. Luke 13:18-21 says, "Then He said, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and put in his garden; and it grew and became a large tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches." And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." Jesus said that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed because a mustard seed is very small when it is planted. In fact it was considered the smallest of all seeds. Matthew 13:32 says, "Which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches." The word translated "least" means smallest in size, amount or influence. However, in the area around Israel the mustard seed would grow about ten feet high and would have branches large enough for birds to sit on the branches.

In Matthew 17:20 Jesus told the disciples, "So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." Jesus

made it clear that a person does not have to have a big faith to do the impossible because it is not that person that does it. Notice the following difference. We can either say “I have a big faith in God” or we can say, “I have very little faith but that faith is in a big God.” Even if we have very little faith but that faith is in a big God, He is able to do the impossible in and through our lives.

Jesus also gave a second illustration of the kingdom of God. When a woman makes bread she uses just a small amount of yeast. However, that small amount of yeast will spread throughout the bread dough and cause the entire piece of dough to increase in size. That is why Jesus compared the kingdom of God to the yeast in the dough. When Jesus returned to heaven there were only about a hundred and twenty disciples in Jerusalem. Acts 1:15 says, “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said.” The group praying in Jerusalem after Jesus returned to heaven was only about 120.

In addition, there was a larger group of brethren, probably disciples in Galilee. 1 Corinthians 15:6 says, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” However, the total of both groups was still a very small group. Yet through that small group of followers of Jesus the kingdom of God has grown to include people from throughout the earth. This is why we have had the opportunity to hear the Gospel.

Jesus taught many things as He visited the various synagogues. He used even the opposition of people like the ruler of the synagogue to teach His disciples and the other people lessons like justice, mercy and humility. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply the Word of God to the everyday situations that happen in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to know, understand and then learn to apply the Word of God to their lives.

Jesus Taught on the Way to Jerusalem

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply the Word of God to their daily lives so that their lives will show justice, mercy and humility. We saw that Jesus chose to teach those lessons by healing a woman on the Sabbath day. The action caused the ruler of the synagogue to show the condition of his heart by the words that he spoke. Today, we are going to see that Jesus taught His disciples many other lessons as they traveled through the cities and villages on the way to Jerusalem.

Jesus used a question one person asked to explain how a person enters into the kingdom of God. Luke 13:22-28 says, “And He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. Then one said to Him, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you, where you are from,’ then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out.” Jesus answered a question and also gave a warning.

Jesus and His disciples were traveling through the various cities and villages as they were on the way to the city of Jerusalem. The last period of months before His crucifixion Jesus spent time across the Jordan River in the area of Perea and also made several short trips to Jerusalem. However, Jesus knew that He was moving toward the time when He would arrive at Jerusalem for the time of His death and resurrection. This gave Jesus the opportunity to teach in the various cities and villages both in Perea and Judea. It also gave time to teach His disciples as they traveled from place to place.

One day someone asked the question, “Lord, are there few who are saved?” The disciples of Jesus had seen the large crowds such as the feeding of the five thousand. At times there were still large crowds. However, this question was probably asked due to the fact that the crowds came and went while the number of disciples stayed small. In John 6:66-68 Jesus said, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.” Those who became true disciples continued to follow Jesus.

The Jews thought that all of the Jews except the tax collectors and sinners would be a part of the kingdom of God. However, we see that some of the disciples realized that many of the Jews were rejecting Jesus. The word translated “strive” means to compete in games or to make every possible effort. The only people who will enter will be those who enter by the narrow gate. Jesus said later in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” Jesus made it clear that He is the only way to enter into the kingdom of God. No one else could pay the penalty for sin and provide forgiveness.

Jesus warned that many of the Jews would not make it into the kingdom of God. Once the door is shut, it will be too late to enter. That is illustrated by what happened when Noah built the ark. Genesis 7:16 says, “So those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had

commanded him; and the Lord shut him in.” In this verse, we see that God shut the door of the ark and after that no one could enter in. The same will be true in the future. Those who want to enter the narrow gate must enter it while they have the opportunity. The door of opportunity is shut for each person when that person dies. Hebrews 9:27-28 says, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.” The time of death shuts the door for all unbelievers but opens the door to eternal life to all believers.

That is why Jesus warned about those who wait until the door is shut. There is no future opportunity for salvation. We see what some people will try to say when they face eternal judgment. They will begin to say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.” Jesus gave a special warning to the Jews who had lived during the time of the ministry of Jesus. We saw in Luke 11:37 that a Pharisee even invited Jesus to dinner at his house. That verse says, “And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat.” We see the final response of the Pharisees and lawyers that were at that dinner. Luke 11:53-54 says, “And as He said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to assail Him vehemently, and to cross-examine Him about many things, lying in wait for Him, and seeking to catch Him in something He might say, that they might accuse Him.” Yes they ate in Jesus presence but they did not repent of sin and place their faith in Jesus. They were also there many times when Jesus taught but most did not believe.

Jesus warned what it will be necessary for Him to say to all those who heard Him and chose to reject Him. In the judgment day they will hear the words, “I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.” There is a day of judgment for all those who reject Jesus. Those who personally heard Jesus and rejected Him were given a warning in Luke 12:47 which says, “And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.” This spoke of the coming judgment of those who heard and rejected. That is why Jesus said that there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Gnashing of teeth speaks of the extreme anguish and suffering of those who will experience eternal judgment. A similar passage in Matthew 8:11-12 says, “And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Jesus gave a warning in that passage that there will be many Jews who will not be in the kingdom of God. Every Jew as well as every Gentile must make a personal decision to either accept or reject Jesus as the way into the kingdom of God.

However, Jesus went on to point out the fact that there will be many besides Jews who will enter into the kingdom of God. Luke 13:29-33 says, “They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.” On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, “Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.” And He said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.’ Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.” Jesus said that many people from the east and west, the north and the south, will sit down in the kingdom of God. This is the promise that many Gentiles will also be in the kingdom of God.

God said in Isaiah 66:18, “For I know their works and their thoughts. It shall be that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see My glory.” Here we see that it has been the plan of God throughout history to include many Gentiles in the kingdom of God. Jesus said that many of the Gentiles who are last will be first and many Jews who had the first

opportunity to learn about God will be last because they chose to reject. That very day some Pharisees came to Jesus and told Jesus to leave that area because Herod wanted to kill Him. Jesus told the Pharisees to go tell Herod that Jesus would finish His work and that Herod could not stop Him because He would not perish away from the city of Jerusalem which was not under the control of Herod.

Then Jesus went on to show His love for the people of Jerusalem. Luke 13:34-35 says, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate; and assuredly, I say to you, you shall not see Me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'” Jesus had a great love for the people of Jerusalem even though they had killed many of the Old Testament prophets.

Jesus said that He wanted to gather the children of those who killed the prophets like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. Jesus had a great love for the city of Jerusalem. Luke 19:41-42 says, “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, 'If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.'” Here we see that Jesus later wept over the city because of that great love. Jesus realized that most of the people of that city were not willing to accept His peace.

Jesus said that their house would be left desolate. This meant that the city would soon experience judgment. About 40 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus the Romans came and completely destroyed the city and the people that were living in the city at that time. Jesus loved that city and will have the opportunity to show His love in the future. We want to help our physical and spiritual children also understand the love that Jesus had for Jerusalem. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the love of Jesus for Jerusalem and the nation of Israel.

Jesus Warned of the Danger of Pride

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn about the love that Jesus had for Jerusalem and the people of that city. Jesus knew that He would soon die in that city for our sins as well as for the sins of the people in that city. However, Jesus wanted to also warn the Jews of His day that those who continued to reject Him would experience judgment. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus warned about the dangers of pride.

One Sabbath day Jesus knew that the Pharisees were trying to trap Him. Luke 14:1-6 says, "Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" But they kept silent. And He took him and healed him, and let him go. Then He 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?" And they could not answer Him regarding these things." Here we see that one of the leaders of the Pharisees had invited Jesus to his house for dinner on the Sabbath day. This invitation was actually to look for an opportunity to condemn Jesus.

There was also a man in the house of the Pharisee that day that had dropsy. The word translated "dropsy" spoke about a physical condition that caused a person to keep fluids in the body so that various parts of their body would become much larger than normal. Today, they know that this disease is caused by liver or kidney problems that keep the fluid in the body. The Pharisees and lawyers were all watching Jesus very closely to see what He would do since it was the Sabbath day. Here we see that the Pharisee had invited Jesus to his house so that they could try and trap Jesus by what He said or did.

Jesus knew their hearts and so Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees a question. He asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" Since the lawyers and Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus, they remained silent and did not answer His question. Jesus then healed the man and let him go. However, since Jesus knew their hearts, Jesus went on to ask the lawyers and Pharisees a second question. This time Jesus asked them, "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?" An animal that falls into a pit is in a serious situation especially if there is water in the pit. The animal could easily die before the next day. As a result, the Jews allowed people to show mercy to animals on the Sabbath day. Here was a man that was suffering from a serious disease. Jesus had shown mercy to him and healed him. The lawyers and Pharisees suddenly realized that they could not accuse Jesus without condemning themselves for showing mercy to an animal. They knew that they did not dare give an answer to Jesus or they would condemn themselves.

However, Jesus wanted to help these lawyers and Pharisees realize the condition of their hearts. Jesus had been watching where the people were seating themselves and so He spoke a parable to them to show the condition of their hearts. Mark 14:7-9 says, "So He told a parable to those who were invited, when He noted how they chose the best places, saying to them: "When you are invited by anyone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; and he who invited you and him come and say to you, 'Give place to this man,' and then you begin with shame to take the lowest place." We see that Jesus used a different situation for the parable but the teaching was clear.

Jesus had watched as the guests chose where to sit for this dinner. He noticed that they only thought about their own desires as they chose the best places to sit. Instead of talking about that dinner, Jesus talked about being invited to a wedding feast. Since Jesus had watched where the people sat for this dinner, they had shown the pride in their hearts by choosing the best places at this dinner. Jesus used that as an illustration and told them not to sit down in the best place at a wedding feast because someone more honorable than they were may have been invited to the wedding feast. Then the person who had invited them to the wedding would have to come and tell them to move so that the honored guest could sit where they were sitting.

Jesus said that the person who had invited the guests to the wedding would ask the person to move and by that time the only place that would be left would be the lowest place. Jesus said that such a person would experience great shame as he moved from the most honored place at the wedding to the least honored place at the wedding. The word translated “shame” means disgrace, dishonor or a sense of shame. The word is used in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 where we read, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” The hidden things of shame speak about the secret sins that a person hides in his heart. Jesus was pointing out that the wedding guest would have his pride that he had so carefully tried to hide from others exposed for all to see.

Pride is one of those sins that people think that they can hide from others. Jesus was actually teaching the application of a principle that had been taught by Solomon nearly a thousand years earlier. Proverbs 25:6-7 says, “Do not exalt yourself in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of the great; for it is better that he say to you, 'Come up here,' than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.” Solomon was speaking about those who would try to promote themselves in the presence of a king. However, Jesus showed in this passage that pride will produce the same attitude in any situation. It will also bring shame to any person who is put in a lower position when others are present.

Jesus went on to point out that just the opposite will happen when a person has true humility. Luke 14:10-14 says, “But when you are invited, go and sit down in the lowest place, so that when he who invited you comes he may say to you, 'Friend, go up higher.' Then you will have glory in the presence of those who sit at the table with you. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.” Jesus said that true humility will be shown when a person takes the lowest place instead of a higher position.

If a person takes the lowest place, the one who invited that person can always ask that person to move to a higher place. Jesus said that those who act with humility will be treated as a friend. The word translated “friend” speaks of one who is respected and treated as a companion. Jesus showed that attitude toward all. Matthew 11:19 says, “The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her children.” Jesus chose to be a friend of tax collectors and sinners. As a result Luke 15:1 says, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him.” The tax collectors and sinners felt accepted by Jesus and so they wanted to learn from Him. The person who exalts himself will be humbled. In contrast, Jesus said that the person who humbles himself will be exalted. The word translated “exalted” means to be honored.

Jesus then spoke to the Pharisee who had invited Him to dinner. Jesus explained to the Pharisee

that if he only invited his friends, relatives and rich neighbors to a dinner that such invitations did not show compassion to the needy because those people would all invite him to their dinners at a later time and he would be repaid. In the law the Jews were specifically told to show compassion to the poor and needy. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 says, "At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do." Here we see that the Jews were to set aside a tithe every third year so that they would have to give to the poor.

Jesus went on to tell this Pharisee how to apply the Old Testament principle when he had a feast. It was fine to invite relatives and friends but he should also invite those who could not return the favor by inviting him to a dinner at a later time. Jesus said that as he made up his list of guests he should also, "invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind." These were people who would not be able to invite him back to their homes for a feast at a later time.

Jesus said that inviting the poor and needy who could not return the favor would bring blessing. Because of their poverty, they could not repay the man by inviting him to a feast at a later time. Instead Jesus said that he would be repaid at the resurrection of the just. This made it clear that the only ones who truly care for the poor and needy have had their hearts transformed by the Lord because of their repentance from sin. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that the Lord will give us a desire to minister to others if we have truly placed our faith in Jesus. Such actions are the result of the love of Jesus controlling our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to show the love of Jesus to the poor and needy.

Jesus Gave the Parable of the Great Supper

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our children how to show the love of Jesus to the poor and needy. We saw those who show the love of Jesus to the poor and needy will be rewarded at the resurrection of the just. This means that those who show such love have placed their faith in Jesus and are acting in obedience to Him. Jesus told a Pharisee that if he truly wanted to experience the blessing of God that his actions would be the result of true faith because he would invite the poor and needy as well to his feasts. In this topic we are going to see that a question that was asked of Jesus gave Him the opportunity to teach about the Great Supper.

One of those sitting at the table with Jesus heard what Jesus had said to the Pharisee. We see what Jesus said in response to his comment in Luke 14:15-17 where we read, "Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'" This person realized that those who eat bread in the kingdom of God will be blessed. At that time many of the Jews thought that all of the Jews would eat bread in the kingdom of God except for the tax collectors and sinners. Many Jews also thought that it would only be the Jews in the kingdom of God.

Jesus then told a story about a man who gave a great supper to help those present understand who will be at the Great Supper. A supper was a formal meal that was usually held in the evening. Sometimes the word was also used to talk about a wedding feast which could last for an entire week. For example, the marriage feast in John 2 seemed to last for several days because they ran out of wine. In this parable Jesus said that the man who gave the supper invited many people to the supper. Then when the supper was ready he sent his servant to tell all of the people that had been invited to the supper that it was time to come because everything was now ready.

However, Jesus went on to tell what happened when the servant told the invited guests that everything was ready for the Great Supper. Luke 14:18-20 says, "But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.' Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'" None of the people had said that they could not come when they had been given the invitation to the supper. That suddenly changed when the servant came to say that the supper was ready. We see that the invited guests immediately began giving excuses why they could not come to the supper.

The word translated "to make excuse" means to refuse, to reject or to make an excuse. The word is used twice in Hebrews 12:25 where we read, "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven." This was a warning written later to the Jews urging them not to refuse Jesus as the Mediator of the New Covenant. Although we see that the people were giving various excuses for not coming to the Great Supper, we see that the excuses are actually a polite way to refuse the invitation to come to the Great Supper.

As we look at each of the excuses that are given, we see why these excuses are really just a

polite way of refusing to invitation to the Great Supper. The first person said, “I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.” There are at least two reasons why we can see that this excuse is actually a refusal. In that day no one would buy a piece of land before they had looked to make certain that the piece of ground was the kind of ground that they needed to grow their crops. Even if someone had already bought such a piece of ground without looking at it first, the land would already have been purchased and it would not matter if the person waited a few days longer to go and see the land that he had bought.

The second person said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.” A yoke of oxen was actually two oxen because a yoke actually hooked two oxen together side by side so that they could pull a plow or a wagon. We see that this is just a refusal to come because of the fact that the people always tested the oxen before they bought them. If a team of oxen could not pull a heavy load, a person would not buy them. The fact that this person said that he had five yoke of oxen to test and not just one yoke showed that this person was either very foolish or was refusing to come to the supper.

The excuse of the third person was, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” A supper provided a special occasion for a new husband to take his new wife to meet other friends at the supper. Newly married couples look for special events that they can enjoy together. Here we see that the person was actually refusing because he was not interested and did not want to go to the supper. Jesus was speaking to lawyers and Pharisees who were refusing Jesus’ invitation to receive forgiveness of sins and become a part of the kingdom of God. ² Corinthians 6:2 says, “For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Jesus told this story because He knew that they were refusing the invitation to salvation.

However, Jesus also wanted to make it clear that others would accept what the Jewish religious leaders were refusing. Luke 14:21-24 says, “So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’ ” Jesus went on to tell how the master of the house would fill his supper with guests.

First, the master told the servant to go out into the streets and, “bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.” Here we see that Jesus included four groups of people that the powerful or rich often neglect. These lawyers and Pharisees had just seen Jesus heal a man that had dropsy. The word translated “poor” was used to speak of the helpless, the powerless and those who had nothing. The word translated “maimed” was used to speak of a person who was injured or had arms or legs which were disabled. The word translated “lame” spoke of one who was missing a foot or a leg which made it difficult or impossible to walk. Of course a blind person could not see. The Pharisees felt that Jews with such physical problems were unworthy or unclean.

The servant went out and invited all of these people with their various needs and they came to the Great Supper. The servant told the master that he had followed the instructions of his master but that there was still room for more guests. We see that the master responded, “Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” The highways and the hedges spoke of those lands where the Gentiles lived. Jesus was speaking to Pharisees and lawyers who thought that only the Jews would be in the kingdom of God. By this

statement Jesus was saying that the Gentiles would also be invited to the Great Supper.

The word translated “compel” means to invite with gentle persuasion, entreaty or even by force. Paul used this same word when he spoke to Peter in Galatians 2:14 which says, “But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?” In that case Peter was acting as a hypocrite because he had been eating with the Gentiles until other Jews came from Jerusalem. Suddenly when other Jews came from Jerusalem Peter acted out of fear and sat at a separate table. In this case he suddenly showed by his actions that he wanted the Gentiles to act like the Jews because of his own fear. However, Jesus used the word compel to speak of sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles by gentle persuasion.

Jesus then said something that personalized this parable. He said that none of the men that had been invited would taste his supper. Jesus was inviting these lawyers and Pharisees to become a part of the kingdom of God and share in His Great Supper. Instead of responding and becoming a part of the kingdom of God, these lawyers and Pharisees were looking for excuses to condemn Jesus. God wanted them in His kingdom but they were refusing to accept that invitation. Paul later said that the Gentiles would hear and accept. Acts 28:28-29 says, “Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it! And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there are also many proud people who will reject the message of the Gospel because of their pride. In contrast, many of the poor and needy and many that the proud reject will hear the Gospel and will respond to that message. Jesus made it clear that all those who will respond will be a part of the kingdom of God and enjoy the Great Supper. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand why the proud will often reject Jesus.

Jesus Taught About Counting the Cost

In our last topic, we saw that we want our physical and spiritual children to understand why Jesus said that many that are proud will reject the invitation of Jesus to enter the kingdom of God. In contrast, we saw that Jesus said that many poor and needy and many Gentiles will respond and become a part of the kingdom of God. Later Jesus continued on His journey toward Jerusalem. A large crowd traveled with Him. He took the opportunity to remind this crowd that it is important for each individual to count the cost of what it will mean in their lives to become a disciple of Jesus.

Jesus talked to the people in the crowd as they traveled along the road. Luke 14:25-27 says, "Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, 'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.'" When the Jews traveled from Galilee to the various feasts in Jerusalem they often traveled together in large crowds. This gave them opportunities to talk with friends and relatives as they walked along the road. It also gave Jesus many opportunities to teach along the way.

As Jesus came close to the time for His crucifixion and resurrection, He wanted to make it clear to any that chose to follow Him that there would be a cost. This large crowd gave Jesus an opportunity to help the people realize that they should count the cost before they chose to follow Him. Jesus wanted all of His true followers including us to realize that there is a cost to follow Him. The word translated "hate" can mean either to hate or to have a lesser love for one thing than another. The first meaning is seen in Matthew 5:43-44 where we read, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." In this verse, we see that we are to do good even to those who hate us.

The second use of "hate" is shown in Luke 16:13 where we read, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." The word "mammon" means riches. Here we see that a person will either love God more than riches or he will love riches more than God. He cannot have the same love for both. This is the way that Jesus used love in Luke 14:26. Christ said that in order to be His disciple we have to love Him more than we love our father, mother, wife, children, brothers or sisters. In fact we have to love Jesus more than we love ourselves. We must love Jesus more than any family member to be a disciple.

Then Jesus said we must bear our cross and come after Him in order to be His disciple. Jesus went to the cross and died to pay for our sins. Here He has just said that we must love Him more than we love ourselves in order to be His disciple. To bear or carry our cross means to be willing to die to the desires of self and live for Jesus. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." To come after Jesus means to follow Him instead of following our wants and desires.

Jesus does not want people to follow Him without thinking through the cost. Jesus made this clear with the following illustrations. Luke 14:28-30 says, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it--lest, after

he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish." If a person decides to build a tower, the first thing that the person does is sit down and figure out how much the tower will cost.

One of the things that the people sometimes did was build a tower in their vineyard where a watchman could see in every direction. This is illustrated in Mark 12:1 where we read, "Then He began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a place for the wine vat and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country." Here we see that such a tower was built. However, Jesus said that any wise person would sit down and figure out the cost of the tower before he started to build the tower. That was done to make sure that the person had enough money to finish the tower.

Otherwise a person might get the tower started but not be able to finish it. Then the other people would mock and make fun of that person. Jesus gave this illustration to remind the people that they needed to count the cost before saying that they wanted to become His disciple. Jesus often told people to count the cost when they said they would follow Him. Luke 9:57-58 says, "Now it happened as they journeyed on the road, that someone said to Him, "Lord, I will follow You wherever You go." 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." People often said they would follow Jesus but for the wrong reasons. When Jesus told them that there would be no selfish gain for themselves, some quickly changed their minds and did not follow Him.

Jesus went on to give a second illustration of the need to count the cost. Luke 14:31-33 says, "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." In this case Jesus used an illustration of a king going to war. Before he goes out to fight he must think about the fact that he only has half as many soldiers as the other king. Such a king must decide whether his soldiers are that much better than the soldiers of the other king or if it would be foolish for him to go to war.

If the king realizes that he will not likely be able to defeat the other king with half as many soldiers he must make a decision while the other army is still a long way from the place. If that king realizes that his army will be defeated and many of his soldiers killed, he will send a small group of leaders from his country to ask the other king what conditions the other king will require in order for the country to have peace. Then that small group of leaders will agree to the conditions that the other king gives so that their country can have peace.

Jesus then explained to the crowd of people what He was telling them by using these two illustrations when He said, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." Christ wanted to make it clear that a person is making a life changing choice when they make the choice to become His disciple. A disciple is one who follows and obeys the teachings of a leader. Jesus told His disciples in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." One of the things that we must realize is the fact that salvation is the work of the whole Trinity. We do not make people Christians by our manipulation.

John 16:8-11 tells us that the Holy Spirit convicts. Those verses say, "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." Then John 6:44 tell us that it is the Father that draws. That verse says, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." Then Jesus said in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of

Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Here we see that it is Jesus who seeks and saves. Our part in the process of salvation is explained in Ephesians 4:15 where we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--.” First, we see that we are to speak the truth which means speaking the Word of God instead of giving our own opinions. Second, we are to speak that truth in love. Third, we are to pray for the Lord to work in the hearts of those with whom we share the Word.

Jesus went on to say in Luke 14:34-35, “Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” True disciples will be those who follow Christ and obey Him because then our lives will become like salt. Matthew 5:13 says, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Mark 9:50 adds, “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another.” Then Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” A true disciple will hear and respond while the multitude will hear, fail to understand and then forget.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children become effective disciples of Jesus. This means that we will show them by our example how to be like salt that is good. We will show them how to share the Word of God with love and grace so that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit can each accomplish their ministries in the lives of those who are not yet Christians. We will also show them how to have peace with one another as Christians so that our lives are like good salt. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be the salt of the earth.

Jesus Taught About Joy in Heaven

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Jesus told people to count the cost of becoming His disciple. We saw that it is important for people to count the cost because Jesus wants His disciples to be the salt of the earth and He wants each follower to be like good salt. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus gave the first two of three parables about the joy that there is in heaven each time that a sinner repents and places his or her faith in Jesus.

We have seen that large crowds wanted to see Jesus as He traveled toward Jerusalem. These crowds included both those who wanted to hear Jesus and those who rejected Jesus. Luke 15:1-2 says, "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." Many of the scribes and Pharisees thought that all Jews would be in the kingdom of God except the tax collectors and sinners. In contrast, the tax collectors and sinners came to hear Jesus because they felt accepted by Him.

We see that the Pharisees and scribes immediately began complaining. They had two reasons why they complained. First, they complained because Jesus received sinners. The word translated "received" means to take to one's self or to accept. This word is used in Titus 2:13 where we read, "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." In this verse, the word is translated "looking for" and speaks of an eager desire for the return of Jesus. Jesus looked for opportunities to spend time with tax collectors and sinners so that He could share with them how to receive forgiveness of sins.

Second, we see that that Pharisees and scribes complained because Jesus ate with tax collectors sinners. This is not the first time that the Pharisees complained because Jesus sat down with tax collectors. Right after Jesus called Levi (Matthew) to follow Him we read in Luke 5:29-30, "Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, "Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" In this case we see that they complained to the disciples of Jesus. Jesus responded for the disciples by answering in Luke 5:31-32, "Jesus answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Jesus always had a concern to show love to those that were rejected by the Jewish religious leaders.

Jesus chose to show His love for the tax collectors and sinners by giving three parables. The third parable will also show that Jesus had this same love for the scribes and Pharisees but they were rejecting that love. The first parable is given in Luke 15:3-7 where we read, "So He spoke this parable to them, saying: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." This first parable speaks about the concern that even a scribe or a Pharisee would have if he lost one of his sheep.

When a person was caring for his sheep sometimes one of them would get lost. As a result, a

shepherd would count his sheep each evening to make certain that the sheep were all there. In this parable we see that a shepherd had lost one of his sheep. That was a serious problem because the only protection that a sheep has from the wolves is the protection provided by the shepherd. If a wolf finds a sheep alone the wolf has lunch and the sheep is lunch. In contrast if a wolf comes after a sheep that is with the shepherd, the shepherd would protect the sheep by killing the wolf. The same was true if a lion or a bear came after a sheep. In fact David said to Saul in 1 Samuel 17:36, "Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God." After Saul heard David say that he allowed David to go and fight against Goliath.

In this parable Jesus said that the shepherd would leave the other sheep and go and hunt for the sheep that was lost until he found the sheep. The word translated "leave" means to depart from or to leave the other sheep behind. The Jewish rabbis taught that God would only receive sinners if they were earnest enough in seeking His forgiveness. In contrast, Jesus made it clear by this parable and the next that it is God who seeks sinners instead of the sinners seeking Him. In Luke 19:9-10 Jesus said, "And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'" Jesus was speaking in that verse to Zacchaeus who was the chief tax collector in the city of Jericho after Jesus had found Zacchaeus up in a sycamore tree. Jesus was clearly seeking him.

Once the shepherd found the sheep he would place the sheep on his shoulders and carry the sheep back to the flock. However, it is what the shepherd did after he returned home that is the important part of this parable. Jesus said that the man would call together his friends and neighbors and invite them to a celebration. The man would tell his friends and neighbors, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" Here we see that the man wanted the neighbors to rejoice with him because he had found his missing sheep. The word translated "rejoice" means to congratulate or to take part in another's joy. The man wanted his friends and neighbors to share his joy.

Then Jesus said, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." Here we see that just as the shepherd wanted his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him after he had found his sheep that in heaven there is great joy every time that a sinner repents. Later both Peter and Paul preached this same message of repentance in the book of Acts. In Acts 3:19 Peter said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Peter said that sins are blotted out when a person repents. In Acts 17:30 Paul said, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." Paul said that this had been his message everywhere that he preached when he told Agrippa in Acts 26:20, "But declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." The repentance of any person causes joy in heaven.

Then Jesus gave a second parable to illustrate this same truth. Luke 15:8-10 says, "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!' Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." In this second parable we see that Jesus talked about a woman that had lost a silver coin.

The word translated "silver coin" was a Greek silver coin called a drachma. It was worth about the same amount as the Roman silver coin called a denarius. In Matthew 20:2 we read, "Now

when he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.” Here we see that a denarius was the wages that a vineyard owner agreed to pay to a person for working for a twelve hour day in his vineyard. As a result, this woman had lost a coin that was worth an entire day’s wages.

This woman searched for this lost coin with the same diligence that the man had searched for his lost sheep. The kind of house that was most common among the Jews was a one room house and everything was done in that one room. Usually these houses did not have any windows so they were fairly dark even during the daytime. Here we see that the woman lighted a lamp so that she could search carefully. Then she swept the entire house. We see that she kept searching carefully until she finally found the silver coin. We also see that the response of this woman was the same as the shepherd once she found her coin. She immediately invited her friends and neighbors for a celebration and said to them, “Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!” This statement was given in verse 7 and is repeated in this verse. Again we see the focus on the fact that there is joy when something that is lost is found.

Jesus said the same thing as He finished this parable that He said as He finished the first parable, “Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Many times we fail to realize how both God and the angels respond when a person repents of their sin of unbelief and enters into the kingdom of God. In Genesis 41:32 Joseph explained to Pharaoh why God repeated something to him two times. That verse says, “And the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.” Jesus wanted all of the people including the scribes and Pharisees as well as the tax collectors and sinners to know that the repentance of even one person brings great joy in heaven. This was a tremendous encouragement to the tax collectors and sinners and a rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the great joy in heaven over any person that repents. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the joy that heaven experiences when a person repents.

Jesus Taught About the Repentant Son

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there is great joy in heaven when even one sinner repents and places his or her faith in the payment that Jesus made for their sin. We also want to help our children understand why the tax collectors and sinners wanted to hear more of the teaching of Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus made this lesson very personal for each of the tax collectors and sinners that were there that day as Jesus shared with them the response of the father when his son repented.

In this parable we see that a man had two sons and the younger son made the choice to waste his life and his money with sinful living. Luke 15:11-13 says, "Then He said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living." We actually see that this younger son was a very rebellious son. Many parents have had similar sons and daughters. However, we are going to see that this Father is a picture of God and His love for all people.

An inheritance is normally not given until after the death of the father. However, that was not the way it happened in this case. We see that one day the younger son said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me." The father did not have to honor this choice because he was still alive. However, the father in his love allowed the son to make that choice even though the father knew that it was the wrong choice. God is a loving Father who realizes that many people will only turn to Him after they have nearly destroyed their lives. As a result, the father honored the request of the son and gave him the inheritance that he would have received in the future.

A few days later the younger son took his entire inheritance and left for a far country. Here we see that he wanted to get as far away from his father as possible. When the son reached the far country we see that he wasted his possessions with prodigal living. The word translated "wasted" means to scatter abroad. This word was used of God in Luke 1:51 where we read, "He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." Here we see that God scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. The word is translated wasting in Luke 16:1 where we read, "He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods."

The word translated "prodigal" means a wild, sinful life filled with immorality. Another form of this word is used in Ephesians 5:18 where we read, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." Here we see that the word speaks of the wild partying that goes along with excessive drinking. That kind of living can quickly use up an entire inheritance. We see that is exactly what happened.

Luke 15:14-19 says, "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and

before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants." ” The day came when this young man had nothing left. At the same time a severe famine came into that land. The word translated “famine” speaks of a scarcity of harvest. This was a very severe famine which meant that there was a great shortage of food.

This young man began to suffer because of the lack of food. Finally he was forced to go and find any job that was available to get some money so that he could buy some food. The only job that he could find was feeding pigs. Since the Jews knew that pigs were unclean animals, this was the worst imaginable job any Jewish person could take. He was so starved that he even tried to fill his stomach with the carob pods that he was feeding to the pigs. Carob pods cannot be digested by the human body so they did nothing to satisfy his hunger. At the same time no one even gave him any food.

One of the things that happened in the pigpen was that this young man suddenly had a lot of time to think. It was while he was thinking in the pigpen that this young man finally came to his senses. He began to think about his father and his home. He realized that his father treated his hired servants with kindness. They had more than enough food. In contrast, this young man realized that he could soon perish from hunger. The word translated “perish” means to destroy, to be lost or to be ruined. In fact it is the word that Jesus used to describe the goal of Satan in John 10:10 where we read, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” In this verse, the word is translated destroy.

The son then made the choice to humble himself before his father. He made the choice to make the long journey home and tell his father, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” First, notice that this son realized that his primary sin was against God. David realized this same thing when he said in Psalm 51:4, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight--that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.” Second, this son realized that he had also sinned against his father. He felt that he was no longer worthy. The word translated “worthy” means to have weight or value. He did not even deserve to be called a son any longer. As a result, the young man planned to ask his father if the father would be willing to make him a hired servant. We see that rebellion had been replaced by repentance.

Luke 15:20-24 says, “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.” It is in this part of the parable that we see that the father gives us a beautiful picture of God.

The young man began the long walk back to his father. When he still was a long way from the house, his father saw him. This meant that the father was frequently looking toward the road watching for his son to return. We also see that the father had compassion. The word translated “compassion” means to be deeply moved from within. This word is used of Jesus in Mark 6:34 where we read, “And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd. So He began to teach them many things.” The compassion of Jesus caused Him to teach the people so they could come to the True Shepherd.

Because of the compassion that the father felt for his son, he ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. The son then spoke to the father and told him that he had sinned against God and against his father. He also said that he was no longer worthy to be called his son. However, the father stopped the son before he could even ask his father to hire him as a hired servant. This is a real picture of the great love that God has for us. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Then Romans 8:14-16 adds, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." When we repent of our sin of unbelief, we become the children of God.

However, the father did much more than just speak words. The father also took actions to restore the son. He told the servants to bring out the best robe and put it on him. When we became a Christian we received the robe of righteousness. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Then the father said to put a ring on his hand. The ring was what showed the authority of the family because the family ring was used to sign official documents and letters.

The father also said to put sandals on his feet. Notice he had walked home with no shoes or sandals. Slaves did not normally wear sandals but sons did so this also showed that the father recognized him as a son. Ephesians 6:15 says, "And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." However, the greatest picture is the picture of the joy of the father. He told the servants to bring the fatted calf that had been saved for a special event and kill it so that there could be a celebration feast. He said that his son had been dead and was now alive. God gave us spiritual life at the moment of salvation. The son had been lost and now he was found. Then they began to celebrate. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the great joy that God had at the time that they became Christians and that there was great rejoicing in heaven. This speaks of the greatness of the love of the Father for every person and His joy at the salvation of each one who comes to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain how this parable shows the greatness of the love of God.

Jesus Taught about the Unrepentant Son

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children grow in their understanding of the greatness of the love of God. We also saw the greatness of the joy of the Father over every sinner that repents. The tax collectors and sinners were probably filled with great joy as they understood the love of the Father for them. In contrast, today we will see that the older son gives us a real picture of the scribes and Pharisees who were complaining because Jesus received sinners and ate with them.

We see that the older son was angry and would not join the celebration that was being held for the return of his younger brother. Luke 15:25-28 says, "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.' But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him." These verses show us many things about the heart of the older son. He was not happy that the father showed love and mercy to the younger son.

The younger son had been in the pigpen when he realized that he had sinned and made the decision to return to the father. In contrast, the older son was in the field of the father doing the work that needed to be done in the field. We are going to see that he had a very self-righteous attitude. As the older son came close to the house, he heard the noise of music and dancing. We can see that the celebration for the return of the younger son was a great celebration. This is a reminder of the joy in heaven over one sinner that repents.

The older brother immediately called one of the servants and asked him what was going on in the house. The servant told the older brother that his younger brother had come home. He said that the father was so thankful that his son had come home safe and sound that the father had killed the fatted calf and they were celebrating. Suddenly the older son became very angry and refused to go into the house. This chapter started by saying in Luke 15:1-2, "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, 'This Man receives sinners and eats with them.'" Here we see that the Pharisees and scribes were complaining because Jesus ate with sinners. Suddenly the Pharisees and scribes had to realize that their complaints showed their own anger and that they were like the older brother. They were refusing to accept the tax collectors and sinners and they were angry that Jesus accepted them. The proud cannot be joyful about heaven when they hear that sinners will be there.

We see that the older son refused to go into the house. As a result, we see that the father came out and pleaded with him. Here we see the love of the father for the older son. The father had run to meet the younger son. Now he went out to talk with the older son. His love for the older son was just as great as his love for the younger son. In fact we read that the father pleaded with the older son. The word translated "pleaded" means to call to one's side, to beseech, to comfort or to exhort. This is the word that is used in the vision that Paul received during the night in Acts 16:9-10 where we read, "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.'" Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them." Here we see that God used a man pleading in a vision to guide Paul and the team with him to take the Gospel to the continent of Europe.

Instead of listening to the pleading of the father, the older son showed his pride by his answer to the father. Luke 15:29 says, "So he answered and said to his father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.'" Here we see that the older son thought that he had faithfully served his father. He thought that he had lived a very good life. In fact his words sounded almost like the prayer of the Pharisee who prayed in Luke 18:10-12 where we read, "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'" I often tell people that sin and pride are very similar, they both have "I" in the center. The older brother certainly had pride as he compared himself to his brother.

The scribes and Pharisees also thought that they were serving God. The scribes made copies of various books of the Old Testament. The Pharisees thought that they were acceptable to God because they made many rules which they tried to get others to obey. Matthew 23:1-4 says, "Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." Here we see that they told others what to do but they were totally unwilling to obey their own rules. In fact they were just hypocrites.

The older son told the father that even though he had never disobeyed any of the commandments of the father that the father never gave him a young goat to make merry with his friends. This statement tells us that the reason why the older son tried to obey the commandments of his father was to get what he could get for his own pleasure. He had not done any of the things that he did to please God. 1 John 2:16 says, "For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world." He was quick to complain about the fact that he thought that his brother was guilty of the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. However, at the same time, he chose to ignore the pride that was in his own life.

The older son had a complete misunderstanding of the compassion of the father. Luke 15:30-32 says, "But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.' "" The older brother showed his bitterness by calling his younger brother "your son" instead of even admitting that the younger son was also his brother. In the same way, the scribes and Pharisees did not even want to admit that the tax collectors and sinners were also Jews.

The older brother immediately told the father that his son had devoured your livelihood with harlots. Here we see another characteristic of the Pharisees. The older brother condemned the younger brother with no evidence that his brother had even done these things since he had not even seen him yet. Early in His ministry Jesus had warned about judging others in His Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 7:1-5 says, "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." The word translated "judge" means to be of the opinion or to condemn. Whether the older brother was

right or wrong, he did not know. However, he had certainly formed an opinion and condemned his brother.

The Pharisees condemned people and called them sinners because they thought that these people were guilty of immorality. This is shown very clearly in John 8:3-7 which says, "Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear. So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.'" The Pharisees did not even realize that they had also condemned themselves because it requires two people for a person to be caught in the very act of adultery. In this passage they only brought the woman.

Even though the older son judged and condemned his brother, the father also showed his love to the older son. The older son had also received his inheritance. Luke 15:12 says, "And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood." The father divided the inheritance to both sons immediately. That meant that the older son actually got two-thirds of the inheritance because the older son received a double portion of the inheritance. However, the father wanted the older son to have more than just the inheritance. He also wanted to have fellowship with the older son. However, the older son was making the choice to reject that fellowship with the father because we never do read that he came into the house. In the same way the scribes and Pharisees rejected eternal life even though it was freely offered and would be paid for by Jesus.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children to clearly understand why the older son gave an example of the way that the scribes and Pharisees had rejected the offer of eternal life that Jesus offered to them as a free gift. Their pride so controlled most of their lives that they were unwilling to accept that offer of eternal life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus Taught About the Unjust Steward

In our last three topics we saw that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children that there is great joy in heaven over even one sinner that repents. Jesus made it very clear to the tax collectors and sinners that He would give them every opportunity to repent and receive forgiveness of sins. At the same time the scribes and Pharisees showed by their attitudes that they rejected the tax collectors and sinners. In our topic today, we are going to see that as they continued to travel toward Jerusalem Jesus taught His disciples about an unjust steward.

One day we see that Jesus talked to His disciples about a steward who had been an unfaithful worker for his master. Luke 16:1-2 says, "He also said to His disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and an accusation was brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. So he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'" The word translated "steward" means the manager of the finances of a rich man or the manager of a household. It can also talk about Christians being stewards of the mysteries of God. 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 says, "Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful." However, in this case we see that this steward was managing the finances of a rich man.

We see that the most important responsibility of a steward was that the steward be found faithful. The word translated "he had wasted" means to scatter. It is the same word that was used of the younger son in the previous chapter. Luke 15:13 says, "And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living." In this verse, the younger son had wasted all of his possessions with sinful living. In contrast, the steward had wasted the money or possessions of his master by fraud or by mismanagement. When the rich man heard the report about the steward, he immediately called him and accused him of scattering his goods. He told the steward to prepare a report of his stewardship because he was no longer going to be the steward.

We see that the steward immediately made a decision when he was told that he would no longer be the steward. Luke 16:3-7 says, "Then the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do? For my master is taking the stewardship away from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I have resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.' So he called every one of his master's debtors to him, and said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' So he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' So he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'" The steward decided that in the short time that he had left that he was going to prepare for his future on this earth. However, he did not prepare for eternity.

The steward said that he could not dig. By this he meant that he did not know how to do physical work out in the fields. He also said that he could not stand the shame of trying to provide for himself by begging. As a result, he decided to act in such a way that the debtors of his master would be indebted to him. He immediately began calling every one of the people that owed his master money or goods. He asked each debtor the same basic question. That question was, "How much do you owe my master?" Then he told each debtor that they were to change their bills to a much smaller amount that they owed his master. Every debtor was eager to receive a decrease in their bill.

The first debtor owed the master a hundred measures of oil. This would have been oil that was used for cooking. A measure was more than nine gallons of oil. That meant that the first person was told to quickly write down fifty measures of oil instead of one hundred measures. That meant that his debt was immediately reduced by over 450 gallons of oil. The fact that the steward had the man change his own bill meant that the man realized that this was not the instruction of the master. This meant those both the steward and the debtors knew that they were cheating the master by changing the bill. In this way the steward knew that they would invite him to stay in their houses because they were also being dishonest and the steward knew that they were in agreement with him to cheat and deceive the master of the steward.

The steward did this same thing with each of the debtors of his master. Another debtor said that he owed a hundred measures of wheat. A measure of wheat was about 14 bushels. The steward told the debtor to write down 80 bushels. The steward continued to make a large decrease in the debt of each of the people who owed goods to his master. We also see the goal of the steward. Since each of these people had agreed to help deceive the master of the steward, it was like they now owed a debt to the steward. His plan was to make certain that they would invite him to stay in their various homes when he no longer was a steward.

The master heard what the steward had done. Luke 16:8-9 says, "So the master commended the unjust steward because he had dealt shrewdly. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home." The master actually praised the steward when he heard what he had done. This was not a complement for stealing the goods of the master. Instead the master was saying, "You were more shrewd than I was so you are the one that won."

The word translated "more shrewd" means to be wise and can be used in either a good or a sinful way. Romans 12:16 says, "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion." 1 Corinthians 10:12-15 warns about being wise in our own conceits. Those verses say, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say." The person who is wise in his own opinion is actually setting himself up for a fall and finally for eternal judgment. That is what we see happened with this steward.

Jesus said that the people of this world are shrewder in their ways than the sons of light. Because of their own opinions, they can easily deceive others in this world. However, Jesus went on to warn that such shrewdness will have no value for eternity. The word translated "mammon" means the riches of this world. Those who make friends in the world to gain unrighteous riches are thinking only of this world and are not preparing for eternity. Those evil friends who help them gain their unrighteous riches will together end up experiencing eternal judgment. This steward used the money of his master to buy friends for this world. Together they can look forward to eternal judgment.

Jesus had just explained to the disciples the consequences of evil living on this earth. Then Jesus told the disciples that He had given them this lesson so that the disciples could learn to be faithful stewards instead of unfaithful stewards. Luke 16:10-12 says, "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will

give you what is your own?" Just as there are consequences for sinful living, there are blessings for godly living.

Jesus told the disciples that those who make the choice to be faithful in the smallest things will also be faithful in the big things. In the same way the one who is unjust in the smallest things will also be unjust in the big things. The word translated "unjust" means to be deceitful or to deal fraudulently with others. Jesus had just illustrated how the unjust steward had been unjust by the way that he had provided for himself after he lost his job as the steward. Jesus had also shown that there were eternal consequences.

Jesus wanted the disciples to become faithful stewards of the message that He was giving to them. Jesus has that same desire for each Christian today. Jesus calls for us to lay up our treasures in heaven. Matthew 6:19-21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The steward had prepared treasure for this earth. Jesus calls for us to seek the eternal treasures that are given to those who are faithful.

Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:10-11, "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. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness." Here we see that Paul told Timothy that greed can cause people to stray from the faith. Instead Paul urged Timothy to pursue the things that bring eternal rewards. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there will be eternal blessings in their lives if they make the choice to pursue the things that will bring eternal blessings and rewards. These are the things that last. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to be good stewards of all that the Lord gives to them.

Jesus Taught About the Danger of Greed

We saw in our last topic that we want to help our physical and spiritual children gain a full understanding of the eternal consequences that faced the unjust steward. He prepared to live the rest of his life on this earth but he made no preparation for eternity. As a result, he faced eternal judgment. The Pharisees were listening as Jesus spoke these things to His disciples. In our topic today, we are going to see how the Pharisees reacted to the words that Jesus had just spoken.

Jesus wanted to help His disciples realize that their choices really showed what was in their hearts. Every person had to choose who he or she will serve. Then Jesus said in Luke 16:13, "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." We saw in the last topic that the word translated "mammon" means earthly riches. That is why Luke 16:11-12 says, "Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?" Here we see that Jesus made it clear that people must be faithful in the way that they handle the riches of this world if they want God to entrust them with true riches.

Jesus wanted each of His disciples to be faithful with any earthly riches that God entrusted to them because Jesus said that was the only way that they could be entrusted with true riches. The same is true for us in our lives today. As Christians we are stewards of the earthly possessions that Jesus gives to us. Here Jesus said that the way we manage these earthly things will determine how many things of eternal value the Lord will entrust to us. That is why Jesus said that it is impossible for any servant to serve two masters. The word translated "serve" means to be a slave. In this case the two masters are either God or earthly riches.

First, we see we will either love God or love riches. The word translated "hate" means to detest or to pursue with hatred. The word translated "love" is the word that is used to speak of God's love for us. It means to be well pleased with, to be contented or to love dearly. If we love earthly riches we will detest God. In contrast, if we love God we will not be concerned about accumulating earthly riches. Instead we will be faithful stewards and use that money wisely to bring glory to God. Second, we see that we will either be loyal to God or we will be loyal to earthly riches. The word translated "loyal" means to hold to something or someone firmly. The word translated "despise" means to think little or nothing of. If we hold firmly to riches we will think little or nothing of God. In contrast, if we hold firmly to God, we will be content with whatever God gives us.

When Jesus said these words, He received an immediate reaction from the Pharisees. Luke 16:14-15 says, "Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." The Pharisees had been listening as Jesus taught His disciples. However, the Pharisees were lovers of money. Many of the Pharisees taught that a person could love both money and God. In fact they thought that earthly riches showed that God was blessing them. The Pharisees thought that rich people were people that were favored by God.

Suddenly they heard what Jesus said about riches and they derided Him. The word translated "derided" means to scoff, to sneer or to turn up the nose at. In fact the only other place where

we see this word used in the New Testament is in Luke 23:35 where we read, "And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." Here the word is translated sneered and spoke about the rulers and people as they mocked Jesus as He hung on the cross. The Pharisees were also mocking Jesus because of what He had just said about earthly riches.

That is why Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts." Here we see that the Pharisees wanted the rest of the people to think that they were right that God showed His blessing by giving riches. They did not want to admit that part of their money was gained through sin. In Matthew 23:14 Jesus said, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation." The Pharisees would try to cover the fact that they were cheating widows by making long prayers for those widows. God said in 1 Samuel 16:7, "But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." Jesus made it clear that God knew the hearts of these Pharisees.

The word translated "is highly esteemed" means exalted on high or higher than. Hebrews 7:26 says, "For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens." In Hebrews this verse says that Jesus has become higher than the heavens. In the minds of the Pharisees their riches had become highly exalted. In contrast, Jesus said that their riches had become an abomination in the sight of God. The word translated "abomination" means a foul or detestable thing that is a part of idolatry. This word is used to describe the image that the antichrist will set up in the temple during the time of the tribulation. Matthew 24:15 says, "Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand)." Mark 13:14 says almost exactly the same thing. Jesus here showed that the riches that the Pharisees highly valued had actually become the idol that they were worshiping.

Jesus went on to point out the fact that the law and the prophets were completing their purpose. Luke 16:16-18 says, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail. Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery."

The Old Testament law and the prophets were necessary until the coming of Jesus. Matthew 5:17-18 says, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets because He was the One that was promised throughout the Old Testament. John was the one who introduced Jesus. In his introduction in Matthew 3:11 John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." The Pharisees were unwilling to recognize that Jesus is God who can baptize with the Holy Spirit.

In contrast, the tax collectors and sinners were pressing into the kingdom of God. Matthew 11:11-12 says, "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." The tax collectors and sinners were eager to hear and follow Jesus. Luke 15:1 says, "Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him."

God had promised through Jeremiah in Jeremiah 29:13, "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." The sinners were searching for Jesus while the Pharisees were rejecting Him.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law. Galatians 3:24-25 says, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." The Law has a very important purpose. That purpose is to convict people of their sin and bring them to Jesus so that they can be justified by faith. Once a person comes to Jesus by faith, Galatians 5:13 says, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." Here we see that the Law has completed its purpose and we are now given the liberty to serve one another in love.

Jesus then used one of the laws to illustrate what it meant to fulfill the Law by serving one another in love. The Pharisees had tried to avoid the Law by their use of divorce. Matthew 19:3 says, "The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" Then Matthew 19:7-8 says, "They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?" He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." The Pharisees had rejected the commandment by saying that Moses commanded divorce. They made that the command because of the hardness of their hearts. Jesus fulfilled the Law and gives Christians the power to carry out the plan that God had for marriage in Genesis 2:24 as they learn to serve one another in love. We want to show our physical and spiritual children how we fulfill the Law not by using our liberty as an occasion to serve the flesh but by showing that the Law is fulfilled by the fact that we are one flesh in Christ and serve our partner in love. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be led by the love of Jesus in your own life.

Jesus Taught About the Consequences of Unbelief

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to be led by the love of Jesus instead of trying to misuse the law to cover our sins. We saw that the Pharisees had rejected the Old Testament Law and so it was impossible for them to realize that Jesus was the One who came to fulfill the Old Testament. That day Jesus was talking both to His disciples and also to the Pharisees. In our topic today, we see that Jesus went on to give a warning to the Pharisees about the consequences of unbelief. This was a real warning to those who chose to reject Jesus.

We saw in the last topic that the Pharisees thought that riches were a sign of the blessing of God. Jesus made it clear that the Pharisees had made their riches their idol and that their idol was an abomination to God. As a result, Jesus went on to tell about the death of a beggar who believed God and a rich man who trusted his riches. Luke 16:19-22 says, “There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.” Since Jesus used the name of Lazarus, this was an event that happened and not a parable.

We learn several things about this rich man. First, he was clothed in purple. Purple dye was very expensive and so it was considered the color of kings and of the very rich. Second, fine linen was a very costly and soft material made from Egyptian flax and was either white or yellow in color. Third, he rejoiced daily as he ate expensive foods. In contrast, we also learn several things about Lazarus. First, he was a beggar. Second, his body was covered with open sores. Third, he was laid at the gate of the rich man. Fourth, he lacked food and was left to eat the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Fifth, the dogs came and licked the open sores on his body.

The fact that the beggar had to eat food scraps, had open sores and had those sores licked by the dogs caused the Pharisees to consider the man unclean and one who would never be accepted by God. The Pharisees considered riches a sign of God's approval of a person and so they expected a rich man to have a special place in the kingdom of God. The Pharisees received a real surprise as Jesus continued to tell what happened to the two men. We see that the two men had one thing in common. They both died. Because Lazarus had his faith in God he was taken by the angels and given a place of honor close to Abraham. This probably came as a great shock to the Pharisees because they expected to hear that he would be rejected by God. The rich man also died and was buried.

Then Jesus went on to explain what happened to the rich man when he died. Luke 16:23-26 says, “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’” Because the Pharisees thought that God honored the rich, they expected the rich man to receive a place of great honor in heaven when he died.

Hades is the Greek word that was used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for the Hebrew word “Sheol” which meant the place of the dead in the Old Testament. Here we see that the rich man was in torment in Hades. We learn several things about the condition of those who have not placed their faith in Jesus from these verses. First, the rich man was immediately in torment (great pain and suffering). Second, the rich man could see. Third, the rich man could cry aloud. Fourth, the rich man said that the physical torment was due to flames. Fifth, the rich man felt great thirst. Sixth, the rich man could remember the past. Seventh, the rich man was so thirsty that he would have been willing to receive just a drop of water from the finger of Lazarus to cool his tongue.

We also see that by telling what happened to the rich man Jesus explained several things about all those who die without placing their faith in Him. First, there is conscious existence after death for all unbelievers. Second, there is a real hell. Third, there is no second chance for forgiveness after death. Fourth, we will see in the next group of verses that those in hell cannot communicate with those who are still living on the earth. Fifth the rich man did cry and ask Abraham to have mercy on him.

We also learn several things from the answer of Abraham. Abraham called the rich man, son. This suddenly told the Pharisees that just being a descendent of Abraham would not give them eternal life. John 1:12 says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” When a person personally receives Jesus, God gives them the right to be the children of God because they have believed and placed their faith in Jesus. However, this also means that God has no grandchildren. A person cannot receive eternal life just by being a descendent of Abraham or someone else who had true faith.

The words of Abraham also reminded the Pharisees that the good things that they had on earth would not help them after death. The rich man had been able to enjoy an easy life with all of the things that earthly riches could buy while he was here on this earth. In contrast, Lazarus had experienced evil things on this earth. This was also a reminder that the rich man had shown no compassion for Lazarus even though Lazarus had been laid at his door where the rich man saw him every day as he passed by him. Proverbs 12:10 says, “A righteous man regards the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” In this verse, we see that a righteous man shows kindness even to his animals. In contrast, the wicked are cruel even when they claim to show mercy. Finally Jesus said that there is a great gulf fixed so that no one can pass from the bosom of Abraham to the place of torment. The word translated “gulf” means a gaping opening or separation. This gulf is impossible for anyone to cross.

The former rich man then made one other request. Luke 16:27-31 says, “Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' ” Suddenly the man had a great concern for his family that was still alive on the earth. He did not want any of his family to join him in the place of torment. This is a key answer to say that they will have their friends in hell with them.

The former rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his family about the coming judgment that they also faced. Here we see that the man became concerned for his family but it was too late for him to do anything to help his family. Hebrews 9:27-28 say, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from

sin, for salvation.” The man knew that judgment had come and so he could not go back to warn his family. However, he asked if Lazarus could go to warn them about coming judgment.

Abraham replied to the man in torment that his family had Moses and the prophets to warn them. This meant that they had the Old Testament which gave plenty of warning about the judgment that faces all those who reject God and the salvation which He promised to provide. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Then Isaiah 64:6 says, “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” These verses and many others make it very clear that the heart is filled with evil and that our own efforts are worthless. The Pharisees had read the Old Testament many times but were still depending on their own efforts instead of coming to God in faith. In fact Jesus knew that the Pharisees that were listening to Him that day would also reject the words of the former rich man.

The former rich man said, “No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” Abraham answered the former rich man, “If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.” The time was coming close when Jesus, Himself, would be condemned to death. He knew that He would rise from the dead and that the religious leaders would pay the soldiers to lie and say that the body of Jesus had been stolen. Matthew 28:11-13 says, “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.'” Most of the Pharisees did not believe the message of the resurrection of Jesus but denied it instead.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain clearly what the Word of God teaches about the resurrection of Jesus. Like the Pharisees, all people must choose to accept the Word of God and believe in Jesus or reject the Word. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to use the Word of God to warn others.